

# Protect your heart

**Y**ou have a pot belly, you are still smoking, your blood pressure is 164/94 and your cholesterol is up. The doctor says you can fix it all with exercise, diet and weight loss. So why don't you do it? Well, stopping smoking is easy. You have done it hundreds of times. You will go for a walk in the morning, unless it is drizzly. You had take-away last night but only because you got held up at work. Anyway, your belly isn't as big as the docs!

We all know what we should do to stay healthy. The problem is that life gets in the way. We sacrifice our future health for immediate pleasure.

You have heard it all before, but here it is in a nutshell.

## Diet

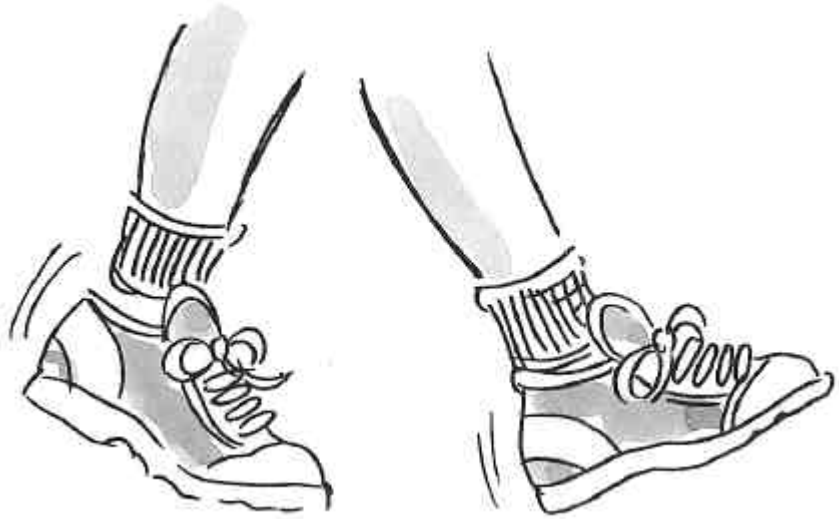
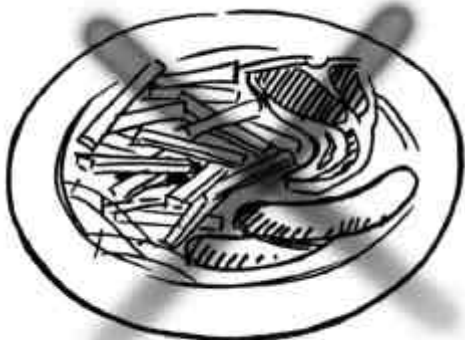
People who eat a lot of fat and animal protein have an increased risk of cancer as well as heart attack. Vegetarian diets contain antioxidants and folate, which seem to play a part in preventing heart disease and cancer. The Australian diet consists of 30% fat. The ideal diet would exclude animal products except egg whites and non-fat dairy products and contain only 10% fat.

### Good dietary advice:

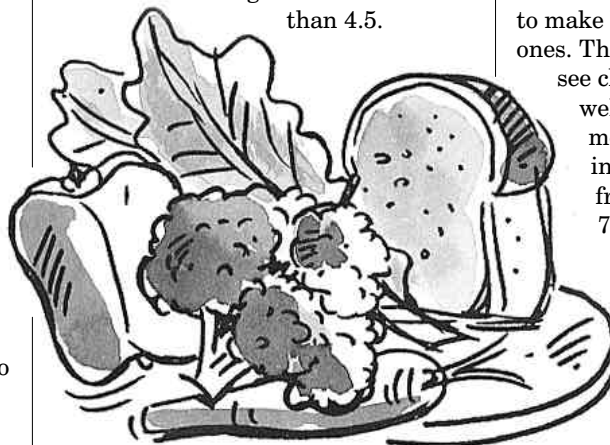
1. Eat colours - leafy green, yellow, orange or red vegetables
2. Eat fibre - cereals and bread
3. Eat Mediterranean or Asian - but go easy on the olive oil, because it is still a fat.

## Low cholesterol reduces heart disease

There are different ways to measure the fat levels in your blood and it is



good to know your total cholesterol, good cholesterol (HDL), and triglyceride levels. A low HDL and high triglyceride can increase your risk of heart attack tenfold. The lower your total cholesterol the better. The average in Asia is less than 4.5.



## Stress plays a role in heart disease

Studies both in humans and animals suggests that hostility, depression and social isolation can all increase the risk of heart disease.

Do what you need to do to reduce your stress. It might be meditation, simply writing out a plan of how to address your problems, or organising a dinner with friends.

## Exercise reduces heart disease

The more intensive it is the better, but the greatest benefit comes from just doing something regularly.

Do what you feel is appropriate for you. It could be aqua aerobics or

marathon running, gardening or golf. A walk in the morning in the cool of the day is cheap, safe and readily available.

## Just do it

Recent studies indicate that it is easier to make big changes rather than small ones. This is because you will start to see changes immediately. Feeling well is a much more powerful motivator than the thought of increasing your life expectancy from 75 to 84 except if you are 74!

In studies of people with heart pain from arteries narrowed by cholesterol, those who changed their diet, reduced their stress and took exercise, needed less medication than those who made no changes. Nobody likes taking tablets, and stopping medication is even more motivation to "do the right thing".

So if you think that making changes to your lifestyle will help and you think you can make those changes, then you will probably succeed in looking better and feeling better. You will probably even reduce your chance of heart attack and cancer in the dim, distant future.