

Defy your diagnosis: Aortic aneurysms!

July 2018



Tor and Trixie Hassell getting a dose of sunshine and sleep therapy while recovering from a serious case of fun-induced exhaustion common to boys and dogs, especially in summer. Worried about sunlight? Read on about the potential benefits.

Can sunlight improve your health?

Simple, traditional, and low-tech tools for improving health and immunity are often overlooked, and heat therapy is one of them. Summer generally isn't the best time of year to recommend hot baths and saunas, but it is a good time to consider the value of the appropriate use of sunlight. Although sunshine can cause problems, including skin cancers, it generally isn't appreciated for its real contributions to health. **Appropriate sunlight exposure is associated with living longer, improved immunity, and better vitamin D levels, as well as reduced cancer, heart disease, type 1 diabetes, multiple sclerosis, and pregnancy complications.**¹

Of all the beneficial effects attributed to sunlight, the best studied is vitamin D production. However, sunlight also directly affects other mood-enhancing components such as nitric oxide, beta-endorphins, and regulation of circadian rhythms. At this point there appears to be no adequate substitute for sunlight. Although vitamin D deficiency is common, studies using vitamin D *supplements* to achieve higher blood levels have often been disappointing, suggesting that there may be a unique benefit from naturally occurring vitamin D (mainly the aforementioned sunlight as well as oil-rich fish like salmon, tuna, etc.) not present in vitamin D supplements.

So how do we get healthy levels of sun exposure without unacceptable skin cancer risk? It can be expected that organizations focusing on skin cancer risk

recommend fairly strict sun avoidance, especially between 10 am and 3 pm, yet this is the time frame that produces the best vitamin D production. A better answer for overall health outcomes is likely to be moderate sun exposure, defined here as not enough to cause burning (for fair-skinned northern Europeans, that is about 10 minutes on each side in midday and mid summer, before using any sunscreen or covering up) but with as many square inches of the body exposed as is socially acceptable.

Thoracic aortic aneurysms and lifestyle medicine: adventures in low-tech healing

A thoracic aortic aneurysm is a potentially deadly disorder in which the large artery (aorta) that carries the blood to the body from the heart has changes in the arterial wall that allow it to expand and potentially break, often with catastrophic results – including death. It's important to detect them early and – depending on the size of the aneurysm and how fast it's growing – arrange for surgery to repair it. Although surgery is a life-saving procedure, it's not without serious complications; however, lifestyle medicine may play an important role when the aneurysm is detected early.

One of the major risk factors for aortic aneurysms is the metabolic syndrome – excess weight around the middle, high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol levels, and elevated blood sugars or diabetes. The more of these elements you have, the greater your vascular risk. Can we reduce the chances that an aneurysm will require major surgery by reversing these risk factors with a whole food Mediterranean-style eating pattern, appropriate weight loss, and daily exercise? It certainly is the right thing to try during the observation period that typically follows the diagnosis, especially in view of the many benefits beyond vascular health.

This year I have worked closely with two patients with growing thoracic aortic aneurysms and metabolic syndrome (high-risk blood pressure, blood sugars, cholesterol levels, and waistline). With the vigorous use of lifestyle choices (as well as medications) they have dramatically reduced their risk factors, and both are showing a reduction in the width of the aorta, which can indicate that the aorta wall is getting stronger and healthier. More importantly, it indicates that both of them may also avoid surgery, which makes them both very happy. Never forget that you are in charge of an amazing healing machine – your body!

¹ Baggerly, C. et al. J Am Coll Nutrition 2015;34:359-65
Lindqvist, P. G. et al. J Intern Med 2016; doi:1111/joim.12496
Holick, M. et al. Anticancer Research 2016;36:1345-56

Marinated Carrot Matchsticks

Carrots are dominant enough to handle aggressive flavors like cumin, cilantro, and garlic, and a recipe like this allows you to sneak in a couple of small turnips sliced into matchsticks and steamed with the carrots; the peppery-sweet flavor and clean white color contrast nicely with the carrots. Recipe is found on page 192 in *Good Food, Great Medicine* – 3rd edition.

(Serves 4 – 6)

4–6 carrots (about 5 cups ¼-inch matchsticks)

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

-or- apple cider vinegar

1 fat teaspoon honey

1 teaspoon freshly crushed garlic

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1. Trim and peel carrots. Slice diagonally into ¼-inch slices, and then into ¼-inch matchsticks.
2. Steam for 7–10 minutes, or until tender-crisp. (If they're too soft they'll fall apart when you toss them in the vinaigrette.)
3. Meanwhile, combine dressing ingredients in a medium-to-large mixing bowl and whisk together. (A larger bowl makes it easier to toss the matchsticks in the dressing without breaking them.) Add carrots and toss gently but thoroughly to mix. Serve hot, warm or room temperature. Makes great leftovers.

► When I can find small young turnips with hard, unblemished skins, I like to include a couple with the carrots. (Actually, if you find fresh young turnips, buy extras to eat raw – just peel and slice thinly and eat lightly salted or with dip. Their peppery sweetness is delicious roasted, too, and especially good with rich meat dishes like meat loaf.)

Metabolic syndrome reversal tool kit

1. **Schedule a consultation** with Dr. Hassell for evaluation, diagnosis, second opinion, or treatment plan, especially for difficult or persistent problems; and to identify steps to improve outcomes, reduce side effects of therapy, and review the value of specific nutritional supplements.
2. **Download** *An Evidence-based Guide to Successful Waist Loss and Preventing or Reversing Insulin Resistance and Type 2 Diabetes* **handouts on the resources tab @ goodfoodgreatmedicine.com.**

3. **Read the first 126 pages of *Good Food, Great Medicine*** (3rd edition), especially the 14-step *Risk Reduction Action Plan* beginning on page 69.
4. **Join a *Good Food, Great Medicine* class series.** (See below for more details.)
5. **Sign up for a health transformation program**, a one-year or six-month doctor-patient partnership for support, accountability, and dietary counsel.

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.

Time:	6 – 8 pm Wednesday
Dates:	7/11/2018 (Part 1) and 7/18/2018 (Part 2)
Location:	Providence St. Vincent Medical Center
Cost:	\$100 (2-class series)
Registration:	Call 503.291.1777 to reserve a place

Dr. Hassell's speaking events

7/11/2018 and 7/18/2018 – *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.

10/4/2018 – 10/25/2018 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)