

## May 2016 Newsletter



Tor is buffing up his muscles with his dad. He's holding a classic 10-pound medicine ball and Dr. Hassell is holding a 10-pound "slam ball." (Alert patients may recognize the skip rope and resistance band behind them.)

### Someone please hide the medicine ball!

If one of our patients accidentally mentions that it's difficult to fit in an exercise program, they will usually be introduced to the recent additions to Dr. Hassell's collection of office workout equipment – a medicine ball and a slam ball. Each weighs ten pounds, and although some patients (and maybe the office below) are startled by his enthusiastic demonstration of the slam ball, all are impressed by the workout our muscles get when we just *hold* the ball – or toss it to someone, which is more fun. (It's **not** fun if you forget to warn them that it's ten pounds.) Maintaining lean muscle mass and good balance are vital if we value long-term energy and independence, and no one is too busy to play with a slam ball for a few minutes. Simple, low-tech tools like these – or any activity that will get us a bit breathless and sweaty – can be helpful for any age or ability. The world is our gym! (For some motivating information on the amazing benefits of physical activity, see *Let's Move More* on pages 50–55 of *Good Food, Great Medicine*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.)

### Food + exercise are *definitely* real medicine

So we want good health. Do we measure it by looking at numbers like blood pressure and cholesterol levels? Or is it more subjective, like feeling vigorous and pain-free and with minimal reliance on medicines and physicians as we get older? How much is our health influenced by genes we inherit? We may not know these answers, but we **do** know two of the most effective interventions known to modern medicine:

eating more vegetables and staying active. The field of medicine – especially to do with diet – is cluttered with opinion, ideology, faith, and good intentions; however, it really is possible to cut through all the confusion and find the real medicine. (For ways to evaluate conflicting dietary advice see pages 10–11 and 124–126.)

### Food + exercise = lower blood pressure + less medications *and* side effects

There are various approaches to treating high blood pressure (hypertension), one of the most common causes of death and disability today. Think of it as the "canary in the coal mine" that warns us of a rising risk of heart attack or stroke, heart failure, diabetes, kidney failure, and dementia. Medications can make blood pressure numbers quickly look better and slightly decrease risk, but they have significant side effects and still leave us with a substantial risk of stroke. (See our December 2015 newsletter.) Hypertension is not a medication deficiency, it's a metabolic disturbance that won't be fully resolved with only a drug. However, we can see amazing results if a prescription is *also* given for eating vegetables and fruit with **every** meal and snack, along with hypertension-reducing agents like raw nuts, extra-virgin olive oil, and a 30-minute walk. (Or a few minutes working out with a medicine ball!) And it can get even better – vigorous application of this food-and-exercise prescription may reduce or eliminate the need for blood pressure medications. Now *that's* real medicine! (More about hypertension on pages 83–84.)

### A food-and-exercise Rx from Dr. Hassell

A 52-year-old man starts feeling odd, with a sense of throbbing in his head. He walks into a pharmacy to take his blood pressure (BP), which is 180/130. He has no primary care doctor so he goes to an urgent care. He leaves with a prescription. His BP remains high and the medication dose is doubled. He develops edema and feels terrible. Then he came to my office for a consultation. His BP was now 160/96. We discuss his options to reverse, not just treat, his hypertension. We talk about his food choices and activity level. We play catch with the medicine ball. He leaves with a different medication at a lower dose, a new food-and-exercise prescription, and a reading assignment (the first 92 pages of *Good Food, Great Medicine*.) When he returns a week later, his BP has dropped to 138/82. Real medicine! (I think some credit belongs to the ball.)

## Crazy Good Crackers

These are adapted from a recipe by Sarah Britton and are frighteningly good: crispy when rolled thin, the ultimate trail food when thicker. (You can experiment with other ingredients.) They have no flour – they are held together with the power of psyllium seed husks.

*(Makes plenty)*

- 1¼ cups steel cut oats
- 1½ cups boiling water
- 2½ teaspoons salt
- 3 tablespoons pure maple syrup or raw honey
- 3 tablespoons virgin coconut oil or extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup sunflower seeds
- ½ cup pumpkin seeds
- ½ cup sesame seeds
- ¼ cup flax seeds
- ¼ cup psyllium seed husks

*Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cut 4 pieces of parchment paper to roughly the size of your cookie sheet.*

1. Combine steel cut oats, water, salt, maple syrup or honey, and oil in a medium bowl. Set aside for about 10 minutes to soften the oats.
2. Meanwhile, in another bowl mix together the seeds and psyllium. Add to the soaked oat mixture and blend **thoroughly**. The dough will be very wet; set aside to thicken until firm, about 15 minutes.
3. Divide mixture in half and place one half on parchment paper. Place another piece of parchment on top, press out the mixture into a disc with your hand, then use a rolling pin to roll out to about 1/8-inch thick, about to the edges of paper.
4. Peel off top paper and score the rolled-out dough (I use a long chef's knife) into the shapes you want. (Easiest are squares.) Sprinkle lightly with salt.
5. Slide an ungreased cookie sheet under the bottom parchment paper (or use the parchment to transfer the scored crackers to the cookie sheet). Take the other two pieces of parchment paper and roll out and score the remaining dough.
6. Bake for 20 minutes at 350 degrees in the top third of the oven, and then **reduce heat to 300 degrees** and bake for another 30–40 minutes. (The first time you make these, be careful; ovens vary, and you may need to adjust the directions to suit yours. It is safer to bake them longer at a lower heat. The important thing is that crackers must be crispy, not chewy!) You can store them for at least a week – but I can't imagine them hanging around that long.

**Note:** Psyllium husks can be found in the nutrition department of most stores.

## Cracker postscript: snack responsibly

A recipe for homemade crackers tasty enough to compete with good store-bought ones is worth sharing, especially when they're flour-free and loaded with seeds. However, these crackers are calorie-dense as well as delicious, and many of us may not be strong enough to be in the house alone with them. Be warned.

## 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 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 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 Tuesday  
**Dates:** 5/17/16 (Part 1) and 5/24/16 (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

**5/17/2016 and 5/24/2016 – Good Food, Great Medicine 2-part Lifestyle Change Class Series:** Portland, OR. For registration information call our office at 503.291.1777.

**6/3/2016 – Willamette Valley Country Club:** *Good Food is Great Medicine: Which Diet and Lifestyle Choices Really Matter?* Canby, OR. Members only event. <http://www.willamettevalleycc.com>

**7/20/2016 and 7/27/2016 – Good Food, Great Medicine 2-part Lifestyle Change Class Series:** Portland, OR. For registration information call our office at 503.291.1777.

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

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (KJV)  
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