



**Weatherhead P.E.T. Center for Preventing and Reversing Atherosclerosis  
The University of Texas-Houston Medical School and Memorial Hermann Hospital**



## Heart News

### Hormone Replacement Therapy

The National Women's Health Initiative study on estrogen / progestin in 16,000 women was designed to find out if estrogen/progestin combinations protected healthy menopausal women from heart disease. The study was cut short after its safety board determined that the benefits failed to outweigh the increased risks of cardiovascular-related illnesses and of breast cancer. These unexpected adverse outcomes have caused fear and concern in many women who have taken estrogen and/or progesterone for years.

The idea that hormone replacement therapy (HRT) may be protective to the heart is based largely on observational studies of women who decided to take HRT. However, upon further examination, it was discovered that the women who took hormones happened to live healthier lifestyles in general. The healthy lifestyle decreased their heart disease risk, not the HRT.

Rather than providing protection against cardiovascular disease, in this study, taking hormones increased blood clots leading to more strokes and heart attacks. Although this seems like a dramatic finding, the information relating estrogen to increased blood clotting is not new, it has been reported in previous studies. In this study as in the previous ones, the increased cardiovascular risk of taking hormone therapy was relatively low; there were 7 additional patients who had heart attacks in the treated group of 10,000 subjects and 8 additional patients who had stroke. In the previous studies, this increased cardiovascular risk was seen primarily in younger women starting hormone therapy rather than older women who had already been on hormones for several years.

The other major risk identified in the study was a slight increase in breast cancer rates in women after 5.2 years of taking estrogen/progestin. In the treated group of 10,000 women, there were 8 additional cases of invasive breast cancer. In many women, these cancer risks were already elevated because of other factors such as obesity.

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### Are you Interested in Saving money on parking?

Memorial Hermann has a free community service organization that has numerous benefits including a \$3 discount on parking in the Hermann Garage when you come in for doctors appts. The group is called 55+ club or the Preferred Partners club. For more information, call the office of MH Community Services at 713-776-5125. The website is [www.mhhs.org](http://www.mhhs.org), search for 55+/Preferred Partners or click on Services & Programs.

### Outpatient Office Location Reminder

Just a reminder that the outpatient office for blood drawing and routine follow-up appointments with Dr. Gould is now in the Hermann Professional Building in Suite 600. The PET Imaging Center continues to be located on the first floor of the Jones Pavilion of Hermann Hospital.

If at all possible, please get your blood drawn prior to your appointment so the results can be available during your appointment. You may request a lab slip, and go to a lab near your home and have results sent to us or come in to Suite 600 a few days prior to your appointment to have blood drawn.

### How often should I get a PET scan?

This is a frequent question asked by patients who have had a PET scan or have regular follow-up appointments with Dr. Gould. PET or positron emission tomography is the most sensitive non-invasive test available to check on the status of coronary heart disease.

Ideally, a baseline PET scan should be done in patients with a strong family history of heart disease at any time after the age of 30 before symptoms develop. Patients with known heart disease who have just started a reversal program should repeat a PET scan within 2 years to make sure the heart disease is stable or improving.

Thereafter, if target cholesterol levels are maintained and clinical status remains unchanged, the PET can be done about every 3-5 years. However, if symptoms change it may be necessary to do the PET scan earlier. To schedule a PET, call 713-500-6611 ext. 4.



## Life Insurance Break

In a previous issue of PET News, we reviewed the difficulty of finding affordable life insurance when PET identifies early reversible coronary disease. Although this early detection has health benefits, some insurance companies are charging "high risk" premiums, despite the fact that these patients are at much lower risk than the general population due to undertaking lifestyle modifications to prevent or reverse coronary heart disease.

Jefferson Pilot Financial recognizes this problem and offers an aggressive underwriting approach for patients who have successfully achieved the goals in our treatment program for a minimum of two years through insurance agent, Joe Garcia. Below is a quote from one patient who has obtained substantial savings.

"Joe Garcia is a terrific person and a pleasure to work with. He saved me lots of money and it gave me great comfort and peace of mind to know that if needed, my family would be provided with the help of an insurance policy." For more information, call :  
Joe Garcia CFP, CLU, ChFC  
1-866-716-7176

## Hormones, Cont'd from page 1 . . . .

sity or smoking. Estrogen has been given to women for 50 years to relieve the symptoms of menopause with substantial data that suggests other health benefits as well. The same Women's Health Initiative Study also identified a 37% decrease in colorectal cancer in patients taking hormones and one-third reduction in hip fractures. Overall, there was no measurable difference in total mortality between the treated and untreated groups. Estrogen has been recognized as a primary preventive agent in osteoporosis; it is known to have a positive effect on the cholesterol profile and studies suggest that it may decrease the risk of Alzheimer's disease and macular degeneration (visual loss usually related to aging).

Like any medication, taking estrogen and progesterone carries some risks as well as benefits that need to be weighed on an individual patient basis. Women should not stop taking their hormones without discussing it with their doctor. Dr. Gould agrees with the UT-Houston OB-Gyn physicians that HRT should not be given to patients with known heart disease solely for the purpose of treating heart disease. But for women with heart disease, who have been taking HRT for years without a problem, there is still no compelling evidence that they should stop it. For women with specific indications such as significant menopausal symptoms or osteoporosis, HRT may be necessary after a review of that person's specific risks and benefits.

## Corner Pharmacy

### The Benefits of the Statin Drugs



The treatment of coronary artery disease took a dramatic turn in the early 1990s with the introduction of a class of drugs known as the (HMG-CoA) reductase inhibitors, or more commonly, the STATIN drugs. This includes the drugs Lipitor (atorvastatin,) Zocor (simvastatin), Mevacor (lovastatin), Pravachol (pravastatin), and Lescol (fluvastatin). Today, approximately 8 million Americans take one of these drugs to lower cholesterol. Recently, Baycol was taken off the market due to some serious side effects which provoked fear in many patients taking statin drugs. However, extensive scientific data prove that the benefits far outweigh the low risk of side effects, which can be recognized and addressed if they occur. Moreover, additional recent studies demonstrate that statin therapy may provide unanticipated health benefits.

Over 30 large, well done, scientific studies have confirmed that statins substantially reduce heart attacks and the need for coronary bypass surgery and balloon dilation. The most recent of these, the Heart Protection Study, examined long-term therapy with simvastatin in more than 20,000 people. The use of the statin drug reduced the incidence of heart attacks and strokes by about one third and was effective in people with existing heart disease as well as in those with diabetes, peripheral arterial disease, or a history of stroke. Even people with pretreatment normal cholesterol levels benefited, indicating that lowering cholesterol below current target levels may offer additional protection.

Especially interesting is the suggestion that statins may be beneficial through their ability to reduce inflammation. Inflammation, caused by the deposition of oxidized cholesterol in the arterial wall plays a critical role in CAD, because it makes fatty plaques more vulnerable to rupture, leading to blood clot formation and heart attack. The statins reduce the inflammation in the coronaries, in addition to reducing the cholesterol depositions in the artery wall. Now, studies suggest that statins may also reduce the risk of three other major health problems.

Osteoporosis is a major cause of pain and disability in older persons. Recently, two large observational studies suggest that the use of "statin" drugs may be associated with a decreased risk of bone fractures in people 50 years of age and older. This decreased risk may be related to the drugs anti-inflammatory effect or to the statins' ability to increase bone density.

Elevated cholesterol levels have been associated with the development of Alzheimer's disease and two studies published in 2000 found that statin use reduced the risk



## Heart Star

At first glance, as lean as he is, you would never suspect Monty Lang to have heart disease. But in 1987 at the age of 51 without any warning symptoms, he had an acute heart attack and cardiac arrest. Fortunately, Mr. Lang was resuscitated, quickly treated, and his right coronary artery was opened by balloon dilation. Shortly afterwards, this artery re-closed and required a second balloon procedure. Eight years later, in 1995, he suffered a second heart attack, this time due to an acute blockage of his circumflex artery requiring an additional balloon dilation. Then, Monty sought the help of K. Lance Gould, M.D. to see what he could do to prevent further problems.

Monty did not have all the usual risk factors for heart disease; he was not overweight, he never smoked, he exercised, and his total cholesterol was below 200; but his family history was terrible. All four of his grandparents had coronary artery disease. His father and mother had died of heart attacks. Consequently, Monty became very enthusiastic and a strong proponent Dr. Gould's active "Reversal Plan" adapted specifically for him. He applied his compulsive personality to improving his lifestyle and survival.

Analysis of his cholesterol levels revealed an LDL cholesterol level of 130, an intermediate size LDL particle, a decreased HDL level and an elevated homocysteine of 18. Medications to address these specific abnormalities were started. Minor modifications were made to his diet and exercise routine.

Six and a half years later, Monty is feeling great. He intensely continues his healthy lifestyle, medications, and monitoring of his heart regularly with PET scans every 2-3 years. His latest PET shows improvement throughout the heart. Now he is working on getting his two sons into shape.

"Sticking to the diet is not a problem" Monty exclaims. "And I travel a lot and eat out." He credits K. Lance Gould's scientific explanations and individual attention to his case as his motivators for staying healthy. Monty's enthusiasm for life and intense commitment to productive survival make him a great example of the *Heart Star*.

### Statins Cont'd . . . .

of developing this devastating disease. The exact mechanism for how statins might protect against Alzheimer's is not known since cholesterol lowering agents other than statins did not produce a reduction in risk.

Another unexpected benefit of statin treatment recently emerged from two large studies showing it reduced the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. It is important to stress that although the results of these studies on the effects of statins on osteoporosis, Alzheimer's, and diabetes are promising, these benefits are not yet proven.

Finally, we remind you that taking statins does not "make up for" the high cardiovascular risks of a poor diet, excess weight, smoking, inactivity and high blood pressure. Statins do not alter the abnormal fat surge in the blood after a high fat or high carbohydrate meal in susceptible people. In fact, the best protection from statin treatment is approximately a 50% reduction in cardiovascular risk.

Careful diet-lifestyle control without statin treatment provides an average 40% reduction in cardiovascular risk. The combination of lipid medications and lifestyle control are additive thereby providing the maximal prevention against heart attacks, strokes and bypass or balloon procedures. Therefore, our advice is "stay lean, work out, take your medications and live a long healthy active life".



## Living Healthy

### Making Time for Exercise

The benefits of regular exercise have been documented in the scientific literature since the early 1970s. Regular exercise helps control weight, cholesterol profile, blood pressure, osteoporosis, diabetes and lower risk of heart attacks or cardiovascular deaths. However, despite the common knowledge that exercise is healthful, more than 60 percent of American adults are not regularly active, and 25 percent are not active at all. Fitness frequently takes a back seat to job deadlines, meetings, and overtime. The most frequent excuse for not exercising is lack of time.



Exercise should not be a prison sentence; it should be enjoyable. After all, if you don't enjoy it, you're less likely to stick with it. Many people treat exercise as an all or none phenomena going full guns or not at all. It is important to remember that overdoing it is the best way to doom your exercise program to failure- and it is not necessarily better. Studies have proven that the majority of benefit is gained from just three or four low-impact aerobic sessions per week but preferably 4 or 5 times per week for optimal benefit. Some individuals need the external support of a personal trainer, a workout class or a schedule in a gym. Others prefer a workout alone at home without the distraction of other people or the time required for going to a facility. Any activity is useful, such as walking, jogging, bicycling, repetitive lightweights, weight machines, sports, swimming, calisthenics or physical labor. The important thing is to do something regularly.

Three studies show that the gains in cardio-respiratory fitness are similar for physical activity in several short sessions (10 minutes) as for the same total duration and intensity of one long session. For people who are unable to set aside 30-45 minutes for physical activity, shorter episodes are clearly better than none. Here are some suggestions:



Available through

Rutgers University Press  
100 Joyce Kilmer Ave.  
Piscataway, NJ 08854

Or call: 800-446-9323

### Exercise . . .

- Walk stairs instead of riding the elevator.
- Watch the news while walking on a treadmill or cycling on a stationary bike.
- Park a few blocks from your job and walk.
- Challenge a friend to a game of tennis or racquetball.
- Ride bikes with your kids.
- Leave your desk once in a while to stretch and walk around.
- Instead of a lunch meeting, take a walk to discuss business or other issues.
- Find a walking partner to meet before or after work or at lunch.
- Take your wife or husband dancing.
- Take several short breaks to do weights, half knee bends, push-ups in your office or in your hotel while traveling.
- For morning people, get up a little earlier and exercise.
- For evening people, have a late afternoon snack and work out before supper
- For night people, work out after supper before bedtime.
- When you are tired and draggy, work out to wake up.

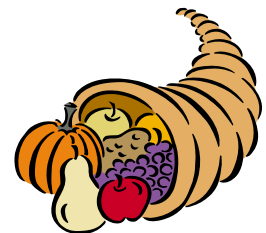
### Barbara's Lettuce Wrap

Sliced Turkey, chicken, salmon, or lean pork  
No Fat Philadelphia Cream cheese or sliced No Fat Cheddar or Swiss Cheese  
Mustard, ketchup or No Fat Mayo  
Bean Sprouts, Avocado, or cucumbers sliced lengthwise

Place ingredients on large piece of Iceberg lettuce and wrap tightly or use large flat pieces of lettuce instead of bread.

### Food Suggestions

Gensoy Delicious Soy Protein Bars- 14 grams of protein, tastes delicious; available in different flavors. Really cuts your appetite when eaten before a meal.



Morningstar Farms Better N Burgers all Vegetable Patties, only 70 calories and 11 grams of protein in a serving; spice the burger up with mustard, ketchup, lettuce, and tomato.

Aqua Cuisine Salmon Burgers-made with pure Alaska Salmon 1.5g fat and 21 gms protein per serving. Available at Sam's Club and Whole Foods

Knorr Gravy Classics gravy Mix-a Rich Fat Free Gravy in different flavors. Use for meats, vegetables, stews, dips. No fat and very few calories.