

# Get Into betterHEALTH!

with Dr. Derek Lee

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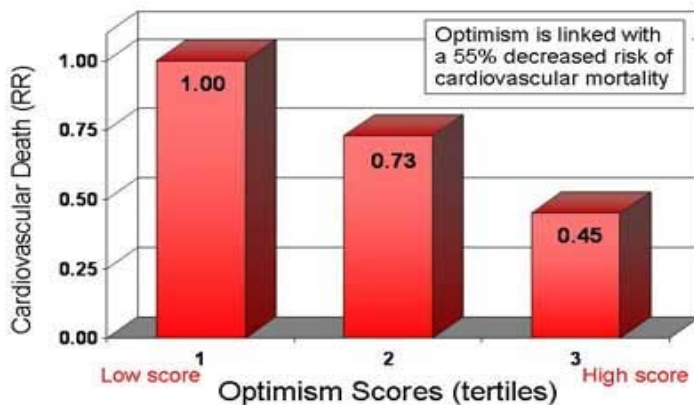
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May 2006: In this issue!

- Optimism and Cardiovascular Health
- Green Tea and Cognitive Function
- Foods Likely to Cause Weight Gain
- Knee Pain and Nutritional Supplements
- Coffee Intake and the Risk of a Heart Attack

## ● Optimism and Cardiovascular Health

### Optimism and Cardiovascular Disease



n = 545 men, 15-year study

Source: *Archives of Internal Medicine*, Feb. 27, 2006.

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An optimistic outlook on life is a strong predictor of emotional and physical well being. A new study reported in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* illustrates the positive benefit of a hopeful attitude on cardiovascular health.

Researchers in the Netherlands studied 545 men who were all in good health, with no cardiovascular disease. They measured the typical risks for cardiovascular disease, including depression, plus a measure of optimism. Optimism was defined in terms of generalized positive expectations for one's future.

After 15 years of follow-up, 187 persons died of cardiovascular disease (CVD). Those men who scored high on optimism (top 1/3) had a 55% lower risk of CVD compared to men who scored low

in optimism (bottom 1/3). These results include adjustments for possible confounders from traditional risk factors including age, BMI, diabetes, smoking, blood pressure, total cholesterol, HDL cholesterol levels, and even depression scores. When physical activity level was added to the adjustment, the risk benefit of optimism dropped from a 55% reduction in CVD risk to a 43% reduction indicating that physical activity likely increases one's optimistic outlook on life.

It was interesting to note that the inverse association with optimism and CVD mortality was graded. The higher the optimism scores, the lower the risk of CVD. Other studies have shown the opposite, that hopelessness is linked to an increased risk of CVD and the progression of atherosclerosis.

**The bottom line.** An optimistic, hopeful outlook on life seems to be important for both good mental and physical health. People who tend to be pessimistic, or look for the negative in life find it. And people who are hopeful and optimistic about the future seem to also find what they are looking for. Psychosomatic medicine has clearly shown that our thoughts and attitudes can affect our physiology positively or negatively. Developing a hopeful, optimistic outlook on life may cut your risk of a heart attack or stroke and help you live a longer, happier life.

**The author's concluded** their study by saying that a low subjectively perceived level of optimism should be added to the list of independent risk markers for cardiovascular mortality.

Reference: Giltay EJ, et al. Dispositional optimism and the risk of cardiovascular death: The Zutphen Elderly Study. *Arch Intern Med.* 2006;166:431-436. Feb. 27, 2006.

## ●Green Tea and Cognitive Function

In an aging population, declining cognitive (ability to think clearly) ability is a growing problem. After age 65, the risk of dementia doubles every 4 years. Maintaining good mental abilities is of critical concern to all aging persons. A study from Japan looked at green tea consumption and cognitive ability in persons 70 and older. They measured the cognitive ability of Japanese seniors using a mental test and their intake of green tea. People who drank less than 3 cups of green tea a week were used as the standard for mental acuity. Persons drinking 4-7 cups of green tea weekly had 38% less decline in mental function, and those drinking 2 cup/day or more had 54% less cognitive decline. Researchers adjusted for other possible confounders such as blood pressure, physical activity level, living alone or not, education level, BMI, history of stroke or heart disease, smoking, alcohol use, vegetable intake, social activity, et cetera. It appears that green tea, high in antioxidants, is helpful for maintaining good cognitive abilities of the brain. They also looked at coffee intake and it showed no benefit to cognitive function.

Reference: *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2006;83:355-361. Feb. 2006.

## ●Foods Likely to Cause Weight Gain

What foods are most closely associated with weight gain? That's a practical question in our current overweight society. 7,194 men and women ages 41 and older were studied to see what foods were linked to weight gain. After 28 months of follow-up here is what they found. The best predictor of weight gain was intake of soda pop. Persons drinking the most soda (top 20%) were 60% more likely to gain a significant amount of weight during the study compared to those who seldom drank soda pop. Other foods positively linked to weight gain were hamburgers, pizza, sausage, red meat, and sweetened fruit juices. This shouldn't come as a surprise, but it certainly explains why North Americans are gaining excess weight, as these are favorite North American foods.

Reference: *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2006;83:362-70-90. Feb. 2006.

## •Knee Pain and Nutrition Supplements

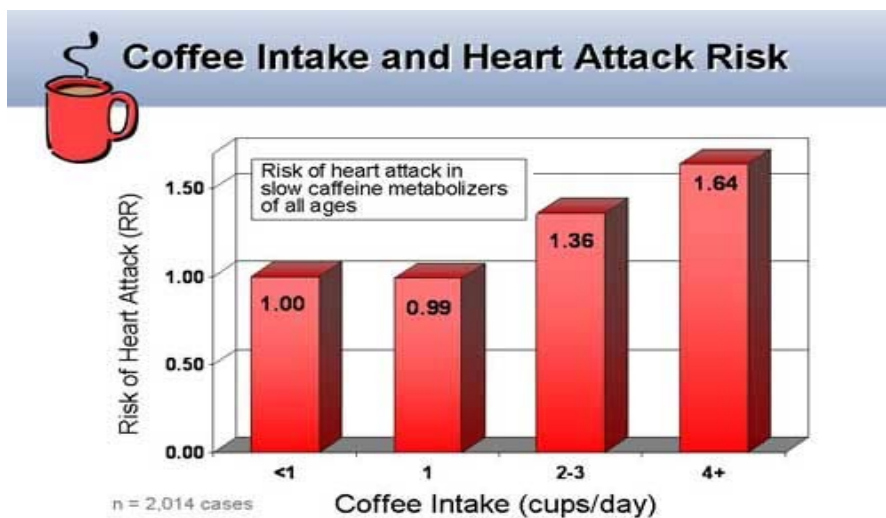
Nutrition supplements of glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate have been recommended by many people for relief of knee pain and arthritis. Two large randomized trials have studied this question. Neither of the recent trials have found the supplements to be any more effective than the placebo (both groups showed a little improvement, but no real difference between the supplements and the placebo). A New England Journal of Medicine editorial commenting on the studies concluded that, on the basis on the 2 most recent studies, it is difficult to recommend their use and that it seems prudent to tell our patients with osteoarthritis that neither glucosamine hydrochloride or chondroitin sulfate alone or in combination has been shown to be more efficacious than placebo for the treatment of knee pain.

Reference: *NEJM*. 2006;354:795-808. Feb. 23, 2006.

## •Coffee Intake and Risk of a Heart Attack

Coffee is a major source of caffeine and has often been linked to a variety of health problems such as irritability, anxiety, impaired sleep, heart arrhythmias, and occasionally with risk of a heart attack, although other studies have not indicated an increased heart risk. Thus coffee's effect on heart health has been controversial.

A new case control study, reported in the March 8 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, may explain why coffee is sometimes implicated in coronary risk, and other times it isn't. It appears that people can be divided, based on a genetic variability, into slow and rapid caffeine metabolizers. If you drink coffee and you are a rapid caffeine metabolizer, your coronary risk is not elevated. However, if you are a slow caffeine metabolizer, and you regularly drink coffee, your risk of a heart attack is increased.



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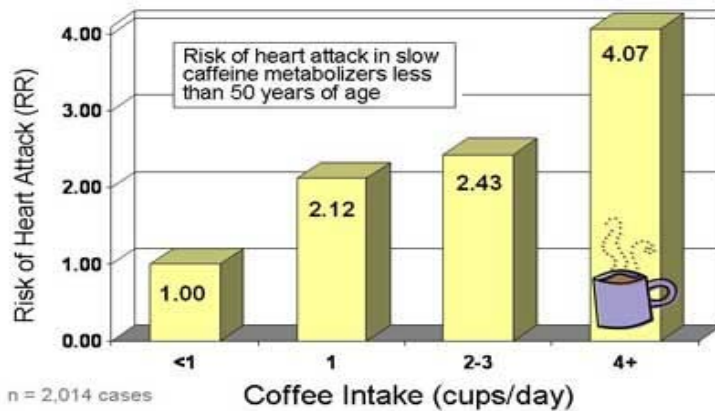
This study included 2,014 cases, people who experienced their first heart attack. A similar number of controls were selected to match age, gender, area of residence, income level, BMI, etc. Then the researchers looked at eating and health habits, medical histories, and the intake of coffee, tea, and cola drinks. They found that in all persons studied, those who drank 4 or more cups of coffee daily had a 40% higher risk of a heart attack than those who didn't drink coffee or had less than 1 drink of coffee daily.

When coffee drinkers were separated into slow and rapid caffeine metabolizers, only the slow group showed increased risk of a heart attack. In the slow metabolizer group, those drinking 4+ cups daily had a 64% greater risk of a heart attack versus those drinking less than a cup daily.

Women showed a greater risk than men. The increased risk of a heart attack associated with coffee consumption was similar for both smokers and nonsmokers.

When age was also included in the analysis, the increased risk of a heart attack associated with coffee consumption was even more prominent. In slow caffeine metabolizers under 50 years of age, the risk of a heart attack increased four fold in those consuming 4+ cups of coffee daily compared to those drinking less than a cup daily. Their risk more than doubled even if they drank as little as 2-3 cups daily. The analysis and calculations of risk were adjusted for possible confounders such as smoking, activity level, body weight, alcohol intake, history of high blood pressure or diabetes, fat intake, sugar intake, income, and other potential risks for a heart attack.

## Coffee Intake and Heart Attack Risk



Source: *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Mar. 8, 2006.

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What percentage of the population are slow caffeine metabolizers? The researchers said that the proportion may vary among various populations, but in this study population, 54% were classified as slow caffeine metabolizers. That means that a sizable proportion of individuals, perhaps over 1/2, may be susceptible to increased risk of heart attacks by drinking coffee, especially if they consume 4 or more cups daily.

**The authors concluded** with this summary. We found that increased coffee intake is associated with an increase in risk of a heart attack in persons who are slow caffeine metabolizers (about 1/2 of the population), suggesting that it is the caffeine in the coffee that is linked to the increased risk. If you are concerned about heart health, you may want to consider an alternate hot drink in the morning or get a genetic test to see if you are a fast or slow caffeine metabolizer. Limiting other caffeine drinks may also be beneficial to your health. It might save you the misfortune of a heart attack.

Reference: Cornelis MC, et al. Coffee, CYP1A2 Genotype, and Risk of Myocardial Infarction. *JAMA*. 2006;295:1135-1141. Mar. 8, 2006.

## Office Hours.

### betterHEALTH Clinic

Monday	9:15 - 12:00/2:30 - 7:00
Wednesday	9:15 - 12:00/2:30 - 7:00
Friday	2:00 - 6:00
Saturday	9:00 - 12:00 (every other Saturday including May 6 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> )

### Corporate Clinics

Tuesday	Kraft Canada, Rogers Barrie
Thursday	Rogers Cable York Mills
Friday	Rogers Cable Richmond Hill