



# Health Radar

Get Healthy No Matter What Your Age

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## The Healing Power of Coffee

Harvard and Mayo Clinic researchers are finding it fights cancer, dementia, diabetes, and obesity.

By Shana Aborn

Millions of us turn to our morning (or afternoon or after-supper) cup of coffee to help wake us up or stay alert. But what many of us don't realize is that our favorite brew isn't just a pleasant pick-me-up. It's a drink that prevents serious illnesses — and even prolongs your life.

By examining the components of coffee and the health of the people who drink it in high amounts, researchers are discovering that the popular beverage lowers the risk for a host of diseases.

### Mayo Clinic Endorsement

Once upon a time, coffee was looked on as a bad habit. Then scientists began taking a closer look — and made some startling discoveries.

It turns out that those fragrant little beans are actually nutritional powerhouses. “When we think about coffee, we think about caffeine, but coffee has hundreds of compounds, including antioxidants,” says Dr. Donald D. Hensrud, chair of preventive, occupational and space medicine at the Mayo Clinic. “Among

people who drink coffee, it provides more antioxidants than any other food or drink.”

Among coffee's antioxidants are chemicals called *polyphenols* that slow or stop the destructive oxidation of the body's cells, boost the body's immunity, and assist in tissue repair. One polyphenol in particular, *chlorogenic acid*, is considered a “super compound” that gives coffee much of its health-giving power. Chlorogenic acid performs a number of functions in the body, including reducing inflammation and protecting brain cells.

“Other data suggest chlorogenic acid may have a beneficial effect on blood pressure, possibly on cognition, and even have an antibacterial effect,” Dr. Hensrud told Health Radar.

### Coffee for Longer Life

While it would be an exaggeration to call coffee an elixir of youth, evidence does suggest that coffee consumption is linked to longer life. Over a period of 13 years, researchers at the National Institutes of Health studied the habits and longevity of more than 400,000 men and

women between ages 50-71 who participated in the comprehensive NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study. They took into account the amount of coffee they drank and excluded subjects with pre-existing health issues such as cancer and heart disease.

At the end of the study period, the researchers discovered that subjects who drank coffee were not only less likely to die than noncoffee drinkers, but they were also less likely to die of specific diseases such as heart disease, infection, and respiratory illness.

The more coffee they drank, the more their mortality risk lowered.

### Harvard: Coffee Lowers Cancer Risk

The components in coffee are thought to protect against certain forms of cancer. For instance, studies have found that coffee lowers levels of insulin and estrogen, two hormones that have been linked to endometrial cancer. Last year, a long-term study from Harvard found that women ages 34 to 59 who drank four or more cups a day had a 25 percent

lower risk of endometrial cancer. Similarly, research has shown that women who drink five or more daily cups of coffee are 57 percent less likely to develop a form of high-risk breast cancer.

For men, the breakfast brew may be the key to avoiding prostate cancer. A study published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* explains that over a 12-year period, men who drank the largest quantities of coffee — six or more cups per day — had a 60 percent lower risk of the most deadly form of the disease

## Green Coffee Pills: Weight-Loss Miracle?

Green coffee bean extract pills have recently become popular as a weight-loss supplement. And, indeed, studies do show it is effective.

Dr. Lindsey Duncan, a naturopathic doctor in Austin, Texas, explains that green coffee beans are richer in chlorogenic acid than brewed coffee, and the chlorogenic acid both reduces sugar in the blood and keeps glucose from being absorbed into the small intestine. As a result, the liver burns more glycogen and fat. One study found that people who took green coffee bean extract lost an

average of 16 percent of their total body fat, without any additional diet or exercise changes.

However, Dr. Duncan told Health Radar that not all green coffee supplements are created equal; some contain no chlorogenic acid at all. Look for a brand with a certificate of analysis on the label showing its chlorogenic acid content. Avoid supplements that are mixed with other herbs (like African mango). And don't use green coffee bean extract as an excuse to neglect your diet or to stop exercising.

## Health Radar

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and a 20 percent lower chance of developing any type of prostate cancer.

Coffee has also been linked to lowered risk of other forms of cancer. A major long-term study from Harvard Medical School discovered that men who drank at least three cups of caffeinated coffee daily were less likely to develop basal cell carcinoma, a common form of skin cancer. Yet another promising study linked coffee consumption to reduced risk of head and neck tumors.

### Helping Hearts

For years, patients at risk for heart disease were told to limit coffee intake or avoid it altogether because it can raise blood pressure. Now doctors are finding that coffee can actually be good for the heart. A team of researchers from Harvard and other institutions analyzed a number of studies on coffee consumption and heart disease and discovered that moderate coffee intake (about four cups a day) was associated with a lower risk of heart failure. (However, extremely heavy use was linked to higher risk.)

Other studies not only support this finding, they also show a reduced risk of death from other cardiovascular issues such as stroke. The protective power of chlorogenic acid may be at play here again. The antioxidant reduces inflammation, helps release nitric oxide that relaxes arteries and improves the function of the arterial lining.

So while coffee does temporarily elevate blood pressure, it may not be as much of a concern as previously believed. “Coffee seems to raise blood pressure in the short

term, but in our meta-analysis, there were no long-term effects,” Mayo’s Dr. Hensrud told Health Radar.

### Stopping Diabetes

The incidence of Type 2 diabetes is on the rise not only in adults, but in children as well. The disease, which develops slowly over time, involves the body’s inability to produce or use the sugar-regulating hormone insulin. But researchers consistently find that those who drink coffee have a lower risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

One study of nearly 90,000 middle-age women showed that the more coffee they drank daily, the more their risk dropped. Upping coffee intake was also associated with lowered diabetes risk in another comprehensive study, with risk dropping 7 percent with every additional cup. “Diabetes is one instance in which the evidence supporting coffee’s benefits is pretty good,” says Dr. Hensrud.

Why does coffee work so well against the disease? Chinese researchers recently reported that coffee, chlorogenic acid, and another coffee compound called caffeic acid all inhibit the formation of a harmful protein that can collect in the body and destroy pancreatic cells. In addition, chlorogenic acid reduces blood sugar by inhibiting the

release of glucose from the small intestine. Dr. Hensrud adds that decaf coffee has been shown to lower glucose even more than regular java — good news for those who don’t tolerate caffeine well.

### Warding Off Alzheimer’s

New evidence suggests that caffeine consumption, particularly through coffee, may help delay the onset of Alzheimer’s disease, even in adults who are already experiencing mental lapses.

A study this year from the University of South Florida and University of Miami followed 124 patients between ages 65 and 88, testing the caffeine levels in their blood. Over a two- to four-year span, researchers found that lower levels of caffeine were associated with a progression to dementia in patients who already had mild cognitive impairment (MCI). None of the patients with MCI who had higher levels of caffeine in their blood went on to develop dementia. “This case-controlled study provides the first direct evidence that caffeine/coffee intake is associated with a reduced rate of dementia or delayed onset, particularly for those who already have MCI,” said lead researcher Chuanhai Cao.

Coffee consumption has also been linked to lower risk of Parkinson’s disease, depression, and suicide.

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## Making **YOU** Live Healthier

with Mehmet Oz, M.D. & Michael Roizen, M.D.

# Sweet Solution for High Blood Sugar

If you're among the 79 million Americans with prediabetes — higher-than-healthy blood sugar levels that pave the way for diabetes and other health concerns — we've got sweet and sour news.

The sour news? New evidence says high levels of blood sugar double age-related brain shrinkage. That translates into shrinkage of memory and thinking skills.

The sweet news? It's easier than ever to say “no thanks” to prediabetes. Small upgrades in your life (a little weight loss and a little activity) work best. They slash your risk of progressing to diabetes by at least 58 percent; drugs manage only a 31 percent improvement.

Wondering if you have prediabetes? One in three adults does — including half of all people over age 65. Yet fewer than 10 percent of these folks know that their blood sugar is creeping into the not-so-sweet danger zone. So before you say, “Hey, Dr. Mike and Dr. Oz: How did I get diabetes?” get hip to what raises your risk. The hit parade: being older than 44, a bit overweight, exercising fewer than three times a week, eating fried food or red meat more than once a week, having close blood relatives with diabetes or having a family background that is African-American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, Asian-American, or Pacific Islander. Women who've had gestational diabetes or who have delivered a baby weighing 9 pounds or more also are at higher risk.

If any of those MOs sounds familiar or if you're feeling rundown, hungry, thirsty and have some vision issues, it's past time to get your blood sugar level checked.

If you find out your numbers are even a bit high, try these steps to bring them down:

**Lose a little.** Shed 7 percent of your body weight — that's 15 pounds if you now weigh 220. It's enough to shrink deep abdominal fat, which churns out

inflammation-boosting compounds. Those culprits interfere with your body's ability to process blood sugar. Fat promotes insulin resistance.

**Trade one TV show for a walk . . . or move while you watch.** A half-hour stroll instead of those daily reruns of “Friends” is all it takes to lower your risk for diabetes by 30 percent. Sitting on your bum watching TV for two hours a day raises your risk by 23 percent — a great reason to march in place or spin while watching “NCIS”!

**Sip something new.** Switching from sodas to seltzer flavored with a squeeze of lemon or a tall glass of water doubles your chances for losing weight. You sidestep sugars that boost blood glucose and fire up diabetes-promoting inflammation.

**Snack at the farm stand.** The fiber! The vitamins and minerals! Being a produce fan cuts your risk for blood-sugar problems by 30 percent. Pair juicy, fresh fruit and veggies with whole grains (blueberries on your oatmeal, fresh tomatoes over whole-grain noodles).

**Go nuts.** Almond butter at lunch, crunchy almonds in your morning yogurt, a handful of walnuts for a late-afternoon snack — these nuts contain good fats and help your blood sugar, too.

**Choose smart fats.** Try a diet with your only fats coming from odd-numbered omega fatty acids. Omega 3s (found in canola oil, salmon, walnuts, and avocados) and omega-9s (in olive oil) may be a key to reversing prediabetes. Also, supplementing with DHA omega-3s and purified omega-7 seems to decrease triglycerides, and some early human studies indicate that purified omega-7 also may lower LDL cholesterol and inflammatory markers, reduce insulin resistance, and boost HDL.

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# Best-Kept Anti-Aging Secret: Pycnogenol

By Vera Tweed

**P**ycnogenol may be the world's best-kept secret in the fight against growing old.

Even though this supplement has been the subject of more than 300 scientific studies showing its effectiveness, including more than 100 human clinical trials, few people know how to pronounce its name (“pic-noj-en-all”), let alone its wide-ranging benefits.

“Pycnogenol is a multifaceted nutraceutical because it does so much,” says Steven Lamm, M.D., an internist and faculty member at New York University School of Medicine. “It has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. And it plays a vital role in preserving and enhancing wellness.”

## What It Does

Pycnogenol is a very strong antioxidant, meaning it counteracts a bodily process much like internal rusting in a machine, which accelerates aging and predisposes us to all manner of deterioration.

“We have yet to discover all of its properties,” says Dr. Lamm, “but we do know it functions in the body to reduce inflammation, enhance blood flow, reduce clotting, have a positive effect on your lipids — cholesterol and triglycerides — and blood pressure.”

Studies have also found this: Pycnogenol helps to keep blood sugar stable, which helps to reverse diabetes, and reduces complications of the disease.

And, by reducing inflammation and dilating blood vessels, it reduces harmful blood clotting, including swelling in the legs from circulatory disorders. It improves memory, asthma and allergies, arthritis pain, a host of female hormonal issues, blood pressure, varicose veins, and ADHD.

Some studies have tested the supplement on people who were taking medications for heart disease or other conditions, and have found no negative drug interactions.

When scientists at the American Botanical Council reviewed nearly 80 human and safety studies, they cautioned only against pregnant women taking Pycnogenol during the first trimester — not because there was evidence of danger but because safety tests on pregnant women have not been done.

## What It Is

The supplement, whose awkward name was coined by a French doctor who discovered it in 1948, is a patented extract of the bark of a pine tree that grows only in coastal regions of southwest France, near the wine region of Bordeaux. It's available in supplements and in skin-care products in health-food stores, many drugstores, and some discount superstores such as Costco.

## Why It's Underused

Considering it has proven effective against so many conditions, it is astounding that Pycnogenol has flown under

the radar for so many years. This may be due to the fact that it is a proprietary supplement supplied by only one company, Horphag Research.

## How to Use It

As a general guide, Dr. Lamm recommends 50-100 mg daily of Pycnogenol. Divide the daily total into two or three doses and always take it with food. Side effects, such as an upset stomach, headaches, or dizziness, are very rare but more likely if Pycnogenol is taken on an empty stomach.

Studies have found these daily amounts to be beneficial for different conditions:

- ADHD, 1 mg per kilogram of body weight (Divide weight in pounds by 2.2. For example, 100 lbs divided by 2.2 = 45, so 45 mg would be the daily dose for a child weighing 100 lbs.)
- Allergies, 100 mg.
- Asthma, 1 mg per pound of body weight.
- Blood vessel improvement in people with coronary artery disease, 200 mg.
- High cholesterol, 120–150 mg.
- Chronic venous insufficiency (where blood vessels can't pump enough blood to the heart), 150–360 mg.
- Diabetes, 50–200 mg.
- Endometriosis, 60 mg.
- Erectile dysfunction, 120 mg.
- High blood pressure, 100–200 mg.
- Memory improvement, 150 mg.
- Menstrual cramps, 30–60 mg.
- Muscle cramps, 200 mg.
- Osteoarthritis, 100–150 mg.

# ‘Lifesize’ Weight-Loss Strategy: Portion Control Made Easy

By Nick Tate

The way Myles Berkowitz sees it, too many diet plans are failing overweight Americans because they are driven by what he describes as a nutritional policy of “no.”

No, you can’t have a hamburger or a taco. No pizza, either. No fast foods, no high-carb meals, no dairy products, no sweets.

But Berkowitz and his business partner, personal trainer Steven Kates, think there’s a better way. That’s why the two have created a new weight-loss plan — the “Lifesize” diet program — that allows overweight people to say “yes” to their favorite foods, even fatty, high-carb, sugary foods. You can eat anything you like.

The catch? You limit your portion sizes using plastic measuring devices. This simple approach has won over tens of thousands of dieters and many health experts, who extoll its in-moderation-only approach to weight loss.

“We have a problem with a lot of the diet and weight-loss messages that are out there in the media,” Berkowitz told Health Radar. “The mainstream diet advice out there is that you should only eat lean proteins and more fruits and vegetables, and every now and then one of these diet trends happens — low carb, low fat, metabolic. The problem is, none of those messages are working.”

The reason, Berkowitz argues, is because most diet plans tell people they can’t eat the foods they love and/or they have to eat foods they don’t like. “At Lifesize we don’t tell people they should or shouldn’t eat anything at all. We tell them they should just eat what they love.”

The trick, he says, is helping overweight individuals figure out how to enjoy their food while eating only enough to feel satisfied.

“You’re not going to take McDonald’s away from the American people, and any diet that pushes that idea is not going to work, and that’s why those diets fail.”

The Lifesize plan stems from a conversation in 2006 in which Kates told Berkowitz that the healthiest people at his gym — including many super-fit actors and actresses — ate whatever they wanted but in moderation. From that meeting the Lifesize plan was born.

Lifesize relies on plastic bowls and measuring devices for food groups like carbohydrates, meats, and dairy. The containers are marked with letters to signify the foods — “M” for meats, “C” for carbs, “D” for dairy, etc. The Lifesize kit — which is available for \$79.99 at [lifesizeportion.com](http://lifesizeportion.com) — includes eight measuring devices for meat, carbs, dairy, toppings, goodies, baked goods, liquids, and “saucy dishes” (Chinese food, chili, casseroles).

Besides measured portions of these different kinds of foods, the plan also allows for unlimited quantities of “free foods,” which include all fruits, most vegetables, low-fat yogurt and nonfried potatoes.

To verify that the Lifesize plan works to help people lose weight, Kates and Berkowitz commissioned a study from Colorado State University. Researchers tracked 27 people who spent 12 weeks on the program. Participants lost up to 15 pounds — a rate similar to Weight Watchers — and they reduced their daily caloric intake by an average of 500 calories. What’s more, only 7 percent of those in the study said they felt deprived.

Berkowitz acknowledges Lifesize’s approach was inspired by his own confusion about nutrition. He believes that’s partly what makes the plan so appealing: It is easy for anyone to use. Berkowitz himself lost 46 pounds in a year by following the program — weight he has not gained back in five years.

Lifesize soared in popularity after the partners made an appearance on the Home Shopping Network last year. Berkowitz says the appeal of the plan is that it’s easy to use.

“It’s really not based on any magic formula,” he says. “It’s all about calories in versus calories out. When you eat less food, you eat less carbs, you eat less fat. It covers everything. That’s how you lose weight, it’s that simple.”

# Can Flower Power Heal You?

The use of flower essences to cure emotional problems is growing fast.

By Jane Wheatley

Most of us have our own ways of dealing with emotional difficulty. I agree with the late Nora Ephron who said that having her hair blow-dried twice a week was cheaper than psychoanalysis and far more uplifting.

But for many people, a couple of drops of flower essence on the tongue is just the ticket. Feeling indecisive? Try scleranthus.

Find yourself down in the dumps? Mustard should buck you up.

Even an acute emotion such as terror may be assuaged with four drops of rock rose taken every half hour until equilibrium is restored.

Back in the 1930s, English physician Edward Bach became so convinced of the healing qualities of plants that he relinquished a respectable medical practice to develop his flower remedies. Dr. Bach scoured the countryside and his own garden for plants, extracting their essence and, by trial and error, assigned each one to a particular emotional state.

Dr. Bach did not live long enough to witness the vindication of his theories, dying at the age of 50. But his followers continued his work, and these days they send out some 160,000 bottles of flower essence every week from his former home. The Bach Center in Wallingford, England, also trains practitioners from 60 countries in the use of healing extracts.

Stefan Ball, a director at the center, admits he was skeptical at first. He was converted after taking mimulus, commonly called monkey flower, to ease his anxiety about a new teaching job.

“I was amazed at how much better I coped,” he said.

A common conclusion is that these remedies work as placebos: a patient is listened to, feels understood, takes the prescribed remedy and feels better. Not true, says Ball, who tells the story of a man whose wife irritated him by preparing tinctures in their kitchen, so she secretly doctored his drink with beech essence, a remedy for intolerance.

“A few days later she was making another tincture and saw him standing in the doorway looking puzzled; he couldn’t understand why he wasn’t annoyed,” says Ball.

Bach remedies took off in the ‘80s. “It is about restoring equilibrium,” according to Ball.

“A lady came to us suffering with very painful arthritis. She talked about how she felt and we mixed the remedies accordingly. She reported later that she felt so much better. The arthritis was still there of course, but it didn’t bother her so much. This is not about killer cures, but a gentle process, helping people to feel more comfortable in their skin.”

Dr. Bach’s aim was to keep his remedies simple so people could treat themselves, explains Ball. “We tell our students: ‘You sign up to the idea that success means losing your clients.’”

Most people, such as herbalist Sarah Furey, use them as one element of a holistic practice.

“Flower essences can gently release stuck emotions,” she says. “It could be grief about loss or a form of post-traumatic stress that is triggered repeatedly.”

“They are also good at clearing away resentment and anger — emotions that may be revealed and examined during a consultation. I use them alongside counseling.”

I took a friend, Rose, with me to the Bach Center who was having sleepless nights over anger at her boyfriend.

The practitioner prescribed a blend of white chestnut, pin, and holly. I called Rose after she’d been taking the drops eight times a day for two weeks; she announced that she was feeling much better and sleeping well. “I don’t know if it’s autosuggestion,” she said, “but I don’t care.”

Although the flower essence movement started in England, there are now more than 100 practitioners in the U.S., and you can find them on the Bach website at [bachcentre.com](http://bachcentre.com).

The site also lists which extracts are helpful for various conditions. Some examples: Aspen tincture is touted as a treatment for anxiety, gorse for feelings of despair, hornbeam for tiredness, rock rose for feelings of fright.

# Sciatica: Finding Relief for the Excruciating Pain

**Q: What exactly is sciatica?**

**A:** Sciatica refers to the varied symptoms of pain that arise when the sciatic nerve or its branches become irritated.

This is the longest nerve in your body and runs from your spinal column, laterally across your buttocks and down the back of the leg. The pain can range from simply annoying to absolutely excruciating. Usually only one leg is affected. It's estimated that 40 percent of adults will suffer from this condition at one time or another.

**Q: What causes sciatica?**

**A:** The most likely cause is a bulging or herniated disk pressing on the nerves as they exit the spinal column. But trauma from an accident or injury can also cause it.

Spinal stenosis, the narrowing of the one or more areas in the spine, is another factor. We come across some cases of sciatica caused by piriformis syndrome. The piriformis is a large muscle that travels from the lower spine and connects to your thighbone.

When this muscle becomes tight or spasms, the sciatic nerve can be compressed. Prolonged sitting or accidents may cause this syndrome. Spinal tumors are rare, but may trigger sciatic pain as they grow, compressing the nerve roots.

**Q: What is the best treatment?**

**A:** Treatment is varied. In many cases, sciatica responds well to self-care. You can take over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medications or pain-control medications like Tylenol to get relief.

Rest is important to allow the nerves and inflammation to settle down. Applying alternating hot and cold packs to the affected area may provide relief.

**Q: At what point should a person with sciatica see a doctor?**

**A:** If your symptoms don't subside in a week or two, you should seek medical help. After a careful

evaluation, your doctor may try injections of anti-inflammatory medications directly into the nerve, epidural injections along the spine to help treat the herniated or bulging disk, or prescribe physical therapy that would include stretching exercises to relieve the symptoms.

As a very last resort, there are several surgical procedures to remove or correct the root cause of the sciatica. Please note that if along with sciatica pain you experience muscle weakness, or bowel and bladder dysfunction, you need immediate medical attention.

**Q: Are there nondrug or alternative cures for sciatica?**

**A:** Some patients have found relief with acupuncture, chiropractic, massage therapy, and even hypnosis.

These therapies are worth trying, have few dangers, and may provide relief. It's important to choose a qualified or licensed therapist, however, if you choose to take any of these alternative routes.

**Q: Once a person gets relief, how can they stop sciatica from coming back?**

**A:** Sciatica is certainly a condition that often recurs, so it's important to be proactive. If you've had physical therapy to treat your sciatica, perform those stretches and exercises daily to keep your back healthy.

Work out regularly to strengthen your back and core muscles, which are essential for proper alignment. Use a chair with good back support or place a pillow or rolled towel in the small of your back to maintain a proper spinal curve. If you work at a computer, take frequent breaks to walk around.

**Dr. Brian Bacot** is an international authority on sciatica and back pain. He is president and CEO of Comprehensive Orthopaedic Global located in St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands.





# Make Yourself ‘Heart Attack Proof’

Little-used but crucial blood test finds heart disease before it’s too late, says top cardiologist.

By Charlotte Libov

It’s a common scenario: You go to your doctor for your annual checkup and undergo a standard blood test for cholesterol. If you fall within the normal range, you breathe a sigh of relief. You have nothing to worry about, right?

Wrong, says top cardiologist Michael Ozner, M.D., medical director of the Cardiovascular Prevention Institute of South Florida.

“Half of the people who have heart attacks have normal cholesterol levels. We are missing the boat by simply measuring cholesterol — instead we should also be measuring the number of particles that carry cholesterol,” he says.

Dr. Ozner says there is a relatively new form of cholesterol testing that can uncover hidden heart risk and save your life. In his new book, *Heart Attack Proof*, he contends that millions of people are living with a false sense of security because of outmoded cholesterol testing, and underestimating their risk of cardiovascular disease.

“Americans are simply taking the wrong tests, measuring the wrong things, and standing by while heart attacks unnecessarily claim the lives of millions,” he told Health Radar.

Chief among these tests is the standard cholesterol test. This test,

developed nearly 40 years ago, was once the best available, says Dr. Ozner.

But these days, an enhanced “advanced lipid test” is far superior because it provides information not only about the amount of cholesterol in the blood, but how it is comprised.

“We are at the dawn of a new era where we have advanced cholesterol tests, which can go beyond the standard lipid profiles and save lives,” he says.

Cholesterol is a necessary fat, or lipid, which occurs naturally in the body. However, too much cholesterol in the blood can form atherosclerotic plaques, which are like pimples in the artery walls, which lead to heart attacks and strokes.

The standard cholesterol test doctors typically use provides information on low-density (LDL) “bad” cholesterol, high-density (HDL) “good” cholesterol, and triglycerides, a fat in the blood that also increases heart disease risk.

This test falls short because it does not provide information on either apoB or LDL-P levels, which are measurements that refer to the number of cholesterol particles the blood contains.

“It’s not that the standard lipid profile is worthless — it’s not. But standard cholesterol testing uncovers only 40 percent of a person’s risk of cardiovascular

disease while advanced lipid test uncovers 90 percent,” Dr. Ozner says.

Particle count is crucial information because of the way cholesterol is transported in the body. As a fatty substance, cholesterol does not mix naturally with blood, which is mostly water, so it must be transported through the body in particle form.

When there are too many LDL cholesterol particles, the excess particles can lodge in the walls of the coronary arteries, become oxidized, and form potentially deadly atherosclerotic plaques.

“You can think of the particles as cars and cholesterol molecules as passengers. It is the number of cars, not the number of passengers in the cars that causes a traffic jam. Likewise, it is the number of cholesterol-carrying particles and not the amount of cholesterol in the particles that put you at increased risk of a heart attack” Dr. Ozner says.

In *Heart Attack Proof* he outlines a plan to prevent or reverse heart disease using lifestyle changes, weight loss, diet, exercise, supplements, and, in some cases, medications. But the key, says Dr. Ozner, is knowing if you are at risk — and that’s why the advanced lipid test is so important.

The test is performed at most comprehensive medical labs, but doctors do not routinely order it.

When you go for a physical, you should insist that your doctor include this test, which is often covered by insurance, says Dr. Ozner.

# Skipping PSA Test Could Cost Your Life

Top prostate cancer surgeon urges men to get the screening — despite new guidelines to the contrary.

By Sylvia Booth Hubbard

**M**en, if you've been thinking of skipping your routine PSA screening because of new prostate cancer guidelines, think again.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force has recommended that healthy men skip regular screening. But David Samadi, M.D., one of the nation's leading experts on PSA screening and prostate surgery, tells Health Radar the recommendations are a tragic mistake — a mistake that could have deadly consequences for many men.

"The recommendations were irresponsible," said Dr. Samadi, vice chairman of the Department of Urology at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York. "The PSA test saves lives. I've seen young men diagnosed with aggressive prostate cancer who had PSA tests only because getting life insurance required it — and that test saved their lives."

In making its controversial recommendation, the task force said the PSA frequently leads to needless biopsies and life-altering treatments for cancer that isn't life-threatening. The panel said prostate cancer is overtreated, and that routine PSA screenings should be stopped.

Since then, experts have weighed in on both sides of the

issue, leaving many patients and doctors confused about whether to test or not to test.

"Test," Dr. Samadi says emphatically. "The recommendations were irresponsible."

More than 32,000 American men die of prostate cancer each year. "Those numbers will go up" because of the new guidelines, says Dr. Samadi, a pioneer in robotic surgery for prostate cancer.

The problem, he says, isn't the PSA test itself, which is critical to discovering deadly prostate cancer early. The problem is how the PSA test results are used.

The PSA test measures the amount of prostate-specific antigen in the blood. While elevated levels can indicate prostate cancer, they can also be caused by other factors, including inflammation. "The PSA test alone can't tell you if you have prostate cancer," Dr. Samadi notes.

A high PSA shouldn't automatically lead to a biopsy, he says, but too many doctors routinely order them. "It's a knee-jerk reaction," he said. "Not every high PSA test means biopsy, and not every positive biopsy means surgery."

The key, says Dr. Samadi, is getting the right doctor, and that involves looking closely at a urologist's qualifications. "If your PSA is elevated, you should look

for an expert in PSA testing and prostate cancer. Some urologists — like me — deal only with PSA and prostate cancer."

High PSA readings should never result in cookie-cutter treatments, and making sure you get the right treatment for you is where a doctor's expertise is vital. "Doctors should individualize care and look at the patient's history, the physical exam and other factors, and then make recommendations," Dr. Samadi said.

"An elevated PSA could be from a benign enlarged prostate, from recent sexual activity, inflammation or prostatitis, or prostate cancer. If someone comes into my office with an elevated PSA, the first thing I do is examine the patient. If there is a nodule that is an irregularity, then they need a biopsy.

"If there's a history of high PSA and the prostate is enlarged but there's no irregularity, I may give him some antibiotics for two weeks to make sure we rule out infection or inflammation, and then repeat the test. If the PSA goes down, we just saved this guy a biopsy."

Even if you are diagnosed with prostate cancer, you have several options — and not all of them include surgery. But if you do need surgery, new techniques can prevent incontinence and preserve sexual function, two fears that stop many men from undergoing PSA screening.

The bottom line? Get screened, says Dr. Samadi: "This test can save your life."

# The Newest Treatments: Relief for Ulcerative Colitis

Compiled exclusively by Health Radar, here are the most significant new drugs and medical devices that have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

## Ulcerative Colitis

Humira (adalimumab) has been approved for moderate-to-severe ulcerative colitis. Humira — a type of drug called an anti-tumor necrosis factor that's designed to suppress abnormal inflammatory and immune responses — has already been approved to treat a host of other conditions, including rheumatoid arthritis and Crohn's disease. Ulcerative colitis causes inflammation and ulcers in the inner lining of the large intestine. It affects about 620,000 people in the U.S. The most common side effects of Humira include infection, headache, and rash, according to the FDA.

## Prostate Cancer

Xtandi (enzalutamide) has been approved to treat men with prostate cancer that has spread despite treatment with standard therapies aimed at minimizing the effects of testosterone, which stimulates prostate tumors to grow. Xtandi has been approved for prostate cancer patients previously treated with another anti-cancer drug, docetaxel. Xtandi, given priority FDA review, was evaluated in clinical studies of almost 1,200 men with metastatic, hormone treatment-resistant prostate cancer who had taken docetaxel previously. Average survival among those who took Xtandi was 18.4 months, compared with 13.6 months among those who took a placebo.

## Colon Cancer

Stivarga (regorafenib) has been shown to extend the lives of those who have colorectal cancer that has spread despite prior treatment. The drug belongs to a class called multikinase inhibitors, which are designed to block enzymes that promote cancer growth. The most common side effects of the new drug include weakness, fatigue, loss of appetite, diarrhea, and mouth sores. The drug also carries a

warning that it could cause severe and fatal liver problems.

## Breast Cancer

The sono-v Automated Breast Ultrasound System (ABUS) is the first ultrasound device to help doctors detect potential tumors in women with dense breast tissue. About 40 percent of women who get mammogram screenings have dense breasts, which have a high amount of connective and glandular tissue. These women are at above-average risk of developing breast cancer. Dense breasts may be seen on mammograms as solid white areas, making it difficult for doctors to spot potential tumors. The device is approved for women who have had a negative mammogram and no breast cancer symptoms.

## Multiple Sclerosis

Aubagio (teriflunomide), a once-a-day tablet, treats adults with relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis (MS). MS is among the most common causes of neurological disability in young adults. The drug's label contains the FDA's most stringent black box warning, alerting doctors and patients to the possibility of deadly liver problems. Doctors are advised to perform blood tests of liver function before and during treatment. Aubagio's label also advises that the drug could harm a developing fetus. So, women of childbearing age must have a negative pregnancy test before beginning treatment.

## Irregular Heartbeat

The S-ICD system is the first cardiac defibrillator that doesn't require a hard-wired connection to the heart. Standard defibrillators — designed to deliver an electric pulse and suppress a rapid or irregular heartbeat — have used an electrical wire called a lead that's inserted through a vein directly into the heart. The S-ICD system, by contrast, uses a lead that's implanted just below the skin along the bottom of the rib cage. It's not sanctioned for people who require a pacemaker, the FDA warned.

**LESS SALT, LESS CANCER**

You already know that putting down the salt shaker can lower your risk of high blood pressure and stroke, but did you know it can also reduce your risk of cancer? The World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) says salt intake should be less than 5 grams a day — the average American gets 8.6 grams — and that salt and salt-preserved foods are a leading cause of stomach cancer. Since so much salt is in processed foods, the WCRF urges governments to more prominently label the amount of salt in foods.

**CHOCOLATE PREVENTS STROKE**

A study published in the journal *Neurology* found that men who eat chocolate every week lower their risk of stroke — and it didn't have to be dark chocolate. A Swedish study of more than 37,000 men over a 10-year period found that men who ate about one-third cup of chocolate chips each week reduced their risk of stroke by 19 percent. And for every one-quarter cup increase in chocolate consumption per week, the risk of stroke decreased an additional 14 percent. Researchers speculate that the benefit is due to healthful flavonoids in chocolate.



**POMEGRANATE BOOSTS HEART**

Pomegranate juice improves cardiovascular health, say researchers at the U.K.'s Sheffield Hallam University. A randomized, placebo-controlled study found

that drinking about 12 ounces of pomegranate juice daily for four weeks caused a significant fall in three markers for cardiovascular health — systolic blood pressure, diastolic blood pressure, and mean arterial pressure.

**MEDITERRANEAN DIET PROTECTS BONES**

The Mediterranean diet may do more than just protect your heart: A Spanish study found that eating a Mediterranean diet enriched with olive oil for two years protects aging bones.

Participants in the study were randomly assigned to three groups: Mediterranean diet with mixed nuts, Mediterranean diet with virgin olive oil, and a low-fat diet. After two years, researchers found that only the men on the Mediterranean diet with olive oil showed a significant increase in the amounts of bone-forming markers in the blood, while serum calcium decreased significantly in the other two groups.

**SHORT RING FINGERS PREDICT CANCER SURVIVAL**

Men whose ring fingers are shorter than their index fingers seem to have an edge when it comes to surviving prostate cancer. Tests show that they respond better to dutasteride (Avodart), a drug that treats prostate cancer by blocking the effects of testosterone on the prostate.

“These results suggest finger length might predict the response to dutasteride treatment,” the researchers wrote. A previous study found that men with short ring fingers had a lower risk of getting prostate cancer in the first place.

**PLASTIC CHEMICAL NARROWS ARTERIES**

Researchers have found a link between Bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical commonly found in

**“FIT AFTER 50” FACT**

Resveratrol, the “miracle molecule” found in the skins of grapes used to make red wine, may help improve mobility in seniors and prevent life-threatening falls. “Our study suggests that a natural compound like resveratrol, which can be obtained either through dietary supplementation or diet itself, could actually decrease some of the motor deficiencies that are seen in our aging population,” said Jane E. Cavanaugh of Pittsburgh’s Duquesne University.

plastic containers and canned foods, and severe narrowing of the arteries. A new study found that those with severe coronary artery disease had significantly higher concentrations of BPA in their urine than those with normal arteries.

“BPA may be adding to known risk factors for heart disease,” said Professor David Melzer of the University of Exeter. BPA is used in some plastic food and drink containers and in the can lining of many canned foods.

**OBESITY SPEEDS MENTAL DECLINE**

If you’re middle-aged and overweight, you might want to start shedding those extra pounds now if you want to maintain your mental edge, says a study published in *Neurology*. French researchers found that those who were both obese and also had metabolic risk factors such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol showed a mental decline that was 22.5 percent faster than that of normal weight people.

**DIABETES DRUGS RAISE  
BLADDER CANCER RISK**

Diabetics who take thiazolidinedione (TZD) drugs for five or more years raise their risk of developing bladder cancer up to threefold when compared to those who take sulfonylurea drugs to control their blood sugar levels, says a new study.

The findings are especially important, say the researchers, because diabetics are already at an increased risk of bladder cancer. Popular TZD drugs, which are used to control Type 2 diabetes, include Actos and Avandia. Sulfonylurea drugs include Glucotrol. TZD drugs account for up to 20 percent of the drugs prescribed to diabetics in the U.S.

**MAYO CLINIC:  
BELLY FAT KILLS**

A roll of belly fat — even if your weight is normal — is worse for your heart than being obese, says a new study from the Mayo Clinic.

Researchers found that people who had visceral fat, which is fat around abdominal organs, were at higher risk of dying from heart disease than those who were obese.

“We knew from previous research that central obesity is bad, but what is new in this research is that the distribution of the fat is very important even in people with a normal weight,” says senior author Francisco Lopez-Jimenez, a cardiologist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

“This group has the highest death rate, even higher than those who are considered obese based on body mass index.”

**LONELINESS LEADS  
TO ALZHEIMER’S**

Feeling lonely, say UCLA researchers, is linked to an increased risk of Alzheimer’s disease, heart disease, depression, and premature death. An eight-week program of

mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) had subjects perform mental exercises that made them focus on the present and not the past or future.

The participants, who were between the ages of 55 and 85, meditated for half an hour and reported they felt less lonely. In addition, blood tests showed that MBSR also altered the genes and protein markers for inflammation. Chronic inflammation is a major contributor to many diseases of aging.



**GINGER AIDS WEIGHT LOSS**

Including ginger as a part of your breakfast boosts your metabolism and curbs your appetite, according to a study at Columbia University. Scientists divided a group of overweight but healthy men into two groups. One group was given a standard breakfast while the second group got the same breakfast with the addition of a ginger tea made with 2 grams of dried ginger powder.

Men who drank the ginger tea burned more calories than the non- ginger group, even though energy expenditure in both groups was the same. The ginger-drinking men also ate less food throughout the day.

**COQ10 SLOWS HUNTINGTON’S**

Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) may slow the progression of Huntington’s disease, an inherited neurodegenerative disorder that destroys nerve cells in the brain.

University of Rochester researchers gave Huntington’s patients 1,200 mg of CoQ10 daily for eight weeks followed by 3,600 mg for 12 additional weeks. At the end of the study, patients had a 20 percent reduction in a key marker for Huntington’s. Researchers believe that Huntington’s is caused by oxidative stress in brain cells, which CoQ10 supplements prevent.

**SLEEP APNEA DOUBLES  
FATAL CANCER RISK**

Sleep apnea, a chronic condition characterized by snoring and frequent pauses in breathing during sleep, can double the risk of dying of cancer. During a seven-year study of more than 5,600 patients, Spanish researchers found that people who had the most severe apnea were twice as likely to get cancer during the study. Treatments, such as wearing masks that deliver oxygen during sleep (CPAP), can reduce the risk.

**NEW PARKINSON’S HOPE**

A new, powerful class of antioxidants called synthetic triterpenoids may be a potent treatment for Parkinson’s disease. The disease affects a person’s ability to control their movements as their brain produces less dopamine, a neurotransmitter that controls movement. Researchers at the Medical College of Georgia used triterpenoids to block the death of dopamine-producing cells in the brains of animal models.

**TOMATOES LOWER  
STROKE RISK**

A groundbreaking new study links tomatoes to lower stroke risk in men. The research, published in *Neurology*, found that men with high blood levels of lycopene had a 55 percent lower chance of having a stroke. Lycopene is a powerful antioxidant found in high amounts in tomatoes.

# Winter Squash: The Perfect Autumn Food

Whether butternut, acorn or pumpkin — squashes are nutritional powerhouses.

By Dieter Hogen

Winter squash (members of the plant family *Cucurbitaceae*) come in many different varieties, with butternut, acorn, and even pumpkins being the most popular ones. They are not just perfect for making those beautiful, sometimes scary-looking sculptures before Halloween, but for eating as well.

Winter squash are nutritional powerhouses with a wide range of health benefits. They are incredibly versatile in the kitchen and can be used for making everything from pies and muffins, to breads and stews. They provide high amounts of vitamins A, B, and C, cancer-fighting phytochemicals, and the minerals potassium and magnesium.

Studies suggest that certain components in pumpkins called protein-bound polysaccharides can help improve blood glucose levels and have cell-protective and antioxidative effects.

## Super Soup

Hearty soups are a popular and excellent way to serve squash. Winter squash fans talk about how

A world-renowned nutrition expert and Olympic athletic coach, **Dieter Hogen** created a nutrition and training regimen in the 1990s that changed the elite athletes' training paradigm forever. Schooled at Potsdam University in Germany, Dieter brings his nutritional knowledge to Health Radar with one goal in mind: "To simply make you healthier and more energetic, no matter your age or current physical condition."



these vegetables have a "warming effect" on the body. I couldn't agree more. To enhance this feeling I personally add finely grated fresh ginger to my pumpkin soup recipe — delicious!

Because squashes already contain high amounts of carbohydrates — for example one cup of raw pumpkin has 8 grams of carbs, acorn and butternut twice that much — avoid adding too much flour or cream to squash soups and stews. They just add lots of unnecessary calories. Winter squash on its own provides a thick, creamy, and satisfying base.

## Squashing Cancer

Don't throw out the seeds! They have a great nutty taste and can be eaten raw or roasted. They contain

lots of protein and healthy fats (an ounce of dried pumpkin seeds has 7 grams of protein and 13 grams of healthy fat). Squash seeds are also high in vitamin K, minerals, and phytochemicals that can lower your risk for gastric, breast, lung, prostate, bladder, and colorectal cancer. They strengthen the immune

system, contribute to good vision, strong bones, and cardiovascular health.

I like to dry roast pumpkin seeds in an open skillet until they are light brown and pop. They fill the house with a wonderful smell and so far I haven't met anyone who does not like them, both the smell and taste. Enjoy them as a snack instead of chips or pretzels.

In the fall you can find excellent local winter squash in just about every part of the country. Look for them at farmer's markets, roadside stands, u-pick farms, and certainly grocery stores. When shopping, be sure they are firm and feel heavy for their size.

The world's biggest squash was grown in 2010 by Chris Stevens of New Richmond, Wis. His pumpkin weighed in at a record 1,810.5 pounds. That's a lot of healthy squash soup!

### "FIT AFTER 50" FACT

We all know the "apple a day" saying — but a new study shows that eating one of the fruits each day may indeed keep the cardiologist away. New research in the *Journal of Functional Foods* found that healthy, middle-age adults who ate one apple every day for four weeks succeeded in lowering their "bad" cholesterol by 40 percent. Participants ate either Red or Golden Delicious varieties of apples.

# Artificial Popcorn Butter Flavoring Linked to Brain, Lung Damage

By Nick Tate

**P**opcorn buffs beware: The artificial flavoring in microwave popcorn may damage your brain and lungs. The chemical PD (short for 2,3-pentanedione) — a key ingredient in fake butter used in a variety of processed foods — is a respiratory hazard that can also alter the genes in brain cells, a new animal study suggests.

PD was developed as an alternative to another chemical in artificial butter flavoring called DA (diacetyl) that was found to cause bronchiolitis obliterans — a life-threatening disease sometimes called “popcorn workers’ lung” — in food plant workers who inhaled the substance. The latest study, conducted by the National

Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, indicates PD is no safer than DA.

Ann F. Hubbs, who headed the study, said the findings show consumers should avoid artificial flavorings.

“Our study also supports established recommendations that flavorings should be substituted only when there is evidence that the substitute is less toxic than the agent it replaces,” she said.

Hubbs’ findings are based on tests of rats exposed to different concentrations of PD, DA, and filtered air. Researchers examined the brains, lungs, and nasal tissues of the rats after they were exposed and found PD caused significant problems in the animals’ respiratory systems and brains.

## “FIT AFTER 50” FACT

Many people walk to stay fit, but a surprising new study found that you may need to move faster to get health benefits. Research published in the *British Medical Journal* showed that walking for an hour a day made no difference in preventing metabolic syndrome, an adverse health condition that can lead to heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Meanwhile, fast walking or jogging was found to cut in half the risk for heart disease and stroke. “Intensity rather than volume of physical activity is important,” the authors concluded.

## New Study: Soap Chemical May Cause Heart Malfunction

**T**riclosan — a common antibacterial chemical used in hand soaps and personal-care products — may cause muscle impairment, including heart problems, an alarming new study has found.

“Triclosan is found in virtually everyone’s home and is pervasive in the environment,” warned Isaac Pessah, chair of the Department of Molecular Biosciences in the UC-Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, who headed up the animal study. “These findings provide strong evidence that

the chemical is of concern to both human and environmental health.”

Triclosan hinders muscle contractions at the cellular level, slows swimming in fish, and reduces muscular strength in mice, the study found. The findings, published online in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, raise new concerns about the chemical, widely used in antibacterial hand soaps, deodorants, mouthwashes, toothpaste, bedding, clothes, carpets, toys, trash bags and other

products.

“Regulatory agencies should definitely be reconsidering whether (triclosan) should be allowed in consumer products,” said Pessah. Triclosan has long been a chemical that has concerned scientists. But now, in the wake of the new report, manufacturing giant Johnson & Johnson announced plans to phase out its use of triclosan in its products by 2015. To avoid triclosan, look for it on the ingredient label of household products.

## Prostate Surgery With No Risk of Impotence

Many men dread prostate surgery because of the life-altering side effects, which include impotence and incontinence. Now, a new minimally invasive treatment for enlarged prostate could end these worries.

The current treatment is to cut out a portion of the enlarged prostate. The new procedure, called prostatic artery embolization, is done under local anesthetic. It uses a catheter to inject microscopic plastic beads into the blood vessels that supply the prostate.

X-ray television monitors ensure precise placement of the beads, which reduce blood flow to the prostate, reducing its size.

“With the possibility of faster recovery — on an outpatient basis — and with no bladder catheters, reduced symptoms, improved urination, and fewer potential side effects, prostatic artery embolization could signal a bold new change in accepted prostate therapy,” said Dr. Ziv Haskal, a professor of radiology and surgery at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and editor in chief of the *Journal of Vascular and Interventional Radiology*.

## Vaccine Reverses Type 1 Diabetes

A tuberculosis vaccine may be the key to conquering Type 1 diabetes, the form of diabetes caused by the body’s immune system turning on itself and destroying insulin-producing cells in the pancreas.

Formerly known as juvenile diabetes, the disease is now considered incurable, but the Bacillus Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine appears to be able to regenerate the insulin cells, say researchers. Even small doses of the vaccine killed autoimmune T cells that destroy insulin-producing cells and

appeared to restore insulin production in patients who had the disease for at least 15 years.

“Our findings show that this simple, inexpensive vaccine modifies the autoimmunity underlying Type 1 diabetes,” said Denise Faustman, M.D., director of Massachusetts General Hospital. “This is not a prevention trial.

“We are trying to create a regimen that will actually reverse Type 1 diabetes in people who are living with the disease.”

## Stopping Heart Attacks By Stopping Inflammation

Even though cholesterol is usually blamed for plaque buildup in arteries that results in heart attacks, research indicates it has a key partner in crime: inflammation.

Experts now believe it is possible to create a vaccine to stop the buildup by stopping the inflammation. Researchers at the La Jolla Institute for Allergy & Immunology say a type of immunity cell, called CD4 T, is responsible for the inflammation that forms heart attack-causing plaque.

They say a vaccine could make the body tolerant of the CD4 T and stop the inflammatory attack. If a vaccine was used in conjunction with statins, “Together they could deliver a nice one-two punch that could be important in further reducing heart disease,” said study leader Dr. Klaus Ley.

## Skin Patch Cures Deadly Peanut Allergy

A stick-on patch called Viaskin Peanut can stop deadly peanut allergies, which affect more than 2 million Americans. The patch, which is about the size of a quarter, contains peanut proteins that deliver small amounts of the allergen gradually, so that the body’s immune cells become desensitized to peanuts and no longer mount a full-scale defense, which results in a life-threatening reaction called anaphylactic shock.

The patch is beginning an international clinical trial including 200 people with severe peanut allergies.

Currently, there are no desensitization treatments for peanut allergies, and two recent studies have shown that the number of victims is skyrocketing — doubling in the past five years.

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