

November 2010 Newsletter



Even if we may be looking at 25 inches of rain in the next 4 months, Tor Hassell (seen here on an afternoon run) would like to point out that with appropriate wet weather wear, no-one needs to let a Portland winter get in the way of daily exercise.

Out-running diabetes

November is officially National Diabetes Month, and therefore a sensible time to focus on type 2 diabetes, which is an increasingly popular disease in this country. The numbers are particularly impressive when we include the metabolic syndrome – ‘pre-diabetes’ or ‘insulin resistance’.

The term ‘metabolic syndrome’ describes a group of risk factors including high blood sugar, low HDL cholesterol, high triglycerides, high blood pressure, or a waistline measuring more than 35 inches for women and 40 inches for men. If you have at least three of these conditions, you have the metabolic syndrome and are looking at 3 – 10 times the normal risk of heart disease, stroke, dementia and other sources of misery. Ouch! Don’t let it happen to you!

Remember these three points:

1. Most cases of type 2 diabetes are the result of poor choices we make, not genetics.
2. Most of the medications we use to treat high blood sugar do not significantly reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke.
3. Health care costs for those with diabetes or the metabolic syndrome are 50 – 100% greater than those for the rest of the population.

The epidemic of diabetes and the metabolic syndrome appears to be caused by the usual suspects, including too little physical activity and too much food – especially refined carbohydrates like processed grains, sweet drinks, and products sweetened with sugar substitutes.

The Mediterranean diet and diabetes

In head-to-head trials against other dietary approaches, including low-fat and Atkins-style diets, the Mediterranean diets have been shown to be the most effective weapon against diabetes. For example, the PREDIMED-Reus study compared a prudent low-fat diet to Mediterranean-style diets and found a 50% reduction in the risk of diabetes in those using the Mediterranean diet.¹ Other studies have shown that those on Mediterranean-style diets have lower blood sugars and insulin levels than those using low-fat or Atkins approaches.² (Mediterranean diets have also shown the greatest risk reduction for heart disease, stroke, cancer and dementia. Nice side-effects, huh?)

Diabetes-beating strategies

If you already have type 2 diabetes, here are some ways you can minimize medications, and maybe even become an ‘ex-diabetic’!

- Exercise daily any way you can, like 30 – 60 minutes of brisk walking.
- Eat vegetables and whole fruit (not juice) with every meal including breakfast.

¹ Salas-Salvado, J. et al. Diabetes Care Oct 13 2010

² Shai, I et al. NEJM 2008;359:229-41

- Eat minimally-refined whole grains and beans that you have cooked yourself, and avoid refined carbohydrates like white rice, anything made with white flour, fruit juice, sweets, sweet drinks, and artificial sweeteners.
- Include some ‘good fat’ (like raw nuts, extra virgin olive oil, and avocado) and protein (like fish, eggs, and modest amounts of dairy) with every meal.
- Keep breads, potatoes, corn and rice (even brown rice) to a minimum, due to their very high starch load.
- Drink a small amount of alcohol, about ½ -1 drink daily. (A drink is 4-5 ounces of wine or 12 ounces of beer.)
- Enjoy your daily coffee and tea – they are associated with markedly lower rates of diabetes. (*Not*, however, with Starbucks-style trimmings like flavored syrups and sweetened white fluff.)
- If you are struggling with losing weight and have already tried the previous suggestions, cut your portions of everything except vegetables by 20%.

Good Food, Great Medicine

Ten Steps for Evidence-Based Weight Loss (Tuesday, December 14th, 6-8 pm)

Join Dr. Hassell for a discussion about food and exercise habits that will allow you to lose weight and keep it off for a lifetime. He will talk about why carrying too much weight around your middle is so significant, and why a whole food Mediterranean diet, healthy fats included, is an evidence-based approach for sustainable weight loss – and the benefits don’t stop there. Losing weight around your middle

- reduces your risk of dementia, stroke, joint disease, and some cancers,
- reduces your risk of heart disease,
- reverses or reduces insulin resistance, a major cause of diabetes,
- *and* just ten pounds of weight loss can lower your risk of developing high blood pressure by 65% and drop your blood pressure as much as a prescription drug!

The class will be held in Souther Auditorium at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center. To register, please call us at (503)291-1777.

The cookbook

Those of you monitoring our dizzying ascent in the Amazon best-seller ranks will have noticed that *Good Food, Great Medicine* is now at 48,717th.

A brief research update

Dr. Hassell’s esophagitis research project with the Providence Cancer Center will move ahead as soon as funding issues are resolved. We expect to be recruiting after the first of the year.

Health care reform

For anyone wanting to learn more about the health care reform controversy, we suggest you read both sides. For the **pro** side: www.acponline.org/advocacy/where_we_stand/access/new_hc_law.pdf and for the **con** position we recommend: www.ncpa.org/healthreform/ or go to www.cato.org/store and download *Bad Medicine* by Michael Tanner.

Upcoming Speaking Events

11/9/2010 – Good Food Great Medicine Series: Miles Hassell MD: *Preventing and Reversing Type 2 Diabetes and Insulin Resistance*. Providence St. Vincent Medical Center. To register, call 503.291.1777.

11/13/2010 – 9th Annual Providence Thoracic Oncology Program Symposium: Miles Hassell MD: *Integrative Medicine and the Patient with Lung Cancer*. Providence Portland Medical Center.

11/15/2010 – Family and Consumer Science Group: Miles Hassell MD: *Chocolate and Red Wine*. Providence St. Vincent Medical Center. *Members only*.

11/19/2010 – Pacific University, School of Physician Assistant Studies: Miles Hassell MD: Hillsboro, Oregon.

11/24/2010 – Providence Portland Medical Center, Internal Medicine Grand Rounds: Miles Hassell MD: *Preventing and Reversing Type 2 Diabetes*. Portland, Oregon.

12/14/2010 – Good Food Great Medicine Series: Miles Hassell MD: *10 Steps for Evidence-based Weight Loss: Holiday Food Strategies*. Providence St. Vincent Medical Center. To register, call 503.291.1777.

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good”

1 Thess. 5:21 (KJV)