

REVIVE

HEALTH • BEAUTY • FASHION

www.REVIVEMagazine.ca

Annual *Just for Men* Issue

Robert Herjavec

THE DRIVEN AND
DEPENDABLE
DRAGON

illumiNATION Tour
Coming to Canada!

Fillers For The
New Man

Lose Your Gut

A Workout Program
That Works!

Cool Scents
For Summer
Sizzle

Gillette Knows Shaving

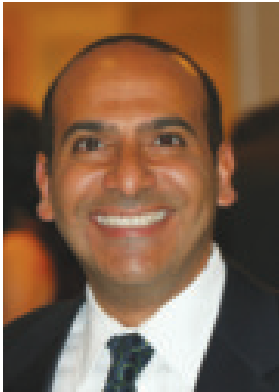
6 steps to
a great
shave

If Shoes Make
The Man
Then Cognac
is the Colour

Mens Health

By Dr. Ihab Matta

Since this is an issue dedicated to men, I would like to use this article to discuss some medical issues that are especially important for the middle aged male (aged 35-55).



Some of the concerns that are pertinent to men include heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, sexual dysfunction, alcohol use, mood disorders and anxiety and stress.

Diabetes, High

Blood Pressure, Cholesterol and Heart Disease

I've grouped these four together because they all have a strong lifestyle component. There are many things to consider but the cornerstone of any lifestyle change to reduce your risk of all of the above is diet and exercise. Since the advent of Penicillin, North American society has tended to rely on a "magic bullet", a pill that fixes everything. Unfortunately no such pill exists, especially to reduce or reverse the effects of bad lifestyle choices.

I've addressed healthy diets in previous articles, but to recap in a nutshell: eat a low calorie, low glycemic index (GI), high fiber diet with fruits, land and sea vegetables, lean protein (fish, veal, poultry, egg whites, game meats), good quality fat (especially mono unsaturated and poly unsaturated fat with an emphasis on omega three fats) from olives, avocado, nuts and seeds. For the most part eat from the land and sea and ignore everything that man has touched. If it's in a package or box with an expiry date into next year, you can imagine that it's not the way God or evolution intended you to eat.

A low glycemic index diet means eating natural unrefined sugars that are absorbed into the bloodstream very slowly as opposed to refined sugars that are absorbed into the bloodstream quickly. When sugar is absorbed quickly it causes a rapid rise in blood glucose, triggering a release of insulin from the pancreas to bring the sugar back down to normal. The body, and brain especially, doesn't like high blood sugars or volatile levels...it gets very cranky. The rise in insulin does many negative things. First insulin travels to the liver and turns on an enzyme called HMG CoA-Reductase (the same enzyme that is turned off by the popular anti-cholesterol medications). Studies have shown that an elevated insulin and sugar level after eating results in a 51% increase in cholesterol. I have had patients lower their cholesterol by 58% within six weeks of shifting to a low glycemic index diet.

High insulin levels as well as general poor nutrition and lack of exercise are also significant causes of high blood pressure. High levels contribute to salt retention by the kidneys and poor nitric oxide response by the blood vessels resulting in constricted rather than dilated vessels. They have also shown insulin is atherogenic, meaning it leads to the hardening of the arteries.

Hyperinsulinemia contributes to diabetes by worsening what we call insulin resistance. This is a genetic tendency to having a poor response to the effects of insulin, resulting in higher levels of insulin being required to lower blood sugar. When an individual with a genetic predisposition to diabetes (usually one that gains weight on

their belly more than their hips) eats a high GI diet for prolonged periods, it eventually causes the pancreas to lose its ability to produce enough insulin to lower blood sugar, thereby resulting in diabetes. Many years of hyperinsulinemia and insulin resistance have transpired by the time a person finds out they are diabetic.

It often takes a heart attack to change a man's behaviour; it's just the way we are. Heart attacks are caused by a blockage to one or more of the main blood vessels that supplies the heart. The "hardening of the arteries" that people talk about is a collection of inflammation and fat in the inner wall of the blood vessel. One of the major things we have discovered over the last few years is the importance of inflammation in the development of the plaque. In fact, one of the major areas of research for all aspects of health, from cancer to aging, is the role that chronic inflammation plays. When inflammation occurs for years combined with poor diet, the plaque gets bigger and bigger until it eventually blocks the entire internal diameter of the artery, leading to a heart attack of the muscle fed by the affected vessel. Believe it or not, it's not the heart attack that usually kills somebody. It's usually a condition called ventricular fibrillation (the thing you see on TV when the good looking doctor has the paddles on someone's chest and calls out "clear"). VFib, as we call it, occurs because of an electrical instability secondary to a heart attack. When the heart goes into Vfib, it twitches instead of pumping blood to the rest of the body and the body and brain are then deprived of oxygen and the individual dies. One of the recommendations we've made for years is the use of a baby aspirin every day to reduce the inflammation that contributes to the plaque formation in the first place. While the aspirin does reduce the risk of GETTING a heart attack, patients that get a heart attack while on Aspirin actually have a 20% higher chance of dying from that heart attack. Patients, on the other hand, who take fish oils every day, or eat fish twice a week, have a 50% lower chance

of dying from that same heart attack. That's because EPA and DHA (both long chain omega 3 fatty acids) have an electrically stabilizing effect on the heart, so that even if one gets the heart attack, their risk of Vfib is reduced by 50%, so is their risk of death.

Sexual Dysfunction, Alcohol Use, Mood and Anxiety

Many men are using Viagra, Levitra or Cialis for recreational use. Men in their forties or higher often present to the office requesting medication to restore their erectile function back to when they were younger. While most men find that erections aren't as strong or long lasting as they were when they were younger, there are many things they can do to improve the situation or at least reduce the worsening of the condition. Viagra taught us a lot about the nitric oxide we talked about above. Viagra affects nitric oxide and was originally designed as a cardiac medication to increase blood flow to the heart. Unfortunately it didn't work out very well for that, but none of the men wanted to give it back due to the effect it had down below. Low GI diets also have a favorable response on nitric oxide, the chemical responsible for dilating blood vessels with a resultant increase in blood flow to the penis. Insulin resistance reduces the effect of nitric oxide on blood flow. This is one of the reasons many diabetic men have difficulty with erections.

Alcohol is another common cause of erectile dysfunction. Most university grads will remember "brewer's droop", even at a prime age they saw the effect of alcohol on stamina. As we age, alcohol has an inhibitory effect both on drive, initial erection and ability to maintain an erection. It is common for middle aged men to rely on a drink or two when they get home at night to relax from a day of stress. I have many patients that use it as an escape, part of the "mid life crisis" that most men don't want to talk about. They go to work, come home and go back to work and realize that this is their life. They often feel the vibrancy and excitement

continued on next page

of their youth is over and this leads to the proverbial mid-life crisis. They tend to escape in many different ways, fancy car, big house, other women, spending money unnecessarily or alcohol and drug use. It usually happens insidiously but becomes a routine. I often have patients describe reckless and dangerous practices and that they "know better" but they still do it. The most common form of escape is alcohol, and men who never drank much as university students find that they are drinking more regularly, and they don't really know why. Some of these patients are depressed, while others have a depressant effect from the alcohol. We know that alcohol depletes the brain of DHA, the principal fish oil fat that we talked about earlier. What comes first, the chicken or the egg? We don't know.

Mood disorders in middle aged men are very common. The causes are multifactorial. Some of it comes from a genetic predisposition. Other contributing factors include diet, lack of exercise, Vitamin D deficiency, trace mineral (magnesium, zinc etc..) deficiency, dropping testosterone levels and social circumstances (marriage, work, kids etc..). Again, in North America we tend to look at things with a one-dimensional eye, while we really need to look holistically. Men in North America are funny. As soon as they hear the word "holistic" they think of some yoga master with a long beard sitting on top of a mountain meditating. What we really mean is looking at all the factors that are contributing to the cause and addressing them all. You cannot come up with a solution without addressing the problem. It seems obvious, but think about how many of us actually address the underlying cause rather than provide a band aid solution.

Commonly, depressed mood and anxiety coexist together. The same causes apply genetics, diet, testosterone etc... Many individuals, men and women alike, are on antidepressants; either for depression or anxiety or both. If you think about it, do you think that God would have created us all with such flaws as to depend on medication for basic things like not wanting to kill our-

elves? I classify depression into intrinsic and reactive. Intrinsic depression is the kind that makes someone want to kill themselves despite a "perfect life". This kind of depression requires some intervention, whether it's medication, counseling, shock therapy etc... Reactive depression on the other hand occurs from some source in our lives; family, work and financial stress are the most common triggers. Anxiety or nervousness can also occur from external sources or have a genetic basis. I have found over the years that diet, supplements, meditation, hypnosis and relaxation techniques are more effective than medication.

Supplements

I'm not a huge proponent of supplements simply for the reason that I like simple ideas. I can't imagine that God or evolution would create this world and require us to take supplements to live. That being said, there are a few supplements that are completely necessary, and others that are recommended. I encourage all patients to get their vitamin D levels checked. The studies show that at least 30% of Canadians are vitamin D deficient, and in my experience, that number is closer to 50%. I recommend all patients take vitamin D between October and March. I also recommend all patients take fish oil supplements, either in liquid or pill form. Magnesium is necessary for over a hundred chemical reactions in the body and is especially helpful for people with muscle aches, migraines and constipation. Patients who do not change their diet and end up on cholesterol medication should also take coenzyme Q10. Zinc is helpful for immune and hormone function; I usually recommend 50-100 mg/day for men.

One of my pet interests these days is iodine deficiency. The soil of the great lakes region is deplete in iodine and the average North American consumes less than a hundredth of the average Japanese individual. It is no surprise that we have so much thyroid insufficiency in North America. Iodine is responsible for thyroid function as well as

continued on page 20

many other organs including breast and prostate. It is also the most important mineral to prevent cretinism and mental retardation. There are suggestions that it has a role to play in the increase in breast cancer that we see. I do not recommend anybody starting iodine supplementation without speaking to their health professional first but for many years doctors recommended using Lugol's iodine as a daily supplement.

I encourage men, especially in their forties, to have their testosterone levels checked. Andropause is a very real medical condition in which drops in testosterone cause a myriad of symptoms. The discussion of andropause is a whole article by itself. Some men will benefit from testosterone supplementation.

Summary

As for women, men need to pay strict attention to their lifestyle, especially diet, exer-

cise, alcohol consumption and smoking (not discussed in this article, but I assume you all know it's not good for you). With the current state of the health care system, many men understand that they have to take their health into their own hands. The first step is to find a qualified doctor who can address all of the concerns in a holistic fashion. Twenty five percent of heart disease presents with sudden cardiac death, without warning. It is far more beneficial to be proactive rather than reactive.

For more information or
to contact Dr. Matta, please visit
www.drmatta.com
or call: 905.790.6644

REVIVE



M.R. WARDROBE MEN'S FINE APPAREL

Your Destination for Quality, Variety and Exceptional Service.

\$50 OFF

On purchases of \$200 or more on regular priced items.

Kenneth Cole • Baumler • Empire • S. Cohen •
Bugatchi • Modango • Horst • Culturata • Gant •
Cotton Reel • Mephisto • Sanyo • Hush Puppies •
Buffalo Jeans • Ballin • Eterna • Mac • St. Hillaire

17205 Leslie Street, Newmarket (No Frills Plaza)

905.830.7500 | www.mrwardrobe.ca

Dr. Matta

Cosmetic
Clinic



Look the Way You Feel

Come Visit

Trinity Commons Plaza | 140 Great Lakes Dr. #129 Brampton, Ontario

Telephone: 905 790 6644 | www.DrMatta.com

