

February 2016 Newsletter



Dr. Hassell is talking about the benefits of salmon and other oil-rich fish during a class for the One Year Health Transformation Program. His sister Mea has just whipped up some Salmon Cakes (page 227), a recipe that you should seriously consider offering to your heart this Valentine's Day.

It's February, and your heart wants to know how committed you are to the relationship

Well, how committed are you? When you've lived your whole life with the same heart, it's easy to take it for granted. However, like any significant relationship, it needs to be nourished every day. You need to know what your heart likes, and then do it. Remember, if your heart's feeling unhappy, you probably are, too. If you're wondering whether your relationship with your heart needs some attention, here is a simple test you can do at home: first, stand up straight. Now look down at your feet. Can you see your toes? If you can't, you have reason to be concerned: excess waistline is the single most serious indicator of health problems for your heart. Here is a list of some of them:

- more insulin resistance and high blood sugar (which can lead to type 2 diabetes)
- high blood pressure
- high-risk cholesterol patterns (small dense LDL and low HDL)
- atrial fibrillation (heart arrhythmia)
- fatty liver
- increased inflammation (common risk factor for almost all degenerative disease)
- higher risk of dying of any cause

These problems are compounded by a significantly higher risk of stroke, heart attacks, cancer, dementia, joint breakdown, acid reflux, sleep apnea, depression, and so on. A sobering list, but the good news is that we can reverse (or substantially reduce) all of these by applying some practical lifestyle medicine.

Suggestions to improve the relationship between your heart and your waistline

1. **Commit to a whole food Mediterranean diet approach that has been proven to maintain a healthy heart and improve overall health while reducing the waist.** THIS IS AN IMPORTANT POINT. It is true that excess weight around your middle indicates serious health risks, but any weight loss program *must* be based on principles known to improve overall health – like those seen in head-to-head Mediterranean diet studies. (For an overview of these principles and some high-quality diet study data, see pages 1–19 in *Good Food, Great Medicine* [3rd edition].)
2. **Avoid short-term solutions.** Rapid weight loss can be achieved through countless ways, but a diet plan should be sustainable. Your heart deserves the best long-term solution, not dietary ping-pong. The healthiest overall eating pattern studied to date (Mediterranean) is also the most unrestricted and wide-ranging, making it easy to follow for a lifetime. Why choose another option, even if it produces faster weight loss?
3. **Commit to physical activity and sleep every day!** These essential nutrients are underrated and too easy to neglect. Daily exercise and adequate sleep are crucial components of heart health.

Risk reduction resources for your heart

- Read the first 126 pages of *Good Food, Great Medicine*, especially the 14-step Risk Reduction Action Plan starting on page 69.
- Start with the handout *An Evidence-based Guide to Successful Waist Loss and Preventing or Reversing Insulin Resistance and Type 2 Diabetes* if you're short on time. (goodfoodgreatmedicine.com – click on the *resources* tab.)
- Register for the April *Good Food, Great Medicine* class series. (See next page for details.)
- Schedule an individual consultation with Dr. Hassell to help clarify your approach to specific lifestyle choices, especially for complex medical issues.
- Sign up for a one-year health transformation program. This twelve-month intensive doctor-patient partnership is customized to your specific health situation.

Valentine's Day treats

A dozen sweet, juicy Honeycrisp apples nestled in a heart-shaped box? A fresh bouquet of long-stemmed asparagus? Nice ideas, but they're not chocolate, and this is Heart Month: *everybody* knows that chocolate is associated with less heart disease. (Make it at least 72% cocoa content – see page 38 of *Good Food, Great Medicine*.) For example, there's the intensely delicious *Chocolate Almond Bites* (page 276), featured in last February's newsletter. Another heart-friendly favorite is the following recipe. Homemade treats like these convey love so much more eloquently than store-bought candy – although still calorie dense, they have the advantage of also qualifying as whole food with measurable nutritional content.

Mea's Candied Pecans

Nuts are born with a sensible combination of good fat, protein, and fiber, but dress them up with a bit of sugar and whatnot and – WOW!

(1 serving. Okay, okay, several servings.)

1½ - 2 cups raw pecan halves

3–4 tablespoons dark brown sugar

1 teaspoon pure vanilla

1 teaspoon cinnamon

½ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon water

1. Place pecans in a 10-inch sauté pan over medium heat for about 5 minutes or until nuts are hot. (Just pat them with your open hand to check.) Shake pan regularly to heat evenly.
2. While pecans are heating, combine sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, salt, and water in a little dish.
3. Push nuts to sides of pan and scrape sugar mixture into center. It will immediately bubble and begin to spread; quickly push pecans into the syrupy mixture and stir and toss to coat as evenly as possible. They will be sticky and difficult to mix, but stir and shake over the heat for another three minutes or so.
4. Now, lock the kitchen door. Tip nuts out onto a parchment-lined baking sheet and separate briskly. Set aside to cool, then store nuts in a jar. They keep for weeks (especially if you forget where you hid them) and make a great gift for Valentine's Day.

Note:

If nuts are still sticky after they cool, pop them into a 350 degree oven for about 5 minutes, or just until their little sugar coats puff up a bit. Then snatch 'em out quick before they overcook.

Good Food, Great Medicine classes

The two-part class series targets weight loss, insulin resistance, and type 2 diabetes, and details steps for preventing or reversing them. The classes are based on the 3rd edition of *Good Food, Great Medicine*, which each participant will receive at the first class.

Good Food, Great Medicine class (part 1):

- Review inter-relationship of excess waistline and weight, insulin resistance (common to most cases of type 2 diabetes), and common chronic diseases.
- Discuss the role of the “key three” – a whole food Mediterranean diet, daily activity, and enough sleep.
- Work through the 14 simple steps that target your risk factors and produce effective, lasting change in your waistline, blood sugar, and other health risks.

Good Food, Great Medicine class (part 2):

- Explore practical application of whole food choices and menu planning. See demonstrations of a couple of foundational recipes from *Good Food, Great Medicine*. Review progress, find solutions to challenges, and fine-tune personal action plans.

Time: 6 – 8 pm Wednesday
Dates: 4/6/16 (Part 1) and 4/13/16 (Part 2)
Location: Providence St. Vincent Medical Center
Cost: \$100 (2-class series)
Registration: Call 503.291.1777 to reserve a spot

Dr. Hassell's speaking events

3/1/2016 – Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine: *Friend or foe? Meat, Dairy & Alcohol.* Portland, OR <https://www.aihm.org/>

3/5/2016 – 2016 Breast Cancer Issues Conference: *Lifestyle Choices for Breast Cancer Survivors.* Portland, OR. <http://komenoregon.org/>

3/11/2016 – Tillamook County: *A Lifestyle Prescription for All Ages.* Tillamook, OR. <http://tillamookcountyhealthmatters.org/>

3/24/2016 – Providence Mercantile Health and Fitness Center: *Lifestyle Choices for Graceful Aging.* Lake Oswego, OR. <http://Providence.org/fitnesscenter>

4/6/2016 and 4/13/2016 – Good Food, Great Medicine 2-part Lifestyle Change Class Series: Portland, OR. For registration information call our office at 503.291.1777.

4/29/2016 – Providence Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel: *The Lifestyle Prescription for Graceful Aging.* Mt. Angel, OR. <http://www.benedictine-srs.com/>

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

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (KJV)