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natural awakenings

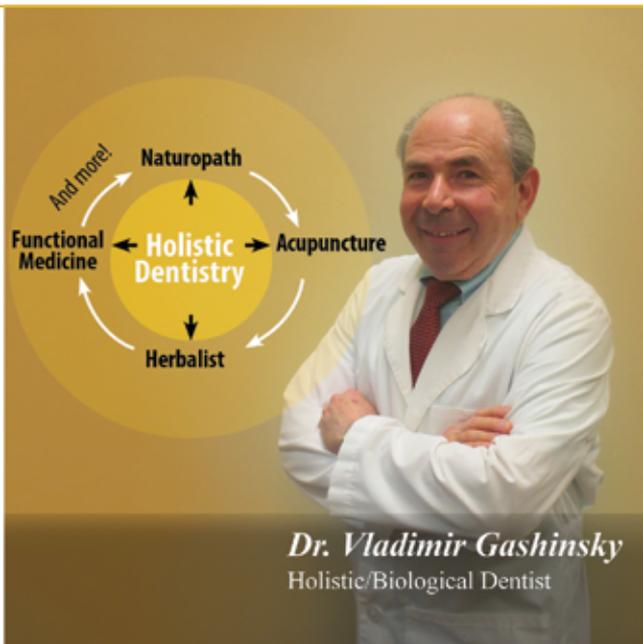
**SAYING 'I DO'
TO THE PLANET**
GREEN WEDDINGS
EMBRACE SUSTAINABILITY

BECOMING HEART-MINDED

HALTING HYPERTENSION
Exercises to Lower High Blood Pressure

HEARTFELT EATING
Best Foods for a Heart-Healthy Diet

VEGGIE TRICKS
HOW TO GET KIDS TO EAT BETTER



Dr. Vladimir Gashinsky
Holistic/Biological Dentist

The Holistic Dental Center

Working Together with Other Holistic Practitioners to Create a True Holistic Approach to Your Health

A team approach to your overall health and it starts at the Holistic Dental Center in Millburn, New Jersey, with their highly skilled team of trained professionals in holistic and biological dentistry. From their award winning doctors and their state of the art technology to their use of ozone and self-healing therapies, they are committed to not only treating your dental related symptoms, but also, the root cause thereby eliminating disease and promoting optimal health.

Little did conventional practitioners know so many years ago that it took more than just looking at the mouth. A generation ago there was a disconnect, a thought that our mouth and teeth had no bearing on the health of the rest of our body. Now more and more research has been showing that there is a strong connection between dental disease and systemic health. Dr. Gashinsky, Holistic Dentist, has always known that. A holistic approach to health is multifaceted, so he has built a network of healthcare practitioners to assist his patients in obtaining their desired level of optimal wellness.

Working hand in hand with Naturopaths, Functional Medicine practitioners and many others in the field of holistic medicine has expanded Dr. Gashinsky's ability to help more people. "I find it to be incredibly fulfilling to work synergistically with these practitioners to be able to improve patients' health so dramatically. Some are coming to me so very sick and by working together we're seeing drastic improvements in their quality of life," says Dr. Gashinsky.

Dr. Gashinsky feels strongly in the need to practice in such a manner as to take patients whole health into consideration. So much so, that he traveled to Switzerland this past spring to visit the Paracelsus Clinic and Swiss BioHealth Clinic; two healthcare models that promote the oral-body connection, to study their holistic approach to patient care. Dr. Gashinsky says, "To truly practice holism; the thought that everything is understood in relation to the whole and not just its parts, it's important to remember that when treating a person it's not just what one practitioner does, but how they can work together to improve the final outcome."

"Finding and working with like minded practitioners to help my patients has not only been professionally satisfying, but also on a personal level knowing that my patients are being well taken care of," say Dr. Gashinsky. "Finding and addressing the root cause of disease in all our disciplines is the key to success in our patients' health. What

they don't see, I do, and vice versa, seeing dental infections and how they can affect organ systems through meridians or directly and utilizing the benefits of networking with a holistic practitioner can and does make all the difference in patient care...I wouldn't have it any other way," Dr. Gashinsky says about working with other practitioners.

So if you're looking for an approach that is inclusive of all aspects of holistic care, visit Dr. Gashinsky and his team at The Holistic Dental Center in Millburn, New Jersey. It's their priority to ensure complete holistic care by promoting the benefits of holism. "It's not just your teeth anymore," as he says, "It never was," but now they have the ability to not just treat overall disease but truly prevent and promote whole body wellness.

Other than being a dentist for 40 years, Dr. Vladimir Gashinsky, is a certified nutritional consultant, Accredited by the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology, SMART certified and a Naturopathic doctor "My passion for learning is never complete, I will continue to research and learn the latest in alternative treatments and team up with the best in the fields of holistic and alternative medicine to bring my patients the best treatments available, this I can assure you."

Holistic Dental Center is located at 91 Millburn Avenue, Millburn, New Jersey. For more information, call (973) 457-4688 or visit HolisticDentalCenterNJ.com.

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Dr. Doug Pucci, D.C. FAAIM
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Publisher **Anil Singh**
Editors **Martin Miron**
Thomas Masloski

Contributing Writers **Thomas Brenton**
Ashley Di Capri
Lisa Poquinto
Joseph Quiroz
Nayda Rondon

Design & Production **Kim Cerne**
Sales & Marketing **Anil Singh**

CONTACT US

Natural Awakenings
North NJ – Bergen & Passaic Edition
247 Ehret St., Paramus, NJ 07652
PH: 201-781-5577
Publisher@NaturalAwakeningsNNJ.com
NANorthNJ.com



@NAnorthNJ

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Free subscriptions are available for our digital edition by emailing:
Publisher@NaturalAwakeningsNNJ.com

NATIONAL TEAM

CEO/Founder **Sharon Bruckman**
COO/Franchise Sales **Joe Dunne**
National Art Director **Stephen Blancett**
Layout **Gabrielle W-Perillo**
Financial Manager **Yolanda Shebert**
Asst. Director of Ops **Heather Gibbs**

Natural Awakenings Publishing Corporation
4851 Tamiami Trail N., Ste. 200
Naples, FL 34103
Ph: 239-434-9392 • Fax: 239-434-9513
NaturalAwakeningsMag.com

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letter from publisher:



Northern New Jersey
Natural Awakenings publisher
Anil Singh and his wife Vartika

I hope that 2021 has gotten off to a great start and that you've been staying safe and healthy.

We remain grateful to all those who are important to us. Near the top of that list is our strong and supportive community and business owners in northern New Jersey. It's good to know that we are connected in health and wellness through *Natural Awakenings!*

We have seen some strange times recently, and hopefully all that is behind us. Being humble and honest is a basic character trait that we want our kids as well as our leaders to follow. The one thought that kept coming back to me is, "Surround yourself with good people." That will break the cycle of negativity going around and bring goodness in many different ways.

With the new year upon us, our thoughts always turn to making ourselves better, healthier and happier. We have very detailed insight from integrative cardiologists on preventing heart disease and creating heart-healthy lifestyle strategies (page 14) and there is great resource for high blood pressure and stress management (page 18). Join us in celebrating Chinese New year with Lois Kramer-Perez and read about relationships in the time of COVID by Marina Maurino on page 19.

Our upcoming Health and Wellness Summit on Thursday, March 4, will have some illustrious speakers for heart (cardiovascular) issues and lifestyle diseases (diabetes, etc.). More details are available online. Sign up for early bird free spots.

Find more health and wellness resources for your body, mind and soul—the outer body and the inner, spiritual well being in *Natural Awakenings* magazine and online on Facebook and our website, *NaturalAwakeningsNNJ.com*.

Mask on and stay safe!!!

Please share your feedback and thoughts at *Anil@naturalawakeningsnnj.com*.

Anil Singh, Publisher



Natural Awakenings is a family of nearly 70 healthy living magazines celebrating 27 years of providing the communities we serve with the tools and resources we all need to lead healthier lives on a healthy planet.

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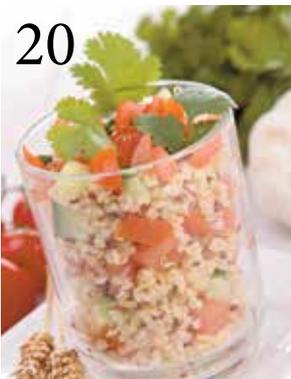
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Free Lecture on Women's Pelvic Health

Patrick Culligan, M.D., co-director of urogynecology and reconstructive pelvic surgery at Valley Hospital, Department of Community Health, will present a virtual program, Working Your Pelvic Floor, about options for treatment of pelvic floor muscle concerns, from 2 to 3 p.m., February 9, online.

The pelvic floor is a term used to describe the muscles, ligaments and connective tissue that provide support for a woman's bowel, bladder, uterus, vagina and rectum. Many women experience the inability to control the muscles of their pelvic floor, resulting in urine leakage, frequency or urgency of urination, difficulty emptying the bladder, bowel gas or stool leakage, pressure or a protrusion through the vaginal opening or a bulge sensation.

Admission is free with registration at 1-800-825-5391 or ValleyHealth.com/events. Attendees will receive an email the day of the program providing instructions and a virtual link to join the meeting.

The more important an activity is to your soul's evolution, the more resistance you will feel to it—the fear you will feel. ~Steven Pressfield

news briefs

Auriculotherapy Wellness Day Discounted at Saddle Brook Wellness Center

Complete Wellness Within Wellness Center is hosting an Auriculotherapy Wellness day from noon to 5 p.m., on February 17 and March 10, in Saddle Brook. Treatments are \$40 (reg. \$60) for a limited time. Participants will learn how earseeds can improve your overall health and try them for yourself.

There are hundreds of points on the ear that are believed to correspond with the organs in the body, as well as specific emotional and physical issues. Auriculotherapy can help with these common issues such as headaches, allergies, weight loss, pain, and even hormonal imbalances and many other issues.



Location: 337 Market St., Ste. 5, Saddle Brook. For more information or to book an appointment (required), call 973-615-2486, email Info@CompleteWellnessWithin.com or visit CompleteWellnessWithin.com. See ad, page 9.

Learn Access Bars in Paramus

The Access Bars (Bars) class from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., February 20, with Theresa Obsuth, is a one-day training session where participants learn to administer an innovative



energy clearing technique that can create greater ease and cultivate more joy in life through greater awareness.

While training, participants learn how to "run the Bars" and will also receive two bars sessions. The Bars are 32 points on the head that when gently touched, effortlessly and easily release thoughts, ideas, decisions, beliefs and attitudes that keep us in limitation. Access Bars can release

disharmonious thoughts and behavior patterns, and the release of these old thoughts and patterns can bring greater possibilities into one's life.

No prerequisites are required and anyone can learn, including children. Class participants receive a certificate of completion and become qualified to provide Access Bars sessions to family, friends, or clients.

Providers of other therapies can introduce Access Bars into their practice.

Location: Paramus. For more information, or to preregister (required), or to book a private session, call Theresa Obsuth, 201-655-3836 or visit accessconsciousness.com. See ad, page 13.



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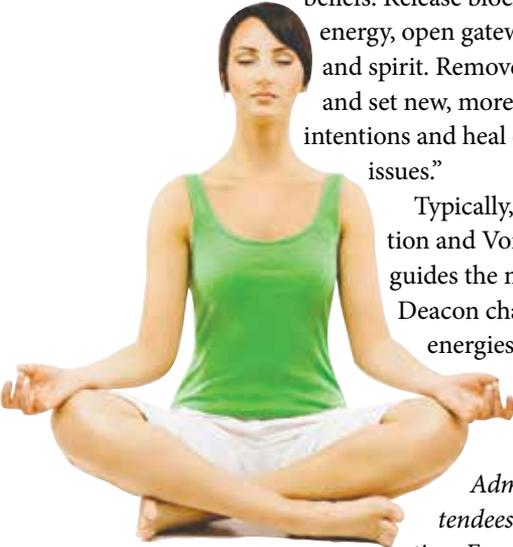


@naturalawakenings_nnj

Experience Vortex Healing via Zoom

Joel Elfman, a hypnotist, and NLP trainer with more than 14 years of experience, and Simon Deacon, who has maintained a healing practice for 11 years, present Vortex Healing from 7 to 9 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month, including February 3, online.

This guided meditation is useful for healing, releasing old issues and improving life, health, happiness and more. Elfman says, "Let go of old thoughts, habits and beliefs. Release blocked karma and energy, open gateways of mind and spirit. Remove limitations and set new, more powerful intentions and heal old emotional issues."



Typically, there are two to three rounds of guided meditation and Vortex Healing combined. In each round, Elfman guides the meditation with words, creating trance, and Deacon channels the Vortex Healing energies. The words, energies and trance will blend together, taking participants deeper into mind, body, energy and soul to create more profound effects.

Admission is \$25. Zoom address to sent to all paid attendees. Register at Tinyurl.com/HypnoVortexRegistration. Formore information, call 212-414-9848.



Free Online Intro to Cybersecurity

NJIT Digital Skills Bootcamps will present an online information session, What Does a Career in Cybersecurity Look Like? from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., February 10, to show how to break into an innovative digital career.

This event is open to anyone who is looking to enhance their understanding, gain new skills, or change careers in the growing field of cybersecurity. Topics include a curriculum overview, a day in the life of a student, remote learning at a glance, admissions process overview, tuition and payment options and next steps. The program accommodates working professionals, offering evening and weekend course classes.



Admission is free. RSVP to Tinyurl.com/RSVPcyber. Guests will receive a Zoom link one week before the event starts.

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-Rachel Ray Magazine

"It was nearly universally liked, praised for its almost-citrusy, bright flavor..."
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Consider Melatonin to Lower COVID-19 Risk



Melatonin, a hormonal sleep aid that can be purchased for a few dollars at local pharmacies, appears to reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19 by 30 percent, report researchers from the Cleveland Clinic. Among African Americans, a group disproportionately impacted by the virus, the risk was reduced by 52 percent. For the study, published in *PLOS Biology*, researchers used

artificial intelligence to compare the host genes and proteins of the novel coronavirus to those of 64 other diseases across a range of categories. They found 34 drugs for possible repurposing, then combed through 27,000 patient records to find which drugs had in fact lowered the risk of contracting the virus. “We’re excited about these results and to study that connection more, but large-scale observational studies and randomized controlled trials are essential to confirm what we’ve found here,” says lead researcher Feixiong Cheng.

Use Glass Baby Bottles to Avoid Microplastic Particles

Polypropylene baby bottles—which comprise 82 percent of the global baby bottle market—release an “extraordinary” number of microplastic particles, reports a new study by Trinity College Dublin. In a study published in *Nature Food*, which covered 48 regions worldwide, researchers found that flexible plastic baby bottles release as many as 16.2 million particles per liter. “A study last year by the World Health Organization estimated adults would consume between 300 and 600 microplastics a day—our average values were on the order of a million or millions,” study co-author John Boland told *The Guardian*. He called for more studies to understand the implications, saying the researchers were “absolutely gobsmacked” by the numbers. The microplastics are released when heated liquid is used to sterilize the bottles and to dissolve powdered formula and when the bottle is shaken to dissolve the powder. The higher the water temperature, the greater the release of particles. Polypropylene bottles have a “5” on the recycling symbol on the bottom.

Eat Chili Peppers to Live Longer

Regular consumption of chili peppers can reduce the risk of dying from cardiovascular disease by 26 percent and from cancer by 23 percent, suggests a review of 4,729 studies involving 570,000 people. Researchers from the Cleveland Clinic reported to the annual scientific session of the American



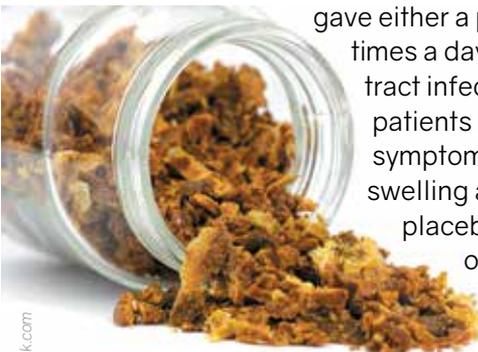
Heart Association that frequent chili eaters also had a lower risk of dying from any cause by 25 percent compared to those that rarely or never ate the fruit. Because it was difficult to measure the type and amount of chili pepper eaten by the Americans, Italians, Chinese and Iranians in the study, no quantities were specified. Previous studies have found that chili pepper has anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, anticancer and blood glucose-regulating effects due to capsaicin, its active ingredient.



Take Propolis and Vitamins A, E and D for Respiratory Tract Infections

Two new studies offer hope for dealing with the winter's respiratory woes. Propolis, the resin-like substance made by bees from plants to build their hives, has been used for centuries to heal wounds and treat colds. In a new study, researchers from Italy's University of Naples Federico II gave either a propolis extract oral spray or a placebo three times a day to 122 people with mild upper respiratory tract infections. After three days, 83 percent of the patients in the propolis group enjoyed remission of all symptoms such as sore throat, hoarseness and throat swelling and redness, compared to 28 percent of the placebo group. The propolis reduced the duration of infection from five days to three days, two days less than the placebo.

A second study in Britain of 6,115 adults found that those with adequate intakes of vitamins A and E from diet and supplements had fewer respiratory complaints. People taking vitamin D as supplements, but not from their diet, also fared better at fending off such symptoms as breathlessness, bronchial trouble, viral pneumonia and throat infection.



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Dr. Anne Deatly
 DR. ANNE DEATLY PHD
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 Aromatherapist



Fatty Liver On the Rise

by Doug Pucci

When people hear about fatty liver, they may shrug it off as something that happens to people that consume alcohol every day or binge drink. Add in poor dietary habits, and that's a recipe for fatty liver, cirrhosis and even liver organ failure.

But nonalcoholic fatty liver disease is increasing in prevalence, and not just in adults—children are being diagnosed with, too. The numbers out of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases are alarming: 30 to 40 percent of adults (about one in three), or between 80 and 100 million Americans; for children between the ages of 2 and 19 in the U.S., it's at about 10 percent (7 million American children; 38 percent of those children are also clinically obese; 23 percent of children also have co-morbidities; and 24 percent of people globally have fatty liver, which is nearly doubling over the past 14 years.

Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease is unhealthy fat in

the liver from a root source other than alcohol. Risk factors include hypothyroidism, insulin resistance, hyperglycemia, Type 2 diabetes, obesity, choline deficiency (an essential nutrient; approximately 90 percent of Americans are deficient) and other factors. In addition, prescription and over-the-counter medications, as well as poor dietary choices, also lead to fatty liver, including things like fried foods, foods

and drinks with added sugar, carb-heavy foods (white bread, pasta, etc.), fat-laden foods and high amounts of salt. The liver needs plenty of water to help it function optimally, so dehydration—something that affects up to 75 percent of Americans—can be another contributing factor.

Chronic liver disease is increasing at a rate equal to the increase of obesity. Researchers believe that soon, fatty liver will become the main cause of liver-related illness and



death. Although the medical community has found very few treatments, a strong spotlight is now being focused on the liver-gut-diet connection because there's a close functional association between the gut and liver. In a current review, researchers found, "The current evidence supports the association between nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, the gut microbiome and the role of diet."

Research from multiple studies has found that exercise is one important component to preventing fatty liver and other diseases of the liver. Resistance exercises in particular were shown to lower the amount of fat in the liver and also significantly reduced cholesterol levels. Studies also showed that any type of physical activity can help—liver fat in participants of the study decreased 0.87 percent for every 1,000 steps taken, whereas liver fat increased 0.87 percent for every hour of sedentary behavior.

The latest study states that probiotics were beneficial—with no major adverse side effects. Not only did probiotics restore gut flora to normal, they also reversed or stopped the progress of these diseases. The importance of a healthy gut microbiome is something functional medicine practitioners have long known, and a good one can determine which type of probiotic will return balance to the intestinal microbiome. But remember that probiotics, like all other supplements, come in a wide variety, and some are more effective than others. For instance, yogurt only contains a couple strains of lactobacillus and is not a significant source to improve gut health. Running some tests to explore both the lower bowel and the small interesting will help to know what kinds of probiotics will help.



To learn about Dr. Pucci's Root Cause Solution to chronic health concerns, call 201-261-5430 or register at GetWell-Now.com/webinar. See ad, page 3.



Experiencing What We Desire

by Anne M Deatly

In his book, “Feeling is the Secret,” Neville Goddard explains the secret of getting what we want: “Assume the feeling of your wish fulfilled. You must imagine that you are already experiencing what you desire.” Consciousness does not know the difference between imagination and reality. It can only function with what it is fed. Our consciousness only acts on what we put into it.

The laws of energy flow operate on what we put out energetically, and comes back to the original source. That is why it is so important to think and feel at higher vi-

brational frequencies. Whatever we desire, we must feel the feeling of already receiving it. We are already that desire.

If we are passionate about becoming something or if we want to experience something (like success in a particular field) or we want to have a new material object, then we have to experience that desire in the present moment. This is being in the “energy” or “spirit” of what we want. It is critical to have that feeling or the vibrational energy of what we desire in this present moment.

If we have a desire, that means it is al-

ready available to us. That desire is already energetically in our field. Now we just have to manifest the desire into the physical world. Manifesting what we really want is easy if we don’t sabotage it with doubt, fear or worry.

The truth is we have been programmed by society, parents and teachers to believe that we don’t make the cut, that we aren’t good enough. We are programmed for lack and limitation, so we verify that lack and limitation with our own perceptions.

We must change this programming because it stops us from seeing the abundance in the universe, being our best and realizing that we are divine. We are all connected to divine energy and if we open up, it will flow through us.

A change in consciousness and how we think is necessary to get what we really want. Our imagination is the key instrument for changing our lives. With some imagination, we can envision the wish fulfilled—that we already have what we desire or we already are the person we want to be.



Dr. Anne M. Deatly is an advanced energy medicine practitioner and director of E Quantum Break-throughs. For more information, call 201-925-1046, email Anne.Deatly@gmail.com or visit DrAnneDeatly.com. See ad, page 9.

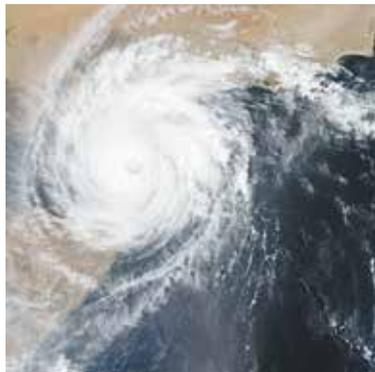
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Big Blow

Climate Change Makes Hurricane Destruction Worse



A study from the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University published in *Nature* predicts that hurricanes will remain stronger and persist longer after making landfall, causing greater and more widespread destruction, because of ocean waters heated by climate

change. In the 1960s, hurricanes lost 75 percent of their energy in the first day after making landfall, but more recent hurricanes lost only about 50 percent of their energy in that same time.

Hurricanes feed off heat energy from the sea and rapidly lose strength once they reach land. Pinaki Chakraborty, a senior author of the study, and its lead author, Ph.D. student Lin Li, analyzed data on storms that made landfall after forming in the North Atlantic between 1967 and 2018. They found that how slowly the storms weakened closely matched changes in sea surface temperatures during the same period. From computer simulations of hurricanes, they discovered that hotter temperatures allowed the hurricanes to hold on to more moisture, which they could continue to use as a source of heat energy once they reached land.

Tiny Invaders

Plastic Particles Ingested in Food and Water



Researchers at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, estimate people that drink bottled water ingest an additional 90,000 microplastic particles annually compared to 4,000 microplastics for those that drink only tap water. Food is contaminated with plastic as well,

which we also ingest. The researchers took data from 26 studies that measured plastic in salt, beer, sugar, fish, shellfish, water and urban air, and combined it with U.S. dietary guidelines to calculate how many particles people

likely consumed annually. The results are 50,000 particles per year for adults and 40,000 for children. When inhalation is included, the estimate rises to between 74,000 and 121,000 particles per year for adults. Even these figures are likely underestimated, because the foods in the studies make up only 15 percent of the typical American caloric intake.

The particles' effect on the human body is not yet understood. Another study revealed that some plastic is expelled from the body in feces. But there is also evidence that it gets absorbed, and that the tiniest particles can enter the bloodstream and lymphatic system, which could affect immune response and aid transmission of toxic chemicals.

Outdoor Fun

Childhood Immunity Enhanced by Natural Environment



At the University of Helsinki, in Finland, a new project recorded in the journal *Science Advances* found that switching a child's playground from gravel to natural forest floor could foster a better immune system within a month by exposing them to a greater variety of skin

and gut bacteria. The researchers studied 75 children between 3 and 5 years of age at 10 daycare centers in two Finnish cities to see how a change in their playing environment altered their skin and gut microbiota, as well as immune markers in their blood.

Four centers turned their gravel playgrounds into fields of forest floor, soil and grasses, while three already had that setting. Three others kept their existing gravel playground. One month after the changes were made, scientists collected samples of skin, blood and feces from the children. In just a few weeks, microbiota of the children at the renovated daycare centers quickly shifted to become more like the microbiomes of children that attended centers that already had more natural play surfaces. The children at the renovated daycare centers developed a higher ratio of the anti-inflammatory proteins to pro-inflammatory proteins in their blood, indicating that their immune systems were in better shape.

Hard Knocks

Low-Carbon Cement Offsets Climate Change



The manufacture of cement creates up to 8 percent of the total global carbon dioxide generated by humans, according to the Chatham House, a London-based think tank. Four billion tons of cement are produced every year, but that figure is expected to rise to 5 billion tons in the next 30 years. The emissions result from the fossil fuels used to create heat for cement formation, as well as the chemical process in a kiln that transforms limestone into clinker, which is then ground and combined with other materials to make cement. In

2018, the Global Cement and Concrete Association, which represents about 30 percent of worldwide production, issued the industry's first sustainability guidelines, a set of key measurements such as emissions and water usage intended to track performance improvements and make them transparent.

A variety of approaches are being explored and implemented to lower these worrisome carbon emissions. For example, CarbonCure, in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, stores carbon dioxide captured from other industrial processes in concrete through mineralization, rather than releasing it into the atmosphere as a byproduct. Solidia, in Piscataway, New Jersey, uses a chemical process licensed from Rutgers University that has cut 30 percent of the carbon dioxide usually released in making cement. It uses more clay and less limestone and heat than typical processes.



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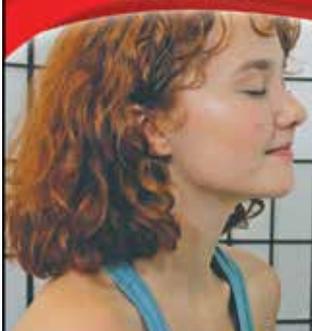
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Live a Heart-Healthy Lifestyle

Integrative Cardiologists on Preventing Heart Disease

by Ronica O'Hara



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Cardiology has made mind-boggling advances in efficiently repairing everything from clogged arteries to floppy mitral valves and even replacing the entire failing heart itself. Yet the stubborn fact remains that almost half of all Americans suffer from cardiovascular disease, killing one in four of us, and those numbers are rising. Research shows that simple lifestyle changes can prevent 80 percent of these deaths, but many cardiologists typically reach for a prescription pad rather than explore diet, exercise and other prevention options with their patients.

“Medicine can be life-saving, but optimal heart health can’t come from medicine alone,” says cardiologist Stephen Devries, co-author of *Integrative Cardiology*. “There is a common belief among many physicians that patients generally don’t want to make lifestyle changes—an assumption that is often dead wrong and refuted by surveys of patients that show that the majority are looking to do exactly that.”

Los Angeles restaurateur and musician Gianni Neiviller, 54, is such a case. When he found holistic cardiologist Cynthia Taik three years ago, he had already endured four major surgeries for gut illnesses; was suffering from obesity, high blood pressure, anxiety

and depression; and was heavily abusing alcohol and marijuana. Taik ordered tests that uncovered sleep apnea, and she encouraged him to turn to an all-organic diet, take vitamin and mineral supplements, exercise and practice mindfulness and meditation.

“At first it was all fairly hard, but as I started losing the pounds, my mind became more clear, and little by little, it all started getting a bit easier,” Neiviller says. He lost 86 pounds within a year, got sober and ceased taking blood pressure medication and using a sleep apnea machine. He now walks six miles a day; practices a

hybrid regimen of qigong, yoga and meditation; and is switching to a holistic health career. “When people try to push my buttons, they rarely succeed these days,” he smiles.

Rebounding into vibrant health is what integrative cardiologists like Devries and Thaik strive for. Also known as preventive or holistic cardiologists, they focus on guiding patients to change long-held, harmful, physical and emotional practices. Although they are comparatively few in number—probably no more than 100 nationally—these doctors are vocal and influential, imparting valuable advice about preventing and reversing heart disease through daily lifestyle choices.

Heart-Happy Eating

Substantial research affirms that one major line of defense against heart disease is what we put into our mouths every day, yet only 8 percent of cardiologists consider themselves capable to give nutritional advice, a survey showed. To counter that, Devries co-founded the Gaples Institute, a Naperville, Illinois, nonprofit that offers free nutritional training online to the public and nutritional accreditation for medical clinicians. Devries, who trained at Dr. Andrew Weil’s Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona, lectures internationally and recently authored *What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About Cholesterol*. “People have a lot more power over their heart health than they realize,” he says.

According to Devries, the name of a diet is not as important as the anti-inflammatory foods it should contain, such as “a wide variety of vegetables and fruit, plenty of beans, whole grains in place of refined, minimizing or eliminating meat (especially processed meat like bacon and sausage), minimizing added sugar (especially from sugar-sweetened beverages) and using small amounts of the most healthful oils, like extra-virgin olive oil.” And the evidence is increasing, he says, of “minimizing or eliminating animal products and getting most or all of your protein from high-quality plant sources like beans, tofu, whole grains and nuts. Fish is one exception for which there is good evidence.”

He’s backed up by a November 2020

study of 220,000 adults published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*. It concludes that those with diets high in red and processed meat, refined grains and sugary beverages had a 46 percent higher risk of heart disease and a 28 percent higher risk of stroke compared to those consuming anti-inflammatory diets rich in green and yellow vegetables, whole grains, coffee and tea.

Devries suggests that gradual, incremental changes to the diet may be easier than abrupt and dramatic choices. For example, he might recommend switching from sugary soda to flavored seltzer first, then trying lemon water and black tea with milk before opting for plain, green tea. Sipping a cup of green tea at least every other day reduces the risk of heart attacks and dying of heart disease by one-fifth, Chinese researchers report in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*.

Powerful Supplements

As a young cardiologist frustrated by the revolving-door nature of his patients, Stephen Sinatra came upon an obscure 1982 study of coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) that he realized could have saved the life of a favorite patient. This catalyzed his intensive studies into nutrition and bioenergetics that produced 17 books, including the bestselling *Reverse Heart Disease Now* and *The Sinatra Solution*. He helped formulate the new field of metabolic cardiology that proposes preventing and treating cardiovascular disease with nutraceuticals to improve energy production in heart cells.

In addition to suggesting a high-potency, multi-nutrient, fish oil, magnesium and vitamin C for prevention, he recommends four key nutrients that produce and use adenosine triphosphate (ATP), the body’s basic cellular fuel:

♥ **CoQ10** is synthesized in the body, but declines with age and statin use. It protects from the free radical damage linked to inflammation. Dosage: 90 to 250 milligrams (mg) daily for prevention, 180 to 360 mg for hypertension and 300 to 600 mg for heart failure.

♥ **L-carnitine** ferries fatty acids to be oxidized to make ATP and moves toxic

metabolites out of heart cells. Dosage: 1,000 to 1,500 mg in divided doses to prevent deficiency and up to 3,000 mg for heart disease.

♥ **Magnesium**, required in all reactions involving ATP, is depleted by some gastrointestinal medications and diuretics. Dosage: at least 400 mg.

♥ **D-ribose** is a naturally occurring sugar derivative of ATP that hastens energy regeneration. Dosage: five to seven grams (gm) daily as a preventive, seven to 10 gm daily for heart failure.

In other nutrient news, adults that took glucosamine/chondroitin every day for a year or longer had a 65 percent reduction in cardiovascular-related deaths, reports West Virginia University researchers that analyzed 16 years of data from 16,686 adults.

Smart Testing

Preventive cardiologist Joel Kahn, the author of *Your Whole Heart Solution* and *The Plant-Based Solution*, says that lab tests typically prescribed by cardiologists and other doctors are inadequate. “Standard lab tests have not changed in 30 to 40 years, but science has,” he says. “For example, inflammation is now understood to be a fundamental process for most chronic diseases like heart disease and cancer. A simple lab test, hs-CRP, is available to measure inflammation. Very few doctors add this to their panel. When it is high, it leads to a search for why there is inflammation and diet, lifestyle and other measures to resolve it.”

After 25 years as a cardiologist treating heart-attack emergencies, Kahn, who is vegan, went back to college to study preventive cardiology and set up the Kahn Center for Cardiac Longevity, in Bingham Farms, Michigan, which focuses on dietary counseling and preventive screenings. His list of “must have” tests includes:

♥ **Advanced cholesterol panel** for a breakdown of LDL-cholesterol particle number and size, which is highly predictive of cardiovascular problems.

♥ **Lipoprotein(a) cholesterol** to detect a

risk-elevating genetic form of cholesterol that's present in about 20 percent of those tested.

♥ **High-sensitivity C-reactive protein (hsCRP)** to identify inflammation of blood vessels.

♥ **Hemoglobin A1c (HbA1C)** to obtain the three-month measure of sugar in hemoglobin, a marker of both diabetes and heart disease.

♥ **Vitamin D** to identify deficiencies linked to a higher risk of hypertension, heart failure, angina and heart attacks.

Move It or Lose It

The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (brisk walking, water aerobics, gardening, tennis, dancing) or 75 minutes of vigorous activity (running, jumping, swimming laps), as well as muscle-strengthening activity (weights) at least two days a week.

Only 20 percent of adults exercise for the full 150 minutes per week, which may be why physical inactivity is a major factor in an estimated one-third of heart disease deaths. "I like to frame it as 'being active,' because exercise sounds onerous," Devries says. "Even a small amount of activity goes a long way—walking at a gentle pace 30 minutes a day confers very significant benefits. Up to a point, more can be better, but only for some people, and only to a point."

Even moving a few minutes daily can add up. Doing 12-minute bursts of vigorous exercise favorably impacts 80 percent of the metabolites that govern such functions as oxidative stress, inflammation and vascular reactivity, reports a new study in *Circulation*. Just one hour a week of strength training significantly lowers the risk of heart attack, stroke and heart disease death, another study found. And simply holding thigh and calf stretches for 45 seconds for a total of five minutes daily improved arterial blood flow, reports a study in the *Journal of Physiology*.

The Emotional Heart

As a child in Myanmar, Thaik witnessed hands-on healing at a clinic she visited with her physician mother, but holistic care only entered her life after 20 years of practice as a frustrated cardiologist, when she was laid low by severe anemia that required transfusions and surgery. Today, the Harvard-trained cardiologist is the author of *Your Vibrant Heart* and founder of the Holistic Heart Healing Center, in Los Angeles, which integrates the medical model with lifestyle strategies and approaches like homeopathy and acupuncture.

"I very much believe that we are both physical beings and energetic or spiritual beings. Our physical makeup is closely intertwined with our mental and emotional makeup," Thaik says. She counsels patients to practice the following:

♥ **Mindfulness.** "A mentor of mine, (life coach) Mary Morrissey, taught me to avoid the three Cs—complaining, comparing or criticizing. If you attempt to do this for even an hour, you will find that it is actually a hard task. Practicing this allows us to be acutely mindful of our thoughts."

♥ **Gratitude.** "I wake up every morning and before my feet hit the floor, I make this statement five times and fill in five different answers: 'I am so happy and grateful now that ...'"

♥ **Releasing.** "I believe the most important ingredient to health and healing is the ability to release—to forgive self and others, to let go and abandon all of our negative thoughts, our self-limiting beliefs, our notions of right and wrong, our feelings of injustice and being wronged."

She advises, "When we can abandon all these beliefs and allow ourselves to float or drift unimpeded—imagine yourself on a tube in a lazy river—that is when healing within our bodies begins, when our parameters of stress and the hormones and neurotransmitters associated with stress start to down-regulate, and we can literally feel a wave of relaxation passing through our bodies. This will lower our heart rate, blood pressure, adrenaline and cortisol levels, thereby mitigating our risk of a heart attack or stroke."

Ronica O'Hara, a natural health writer, can be contacted at OHaraRonica@gmail.com.

More Heart-Healthy Strategies

TAKE LONG SOAKS. Middle-aged Japanese adults that took a daily bath in warm or hot water had a 28 percent lower risk of cardiovascular disease and a 26 percent lower risk of stroke than people that didn't bathe in the tub more than twice a week, concludes a study in the journal *Heart*.

OUTDO EACH OTHER. People that competed with each other to walk more steps ended up walking about 100 miles more in nine months than people that simply walked on their own, reports the *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

CONSIDER CANNABIDIOL. This non-psychoactive form of cannabis has been shown in small lab studies to lower inflammation and ease arrhythmia. "CBD can help to reduce stress, lower blood pressure, improve anxiety and depression, reduce inflammation, improve glucose regulation, diminish pain and thereby lower our adrenergic (fight-or-flight) tone," says holistic cardiologist Cynthia Thaik.

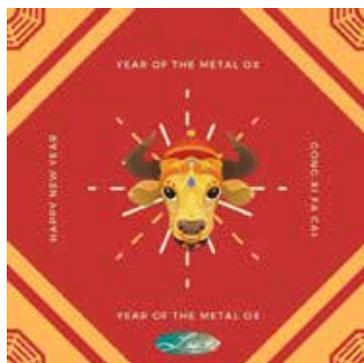
BRUSH A LOT. In a 10-year Korean study, people that brushed their teeth three or more times a day had a 10 percent lower risk of atrial fibrillation and a 12 percent lower risk of heart failure.

SIDESTEP POLLUTION. Stay away from traffic and industrial areas when exercising. Even a few hours of exposure to the ultrafine particles generated by emissions may potentially trigger a nonfatal heart attack, reports research in *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

Welcoming Chinese New Year

by Lois Kramer-Perez

Chinese New Year, on February 12, is a great way to reboot for the new year. The lunar new year is set by the cycles of the moon and can fall anywhere between mid-January to mid-February. Here is a list of things to ensure creating the optimal energy for a happy, healthy and fortunate year by are setting an intention for the energy we want to enjoy.



or any activity to set our intention for the year to come. Prepare a wealth vase as part of the intention to prosper.

■ Open the doors and windows at midnight to let out 2020 and welcome 2021. Bang some pots or cymbals, or light some firecrackers.

On New Year's Day

■ The first words we speak should be sweet and filled with love, to ensure each day will be such. No crying or reprimanding children today. Do not speak of the past, death or use negative language. It is the day to be joyful and happy!

■ The first thing we eat should be sweet, to ensure we will have only sweetness filling up all days of the new year. Mandarin oranges are a traditional choice.

■ Wear new clothes and include something red; whether the color red it is seen or unseen, it is still auspicious. Don't wash hair on New Year's Day, as it is said to wash our luck away.

■ Fill red envelopes with money to give friends and family to activate prosperity for the year. Combinations of 88 signify double prosperity.

■ All of the preparation has been completed, so there are no chores to be done on New Year's Day. This ensures we will not be burdened with hard work this year. We will prosper and everything will be joyful, smooth and easy.



Lois Kramer-Perez, CHt., is a certified feng shui, NLP, NAP practitioner. She offers a free 10-minute tune up at LoisKramerPerez.com. See ad,

page 25.

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Lifestyle Emphasis, Targeted Fitness

“It’s been fascinating to watch clients come in extremely anxious about their high blood pressure number. A few months after consistent training and maintaining a healthier diet, there is a significant change within the body,” says Los Angeles fitness trainer Dominic Kennedy, creator of the new wellness app *Dominic Effect*. Kennedy recommends beginning with a brisk walk outside or on the treadmill and according to comfort level, bumping up the time each day. He underscores weights for those ready for strength training. “For many of my clients with high blood pressure, I superset their exercises so their heart rate is pumping. You will be surprised how aerobic weight training can be.”

Wolfson testifies to the benefits of HIIT, which alternates short periods of intense aerobic exercise with less intense recovery periods. “I recommend my patients get 30 minutes of HIIT four to five times per week. The design of a HIIT program must meet the person where they are at in their level of fitness. Whatever physical activity you choose, try to do it outside,” he says. “This way, we get the synergistic benefits of exercise and sunshine to lower your blood pressure. I’ve always told people that there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes.”

Halting Hypertension

Exercises to Lower High Blood Pressure

by Marlaina Donato

An estimated 75 million American adults have blood pressure high enough to require management, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For people with hypertension, tempering stress responses and limiting consumption of sodium, caffeine, alcohol and sugar can make a difference. Fortifying these lifestyle changes with aerobic exercise, yoga and high-intensity interval training (HIIT) can also help prevent and manage worrisome blood pressure readings.

Integrative cardiologist Jack Wolfson, in Paradise Valley, Arizona, points out that the development of hypertension is multicausal. “We are not genetically programmed to develop high blood pressure. Studies over the last 50 years confirm that physically active people have a lower risk of developing high blood pressure. For those with high blood pressure or people with a condition known as pre-hypertension, there is a blood pressure-lowering effect of physical activity.”

Aside from the value of strength training, walking, cycling and jogging, the Mayo Clinic recommends everyday movement in the form of household chores such as raking leaves, tending a garden or pushing a lawnmower. Cross-country skiing, skating and swimming also pack an aerobic punch. Experts agree that an active lifestyle strengthens the heart, demanding less systemic effort to pump blood, and healthier blood pressure is a result.

Yoga for Stress Management

Wolfson is also an advocate of yoga for its parasympathetic nervous system support. Research published in *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* in 2018 shows that yoga, breathwork and stretching all positively impact blood pressure, with the greatest improvements evident from yoga and deep breathing.

“Yoga, no matter the type, is known to promote a sense of calm in the body and mind. A regular practice will help to reduce the effects that stress causes. It may or may not be the only step necessary,” says New York City yoga instructor Gail Grossman, author of *Restorative Yoga for Life*. She emphasizes personal preferences



Relationships in the Time of COVID-19

by Marina Maurino

CCOVID-19 is forcing many changes, but we can learn to flow with them to create peace in ourselves and with others by making different choices. We can choose to deeply feel the truth of our feelings, accept what is and let go—just surrender. This is a very important time to know that we have a choice in how we perceive what is happening and how we choose to live through it.

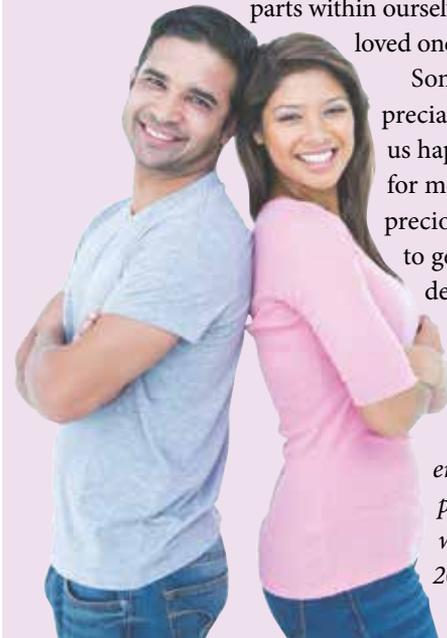
We can get stuck in fear or we can be centered and at peace. With the isolation and challenges of the pandemic, we have all had bouts of stress. Yet, it is an extraordinary opportunity to go within as an individual and in our personal and family/friend relationships, even as we may be struggling with health, finances and fear.

We can choose to look for the proverbial silver lining. It may be an outcome of being forced into this isolation that we learn about deep intimacy, about soul connection, about what is really important to us, about how important our dear ones are to us and about what values we truly cherish. If we generally live very busy lives, we can end up tired and disconnected, offering little more than merely cohabitating with our family rather than truly cherishing and enjoying our time together.

Right now, each of us has the choice to see things differently. We can use this time to enhance our connection and enrich our time spent together, finding the deeper parts within ourselves and sharing them with our partner or loved ones. We can learn to be more vulnerable.

Some people are already finding a deeper appreciation and respect for each other that makes us happy and healthy. For others, this possibility for more intimacy may be threatening. Life is precious and all too short. Take the opportunity to get to know the people we are with in a much deeper way. Ask intimate questions that we've never asked before. Don't forget that intimacy is about who we really are.

Marina Maurino is a psycho-spiritual teacher/therapist who integrates psychology, spiritual principles and an energy-based perspective with her clients. For more information, call 201-967-9377 or visit ReflectingTruth.com.



and staying within your comfort zone, noting, "If you feel stressed because it's difficult, it won't benefit you. I personally think restorative yoga, breathwork and meditation are the best practices for high blood pressure."

For Grossman, there is no such thing as too much yoga, but she recommends not getting overwhelmed with the commitment and having professional guidance for pranayama, or breathwork. "Do what you can. A practice does not have to be a full class, especially in restorative yoga. If you can commit to 20 minutes a day, you will see results, if you are consistent."

Kennedy underscores that investment pays off. "Many clients have come to me months later when they are in a more normal range and say, 'We wish we would have started this sooner in life,' but it's never too late to start a fitness program. A good personal trainer or coach will help you do it in a safe way and get your body back in shape and healthy."

Marlaina Donato is an author and recording artist. Connect at AutumnEmbersMusic.com.



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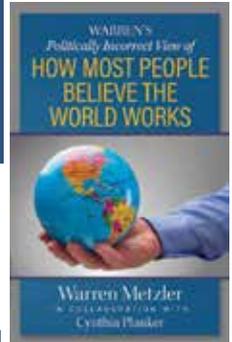
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Heartfelt Eating

Best Foods for a Heart-Healthy Diet

by April Thompson

Hypertension affects nearly half of all Americans, increasing the risk for heart disease and stroke, the leading cause of death. We can help mitigate that risk and have a healthy “change of heart” by revamping our diets.



While food fads are constantly changing, the basics of a heart-healthy diet have not, says Cheryl Strachan, a registered dietitian in Calgary, Canada, and founder of *SweetSpotNutrition.ca*. Strachan notes the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet has been used to help lower blood pressure and with other heart disease risk factors since its development in the 1990s. The DASH diet is rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, beans and low-fat dairy foods. While it includes lean meat, fish and poultry, it limits sugary foods and fatty meats.

The Mediterranean diet, says Strachan, is another proven regimen for heart health, citing a five-year Spanish study in *The New England Journal of Medicine* that found the incidence of cardiovascular events was 30 percent lower among participants on this diet, supplemented with extra-virgin olive oil or nuts, compared to those assigned a reduced-fat diet.

A Mediterranean diet doesn't necessarily mean eating dishes specific to that region. “It's the type of foods that matters: a largely plant-based diet focused on whole grains such as the bulgur in tabouli, legumes, nuts, seeds, olive oil and some animal products like fish, poultry and dairy,” says Strachan.

Michael Greger, a Seattle physician and author of the bestseller *How Not to Die*, disagrees that meat-based proteins have a place in a heart-healthy diet. “Only one way of eating has ever been proven to reverse heart disease in the majority of patients: a diet centered around whole-plant foods,” says Greger, adding that the most critical risk factor is elevated LDL cholesterol. “To drastically reduce LDL cholesterol levels, we need to drastically reduce our intake of trans fat, which comes from processed foods and naturally from meat and dairy; saturated fat, found mainly in animal products and junk foods; and playing a lesser role, dietary cholesterol, found exclusively in animal-derived foods, especially eggs.”

Michelle Routhenstein, a preventive cardiology dietitian and owner of Entirely Nourished, a nutrition counseling practice in New York City, likes to meet clients where they are rather than trying to force a drastic switch they can't maintain. “Often, people get very broad advice, like ‘Adopt a

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plant-based diet,' but when it comes to the heart, you have to find a way of eating you can commit to long term. I start by asking what foods bring them joy, as well as their food dislikes, history and culture.”

For Routhenstein, an optimal diet for the heart includes a healthy balance of good fats, lean protein and the complex carbs that are important sources of fiber. “Research has shown that every additional 10 grams of fiber per day can decrease the risk of coronary heart disease by as much as 25 percent,” by helping the body remove excess cholesterol, says the dietitian and author of *The Truly Easy Heart-Healthy Cookbook: Fuss-Free, Flavorful, Low-Sodium Meals*. While fatty foods are sometimes scapegoated for poor health, unsaturated fats are “really good for blood vessel health,” she adds.

Nutrients for Heart Health

Potassium is a key mineral for heart health, as it can help the body remove excess sodium, lower blood pressure and improve blood flow and blood vessel health. Yet research shows less than 2 percent of Americans get enough. Beans, sweet potatoes, lentils, beets and avocados are among many potassium-rich foods with multiple heart benefits.

There is a growing awareness of the importance of inflammation-fighting omega-3 fatty acids, particularly in fish like wild salmon, arctic char and sardines. Routhenstein also advocates omega-9 fatty acids such as in tahini and avocado. Omega-9s have been shown to help increase HDL “good” cholesterol and decrease LDL “bad” cholesterol while protecting blood vessel health.

Heart attacks often seem to occur suddenly simply because the damage happens gradually and quietly, warns Routhenstein. “Heart disease is progressive, so over time a poor lifestyle and diet can damage blood vessels and accelerate hardening of the arteries that lead to heart attacks,” she warns. “Some damage may not be entirely reversible, but it’s never too late to optimize heart functioning.”

Connect with Washington, D.C., freelance writer April Thompson at AprilWrites.com.

Servings for the Heart

Quinoa, Edamame and Carrot Salad with Ginger-Sesame Dressing

Edamame are whole, young, green soybeans that are mildly grassy in flavor. They have about five times the folate—a highly important cardiovascular nutrient—of mature soybeans. Edamame’s flavors pair well with fluffy quinoa, crunchy cabbage and carrot slaw, and combine seamlessly with the spicy, toasty notes of the ginger-sesame dressing.

YIELD: 2 SERVINGS

½ cup quinoa
1 cup water
1 cup edamame, fully cooked and chilled
2 Tbsp ginger-sesame dressing
1 cup shredded carrots
2 cups shredded cabbage



courtesy of Laura Flippen

In a small pot, bring the quinoa and water to a boil. Lower the heat to low, cover and simmer for 8 minutes.

Add the edamame to the pot and cook for an additional four minutes, until the water in the quinoa pot has been absorbed and the edamame is tender.

In a medium-size bowl, combine the quinoa and edamame with the dressing, shredded carrots and shredded cabbage and serve.

Tip: There are three ways to make this easier: batch-cook the quinoa; thaw, cook and shell the edamame and keep overnight in the refrigerator; and buy prepackaged slaw. Just assemble.

Ginger-Sesame Dressing

Typical sesame dressing is high in sodium from the soy sauce; even the low-sodium varieties are high in salt. This dressing is well-balanced, low in sodium and adds flair to just about any dish. Toasted sesame oil is aromatically pleasing and adds immediate flavor that is balanced by tangy rice vinegar, zesty ginger and crunchy sesame seeds.

2 Tbsp toasted sesame oil
2 tsp rice vinegar
2 tsp fresh grated ginger
2 tsp unsalted sesame seeds

In a small bowl, mix the sesame oil, rice vinegar, ginger and sesame seeds until well combined. Store in the refrigerator in an airtight container for up to one week.

Flavor tip: For added heat, add ½ teaspoon of hot sauce and 1 teaspoon of lime juice to balance it out.

VEGGIE TRICKS

How to Get Kids to Eat Better

by Ronica O'Hara

It's the rare parent that doesn't have to plead and plot to get a child to eat vegetables. That's not surprising; almost no one is born with a natural hankering for broccoli, and being wary of strange new foods may be hardwired in us so we can survive as a species. Happily, clever workarounds can help move a child past exclaiming, "Yuck!" as these parenting bloggers, nutritionists and other grown-ups have learned in the veggies-are-good-for-you trenches.

SERVE SMOOTHIES. "The combinations are endless. Pack it full of spinach, kale, frozen zucchini or cauliflower. Then add a frozen banana or other fruit, plus your milk of choice (like cashew milk) then blend. Bam! You have a naturally sweetened, veggie-filled, delicious drink for your child, and they don't even know they're drinking their vegetables," writes Emily Lesh, at *ExperiencedMommy.com*.

USE SPRINKLES. "Everyone loves sprinkles! You can use chia seeds, microplaned broccoli head, flaxseed, grated carrots or even frozen yogurt dots. It transforms the food into something much more exciting," writes Danielle Zold, at *PickyEatingDietitian.com*.

GET THEM COOKING. "My kids love to help in the kitchen, and I have found that they are much more likely to try foods that they have helped to cook. We made our cranberries from scratch for Thanksgiving. My kids loved watching the cranberries boil and pop in the pot and seeing them change colors as they cooked. When dinnertime came, they were excited to try the cranberries, and my daughter ended up loving them!" writes Sarah Miller, at *HomeSchooling4Him.com*.

ROTATE FAMILY CHOICES. "Everyone in the family gets to choose one meal on one night of the

week. We all commit to eating whatever the family member has chosen. This has helped our kids to try meals that aren't on their favorite list, as they know that they'll get their turn to choose soon," writes Sophia Nomicos, at *MasAndPas.com*.

TEMPT THEM. "When I'm making dinner, I like to have carrots or cucumbers available on the counter. They always come in to try to get snacks and if they see those, they will 'sneak them away' to eat them, since I tell them no more snacks or food til dinner," writes Heather Hoke, at *EmbracingChaosWithLove.com*.

REWARD MULTIPLE ATTEMPTS. "Just because a kid hates a veggie the first 10 times you offer it doesn't mean they'll hate it forever. I try to make it fun by having kids track veggies they've tried and the number of times they've tried them with stickers on a veggie discovery table, which means even foods they dislike feel rewarding to try," writes Jess Dang, at *CookSmarts.com*.

BE SNEAKY. "Take something kids already like and make it with healthier ingredients. For example, if your kid loves meatballs, start by making them homemade, then adding in healthy things like frozen chopped spinach. I'll grate zucchini and carrots and put them in about any pasta, meatloaf, burgers. I used to think sneaking in veggies was a bad thing, but honestly, it's been great for our family," writes Stephanie Rapone, at *PantryToPlate.net*.



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TALK UP THE BENEFITS. “I have found that when my son doesn’t want to eat something, he is much more likely to eat it if I tell him its benefits. For example, I told him, ‘When you eat carrots, they make your eyes stronger, and they help you see in the dark.’ He loves to eat carrots now. He says, ‘Now I will be able to see in the dark!’ I am learning a lot this way, too. We Google the benefits of food at least once a day,” writes Elizabeth Manly, at *DiscoveryPlayShop.com*.

REINFORCE. “Explain that when a child feels good, she can attribute it to eating healthy. For example, if we managed to get our daughter to eat an apple—her favorite fruit that she now eats every day—I would say, ‘Wow, you sure ran around a lot at the playground. That apple you ate gave you a lot of energy,’” writes Kirsten Schuder, author of *Schooling Your Kids Through a Pandemic*.

Ronica O’Hara, a natural health writer, can be contacted at *OHaraRonica@gmail.com*.

What the Research Shows

BE PERSISTENT. Don’t give up too soon. Researchers have found that it can take toddlers five to 10 times in tasting a new food before enjoying it; and for 3-to-4-year-olds, up to 15 trials.

PUTTING ON AN APRON HELPS. A study of Canadian fifth-graders in 151 schools found that those that helped with meal prep and cooking were more likely to eat vegetables and fruit.

GIVING KIDS A CHOICE WORKS. Australian kids that were offered a choice of broccoli, cauliflower or green beans for five weeks ate twice as many veggies as children offered only one vegetable.

THINKING A FOOD IS RARE MAKES IT SPECIAL. In a recent study, 5-year-olds that were told there weren’t many more carrots than were on a plate ate 50 percent more carrots; 96 percent of those kids rated the carrots as yummy, compared to 67 percent in a no-limit carrot control group.

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Saying 'I Do' to the Planet

Green Weddings Embrace Sustainability

by Sandra Yeyati

From advising couples about Earth-friendly menus to reducing and reusing plastic in her business operations, wedding planner Erica Jill Razze, of Capiche Custom Events, in Wilmington, Delaware, is dedicated to environmentalism. When designing her own wedding last year, she wanted it to serve as a portfolio example of sustainability. "Our parents are a little more traditional, so there were certain aspects that we tried to respect and uphold for them, while still finding our happy place from an environmental standpoint," she says.

Although no wedding can be totally zero waste, there are always greener options, starting with the invitations. The most eco-friendly choice is email, which Razze's parents declined to use, so she opted for the next best thing: biodegradable, non-toxic paper directly benefitting women in India. In lieu of a response card, which would have required more paper and another mailing, she created a website for RSVPs. Bridal shower invitations were printed on botanical paper embedded with seeds. Invitees that followed the planting instructions were delighted to welcome blooming flowers in their yards.

"Find a venue that already fits your theme, so that you're not trying to transform a space or shipping in plastic decorations that add to the carbon footprint and end up in landfills," says Razze, who prefers horticultural centers or outdoors spaces. "The beauty and simplicity of what's around you is what makes it so wonderful," she says. "Don't try to turn a ballroom into a forest and vice versa."

Flown-in, farmed flowers are a big no-no. "The transportation is a huge carbon footprint. If they're growing one particular flower, they're treated with pesticides," Razze says. Sustainable alternatives are locally harvested, organic wildflowers; dried flowers that haven't been sprayed or painted with toxic chemicals; silk blooms; and rented potted plants. Some local florists collect flowers after the event for composting. Heart-shaped confetti made of dried leaves is a clever swap that begins composting once it hits the ground.

Razze's vegan meal offered another planet-saving opportunity. While real stoneware and silverware gets expensive because it requires hiring staff, single-use plastics that are gold-decorated to simulate real china betray the Earth and believability. "You're not fooling anybody with that stuff," she says, recommending less costly alternatives like biodegradable bamboo and palm-leaf disposables. "Instead of fake-impress, show people something new. Thankfully, taking care of the environment has become trendy, so it's an easier sell."

Instead of wedding favors, most of which come from China and are wrapped in plastic, donate meals to people that don't have ac-



cess to food, advises Emily Raezer, director of weddings at Global Gourmet Catering (GGC), in San Francisco. "A lot of times, guests don't even take those favors home. Why not make a donation that's going to have a social impact?" GGC also donates all event leftovers to food banks in local communities.

As the first green-certified caterer in Northern California, GGC educates wedding clients about sustainability, helping them choose menu items that are in season, organic, locally sourced, sustainably farmed and drought-friendly. Raezer explains the reasoning behind these principles: "We don't want things traveling very far

and having CO₂ emissions. Growing things out of season costs the environment water and other resources, and some products are more drought-friendly—which explains choosing avocados over cucumbers. Sustainable fishing really impacts our oceans, so we won't source any fish that's on the Monterey Bay watchlist, and a lot of couples are cutting out red meat from their weddings because of the methane emissions.”

GGC goes to extraordinary lengths to minimize impacts caused by their events, including reclaiming and repurposing used vegetable oil for San Francisco's alternatively fueled vehicles; serving filtered tap water to avoid using plastic water bottles; opting for biodegradable and reusable utensils and decorations; recycling whenever possible; partnering with local farms to compost efficiently; and using non-toxic dishwasher detergents. For every event, they donate a portion of the proceeds to Terrapass for carbon offsets.

Despite all preparations, couples must be ready for the unexpected. When the COVID-19 shutdown hit last March, just two months before Razzo's May wedding, she decided to legally marry in a small gathering of fewer than 10 people and postponed her larger green reception for a year. “We want to celebrate with everybody,” she says. “In a year, it could be a vow renewal. How cool is that?”

Sandra Yeyati, J.D., is a professional writer. Reach her at SandraYeyati@gmail.com.

Earth-Friendly Engagement Rings

Among environmentally and socially conscious couples, traditional engagement rings purchased at Tiffany's that feature the largest diamond three month's pay will buy are not so cool when more ethical, sustainable and meaningful options are available. One goal is to use conflict-free or ethical diamonds that are not associated with civil wars, unfair pay, unsafe working conditions, human rights abuses and unsavory environmental practices. Earth-friendlier choices include rings inherited from family members or purchased at estate sales, as well as lab-generated gems and custom-designed, one-of-a-kind rings.

According to jewelry designer Amanda Jaron, of Naples, Florida, there's a trend in the younger, first-time wedding market toward alternative gems. “It might be a lab-created diamond like a moissanite, or what they call a salt-and-pepper diamond, which has many black and white inclusions [imperfections], giving the stone a speckled or smoky look.”

Gemstones and jewelry handed down by family members or acquired at an estate sale are also popular and represent the bulk of Jaron's creative work. “There's nothing more special than a gemstone that has two or three decades worth of life to tell,” she says. “I love being able to create fabulous, modern pieces that my clients can wear proudly. What's better than a sparkly treasure that also has sentimental value?”

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Elana is a violinist, sound healer and a certified reiki master. She has been healing people through sound for more than 25 years. Originally trained as a musician, her interest in healing was sparked by the observation that playing and teaching violin helped with her own health challenges. She is passionate about helping others on their journey towards wellness. Sessions are tailored to each person's goals and focused on deep relaxation and well-being.

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