

I am continuing an article series on a new common sense, science based approach to restoring and maintaining health.

First I want to share more examples of why our current approach is not working. Last week I gave an example of how back problems develop. This week I want to talk about heart disease.

Most heart disease is caused by poor lifestyle choices along with medications that can damage the heart either directly or indirectly. There are many ways in which we damage our hearts and I cannot cover all of them in this space, so I will have to simplify my example.

Let us start with Bill who is born in the early 50's. At this time not much was understood about nutrition, in fact, many cardiologists didn't consider the diet to have anything to do with heart disease. Bill's mom stayed at home like most mothers of that age and she cooked fairly healthy meals, however, margarine (artificial butter) and shortening (artificial lard) were very popular additions to the kitchen. These products contained trans fats which unknowingly caused stiffening of the arteries and weakened the cells that made up the arteries and heart.

When Bill became a teenager, he hung out with his friends at the local burger joint eating his weight in burgers, fries and shakes. The excess fat (trans fats in the cooking oil), salt and low nutritional value led to further deterioration of his cardiovascular system. In his thirties he was married with kids and the stress of his job caused a stress hormone to be released into his blood stream that gradually irritated the arterial walls. Since his wife worked, they ate out more than he did as a kid, increasing further his intake of fat and salt.

Bill's nutritional intake was deficient in a number of key nutrients that help to keep the heart and arteries healthy. His low fiber diet resulted in excess absorption of cholesterol so his doctor prescribed a statin drug to keep the numbers low. Unfortunately, the medication prevented the liver from making coQ10 which is important for normal muscle function. Since the heart is essentially a muscle, the heart was unknowingly weakened. The medication also caused some muscle aches so he was prescribed an anti-inflammatory drug. It wasn't known at the time that these drugs damaged the heart.

Bill was not aware that the American diet was full of corn products which tends to cause an imbalance in essential fatty acids leading to general inflammation in the body. This makes the arteries more sticky, leading to a cholesterol buildup. Eventually some of Bill's coronary arteries became clogged, so to prevent a clot from forming and stopping up the artery, he had a bypass. Although the research was available, the doctors didn't inform Bill that it is not usually the clogged arteries that have clots. It is usually the ones that are less clogged.

As a result, although the surgery was a success, a few years later one of the other arteries formed a clot that resulted in a heart attack and Bill died at the age of 58.

This or similar scenarios happen every day in our country and it happens because most people don't realize how sick they are until it is too late. Next week I will talk about diabetes.