

January 2011 Newsletter



On the plate in the photo above is an example of the role meat should play in a meal. The slices of grilled flatiron steak are sharing the plate with some of our favorite vegetables from *Good Food, Great Medicine* – Butternut Squash Purée (on page 144), roasted beets in vinaigrette (pages 125 and 95), roasted cauliflower (page 126), and broccoli, steamed until just tender and tossed in vinaigrette.

Sugar, white flour, and white rice are hazardous to your heart!

For reasons that are buried in history, culture, and marketing trends, animal fat has been associated with heart disease for a long time. The hubbub over saturated fat, in fact, has only served to distract attention from a gang of **really** bad boys – *refined carbohydrates*. This is a food group that includes sugar, white flour, and white rice. (This includes agave nectar, by the way. We prefer honey. See our newsletter from January 2010.)

Common examples of refined carbohydrates are most breads and baked goods, pasta, sweet drinks, sweetened fat-free yogurt, power bars, and just-add-milk breakfast cereals – from Cocoa Puffs to Kashi. (See page 14 in *Good Food, Great Medicine*, 2nd edition).

The effect of the demonization of saturated fat has been to push people towards low-fat, low-cholesterol foods in the fond belief that these foods are healthier. The trouble is, most of the low-fat, low-cholesterol food choices happen to be – you guessed it – processed and sweetened foods.

This month we'll give you a quick review of the data showing harm from refined carbohydrates, and compare it to the information about fat.

If you are someone who just wants the bottom line, here it is: sugar, white flour, white rice, and highly processed grains – including 'whole grain' cold breakfast cereals and many 'whole grain' breads – cause heart disease! The omnivorous whole-food high-fat Mediterranean diet has the best health outcomes of any diet studied so far. Simply by eating plenty of vegetables, whole fruit, beans, whole grains, good fats, fish, and modest amounts of animal proteins, you are reducing your risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and dementia.

For the evidence, read on.

Enough evidence to convict? Yes!

Solid evidence gathered from population studies demonstrates that a diet high in refined carbohydrates (often foods with a 'high glycemic index') is strongly associated with increased heart disease risk¹ as well as diabetes and at least some cancers. In prospective randomized studies, those eating a *high-carbohydrate* diet had increased markers for heart disease risk (such as blood cholesterol and blood sugar) compared to those eating a *high-fat* diet, with more dietary saturated fat and cholesterol.²

In another study, substituting saturated fat in the diet with refined carbohydrates was associated with a striking increase in heart disease risk.³

The evidence shows that animal fat, when part of a balanced omnivorous diet, does not cause heart disease. Historically, the Mediterranean diet – which includes meat – has been associated with the best health outcomes in both observational and prospective studies.

¹ Mentz, A. et al. Arch Intern Med 2009;169:659-669

² Shai, I et al. NEJM 2008;359:229-41

³ Jakobsen, MU et al. Am J Clin Nutr 2010

More recently there have been several analyses of the available diet studies, looking *only* at the possible correlation of meat/saturated fat and heart disease. One of these studies, reviewing the results from 350,000 patients studied for up to 23 years, **showed no association between saturated fat intake and heart disease.**⁴

And here's some even better news: Eating dairy fat (cheese and other milk products) has actually been associated with a *reduction* in heart disease risk.⁵ Other studies have given similar results. (Let us know if you'd like more references to review.)

Cautionary comments:

1. **Red meat:** There is reason to limit red meat to about 18 ounces (1 pound 2 ounces) weekly, as quantities above that level seem to be associated with more cases of some cancers (AICR 2007). Besides, if you are eating a lot of red meat, you are probably **not** eating enough vegetables, beans, fruits, unrefined grains and nuts. Meat should be more of a condiment, taking up no more than a quarter of your plate.
2. **Preserved (smoked, salted, cured) meats:** Meats such as ham, bacon, lunchmeats, and sausages are associated with more heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Avoid them.

Ready for some refined carbohydrate alternatives? Need some ideas? Check out some of these from *Good Food, Great Medicine*, 2nd edition:

- **Cold breakfast cereal:** make a batch of muesli or granola from the recipes on page 77.
- **More breakfast options:** read pages 72-81.
- **Rice:** try substituting brown rice for white rice. See pages 170-77 for tips and recipes. Better yet, substitute protein-rich quinoa (page 180).
- **Yogurt:** buy plain yogurt and sweeten with honey and fresh fruit. (See pages 78 and 97.)
- **Bread:** the coarser the grain, the better! (See page 16.) Or make your own from chapter 13.

Good Food, Great Medicine Class

Cancer Survivorship

Tuesday, February 22nd, 6-8 pm

Join Dr. Hassell for a discussion about evidence-based diet and exercise recommendations for reducing future cancer risk and achieving optimal

outcomes during cancer treatment. Hear answers to these common questions:

- Does cancer 'feed on sugar'?
- Should I be on a low-fat diet?
- Should I eat meat?
- Do flax seeds have anti-cancer benefits?
- Should I be eating soy products?
- Does the Mediterranean diet help with cancer?

He will also talk about nutritional supplements, tips for dealing with side effects of treatment, and tips for evaluating claims for 'cancer cures' you may come across on the internet or elsewhere.

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

For more about heart disease and how to prevent it (and even reverse it), check out chapter four in *Good Food, Great Medicine*.

www.goodfoodgreatmedicine.com.

KOIN Studio 6

Dr. Hassell is a guest on KOIN TV's Studio 6 on the first Monday of each month, discussing – this may surprise you – health. The topic January 3rd was "Simple ways to improve your health in the new year." His next appearance will be on February 7th. The program is from 4 – 5 pm.

Upcoming Speaking Events

1/20/2011 – Breast Cancer Tumor Board: Miles Hassell MD: *Breast Cancer Survivorship, and the Mediterranean Diet, including associations with Insulin Resistance.* Providence St. Vincent Medical Center.

1/24/2011 – Nutrition Elective: Miles Hassell MD: *Nutrition in the Primary Care Setting.* OHSU.

1/25/2011 – Southwest Family Physicians: Miles Hassell MD: *Insulin Resistance: It's Much, Much More Than Diabetes – And it is Reversible!* Tigard, Oregon.

2/11/2011 – CAPRI: Miles Hassell MD: *Ten Steps for Preventing and Reversing Heart Disease.* Bremerton, Washington.

2/22/2011 – Good Food Great Medicine Series: Miles Hassell MD: *Cancer Survivorship* (See this page.)

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good"

1 Thess. 5:21(KJV)

⁴ Siri-Tarino, P et al. Am J Clin Nutr 2010 doi:10.3945

⁵ Warensjo, E et al. Am J Clin Nutr 2010;92:194-202