

Put your heart risk in reverse!

February 2020



Try this Creamy Mushroom Soup for the health of your heart and your brain (recipe further on). Learn more about using whole food and lifestyle medicine to reverse your risk for heart disease and stroke as well as diabetes at the Good Food, Great Medicine class series. (Details further on.)

Reversing heart disease and stroke risk

If you have a pulse, you probably have some heart disease “risk factors”; most of us have *something* that could be said to be a risk factor. However, perhaps you have more than just a vague sense of risk: maybe you have already had a heart attack or stroke, or have enough known risk factors to appropriately elevate your concern. Well, TODAY is the best time to reverse those risk factors!

When the risk is due to blocked arteries

Many interventions, including both medications and lifestyle choices, have been shown to reduce the amount of atherosclerosis blocking arteries. However, we should take aim at a more important goal: **reducing the future risk of heart attack or stroke**. This involves a lot more than just clogged arteries: it means keeping the blockage stable and harmless, improving blood flow through healthier arteries and collateral circulation, and reducing other underlying risk factors with targeted lifestyle choices. While drugs may be needed, the greatest risk reduction is associated with lifestyle modification.

Evaluate your risk factors

A good starting point is to get a personal evaluation to assess your current risk profile. This means looking at your health history, weight, fitness level, diet choices, and blood pressure. Next, blood tests to measure cholesterol levels, blood sugar, and other risk factors. Then, consider evaluating your arterial health with studies such as a CT for calcium scoring (a scan of your coronary arteries to measure buildup of plaque), arterial ultrasound, or stress test. At this point, you and your physician have the data to decide if there are changes you need to make.

Which lifestyle changes make a difference?

Can I avoid taking medications?

While we often use medications to help reduce risk, it often surprises patients to learn that the intervention with the greatest impact for reversing heart disease and stroke risk is *still* the good old whole food Mediterranean diet. The Lyon Heart Study¹ is a 4 year study of patients who had already had a heart attack, and were randomized to either a Mediterranean diet or a low-fat diet. In the Mediterranean diet group, the risk of heart attacks or stroke was cut by 70%, the death rate by 56%, and the cancer risk by 60%! And this same diet can also be used to reduce cholesterol as much as a moderate dose of a “statin” drug (see Joe’s story in our May 2019 newsletter). Sadly, popular diets such as keto, paleo, and *Whole 30* have not been shown to have this level of benefit, and all 3 diets limit foods such as whole grains, which have been shown to have real health benefits.

Build your own bypass *before* you need one!

Exercise is the key: it not only improves heart and brain circulation and function, it also helps build new vessels in your heart (“collateral circulation”). Exercise is also one of the most effective antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antidepressant medicines available. (See pages 70–74 in *Good Food, Great Medicine*, 4th edition.)

Blood pressure (BP) and blood sugar control

The Mediterranean diet and improved fitness work together to reduce this pair of risk factors. Even mild elevations of blood sugar (“pre-diabetes”) carry risks similar to type 2 diabetes, as well as significantly raising our risk of stroke. High BP is also a red flag. While there are effective blood sugar and BP drugs available, in most cases we can achieve better risk reduction *without* drugs by using a targeted lifestyle management solution. In particular, specific foods that target blood sugar and BP can have dramatic results. And if medications are needed, we can use those, too.

Cancer risk reduction, improved cancer outcomes, diabetes reversal, reduced dementia, depression and anxiety, acid reflux . . . the collateral benefits of choosing lifestyle-based medicine are many, and improving one set of risk factors overlap with and improve others. Need help getting started? Sign up for one of the *Good Food, Great Medicine* class series – see details further on.

¹ Lorgèril, M. et al. *Circulation* 1999;99:779-85

Creamy Mushroom Soup

Our apologies to any of you who may not be lovers of mushrooms (the technical term is "mycophile") but Valentine's Day is upon us, and we feel compelled to feature this Creamy Mushroom Soup because we love it. It will never be accused of being especially photogenic but it has more important qualities; it's simple to make and we love the way it tastes. Happy Valentine's Day! (This recipe is from *Good Food, Great Medicine*, 4th edition, page 189. Non-mycophiles can find creamy mushroom-free alternatives on pages 189-192.)

(Makes about 3–4 cups)

- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter
- 1 medium-large onion, chopped (3–4 cups)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 pound chopped mushrooms, (about 6 cups)
- 1 teaspoon freshly crushed garlic
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup half-and-half *or* ½ cup cream

1. Heat butter in a 3-quart soup pot over medium high heat and add onion, salt, and pepper. Cook for 5 minutes or until onions are bubbling and translucent, stirring occasionally.
2. Add chopped mushrooms and garlic, and stir well to combine while mushrooms begin to soften and release their liquid. Add water and bring to a boil, and then reduce heat to medium low and simmer 30 minutes or until onions are very soft.
3. Add half-and-half or cream and purée until smooth. (If using a food processor or blender, allow soup to cool for 15 minutes first.) If you don't eat it all right away, it will keep in the refrigerator for up to a week.

Note: This soup alone is worth the price of an immersion blender: you can purée the hot soup directly in the pot!

If your Valentine wouldn't appreciate a bowl of *Creamy Mushroom Soup*, how about a *Good Food, Great Medicine* gift box? It's a quartet of good food, all Oregon-sourced, Mediterranean-approved, and minimally processed. There's **Dr. Hassell's Crackpot Cereal**, a trio of whole grains (oat groats, whole barley, and rye berries) which turns into a hot, fragrant breakfast overnight; **Raw Oregon Honey**, unrefined and rich in antioxidants, harvested from gardens along the Willamette River; **Extra-Virgin Olive Oil** from Durant Olive Mill, the first commercial olive mill in the NW, situated at beautiful Red Ridge Farms in Dayton, Oregon, and **Dagoba Extra-Dark Chocolate**: smooth, rich with 84% cacao, and just the right amount of sweetness! (Monday, February 10th, is the last opportunity to order gift boxes for delivery by Valentine's Day, February 14th.)

Good Food, Great Medicine 2-part classes:
A two-part class series to target weight loss, diabetes reversal, and inflammation The classes are based on *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 four" – a whole food Mediterranean diet; minimal sweeteners, refined grains and starches; daily activity; and enough sleep.
- Work through the 14 simple steps that target your risk factors and produce effective, lasting changes to 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 demos of foundational recipes from *Good Food, Great Medicine*. Review progress, find solutions to challenges, and fine-tune personal plans.

"I've bounced around for decades trying to find an eating style that is sustainable. I'm very susceptible to simple carbs and will spiral into heroin-strength [and] adherence to the Mediterranean diet works best. . . your approach is common sense AND evidence-based! Bravo!" Joan B, MD/MSPH

Time:	6 – 8 pm Wednesday
Dates:	3/11/2020 (Part 1) and 3/18/2020 (Part 2)
Location:	Providence St. Vincent Medical Center
Cost:	\$100 (2-class series)
Registration:	Call 503.291.1777 to reserve a place

Speaking events and classes

3/11/2020 and 3/18/2020 – Good Food, Great Medicine TYPE 2 DIABETES REVERSAL and SUSTAINABLE WEIGHT LOSS 2-PART LIFESTYLE CHANGE CLASS SERIES: Portland, OR. Call our office at 503.291.1777 to register.

3/26/2020 Spring Training for Primary Care 2020: Miles Hassell MD: *Good Food + Activity = Great Medicine*. Seattle, WA.

4/2/2020 – 4/23/2020 Providence Heart Institute BASECAMP Cardiac Prevention + Wellness 4-part Series: *Good Food, Great Medicine*: Portland, OR. Call the Providence Resource Line at 503.574.6595 to register or find *Good Food, Great Medicine* in the class catalog at providence.org/classes.

Sign up for this free monthly medical + lifestyle newsletter at Goodfoodgreatmedicine.com

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."
1 Thessalonians 5:21 (KJV)