

Wellness MIDSOUTH GUIDE

July/August 2006

“America’s Wellness Guide”

Number 40

FREE at all Doctor’s Offices,
Hospitals, Clinics, and Kroger
Pharmacies in the Midsouth

Cover

How To Talk With Your Doctor

By Lawrence F. Schrader, M.D., F.A.C.S

Midsouth Orthopedics Associates

MAKE A NOTE ON HEART DISEASE

By Jason Infield, M.D. & Elissa Fine, MS
Stern Cardiovascular Center

Emergency Contraceptive

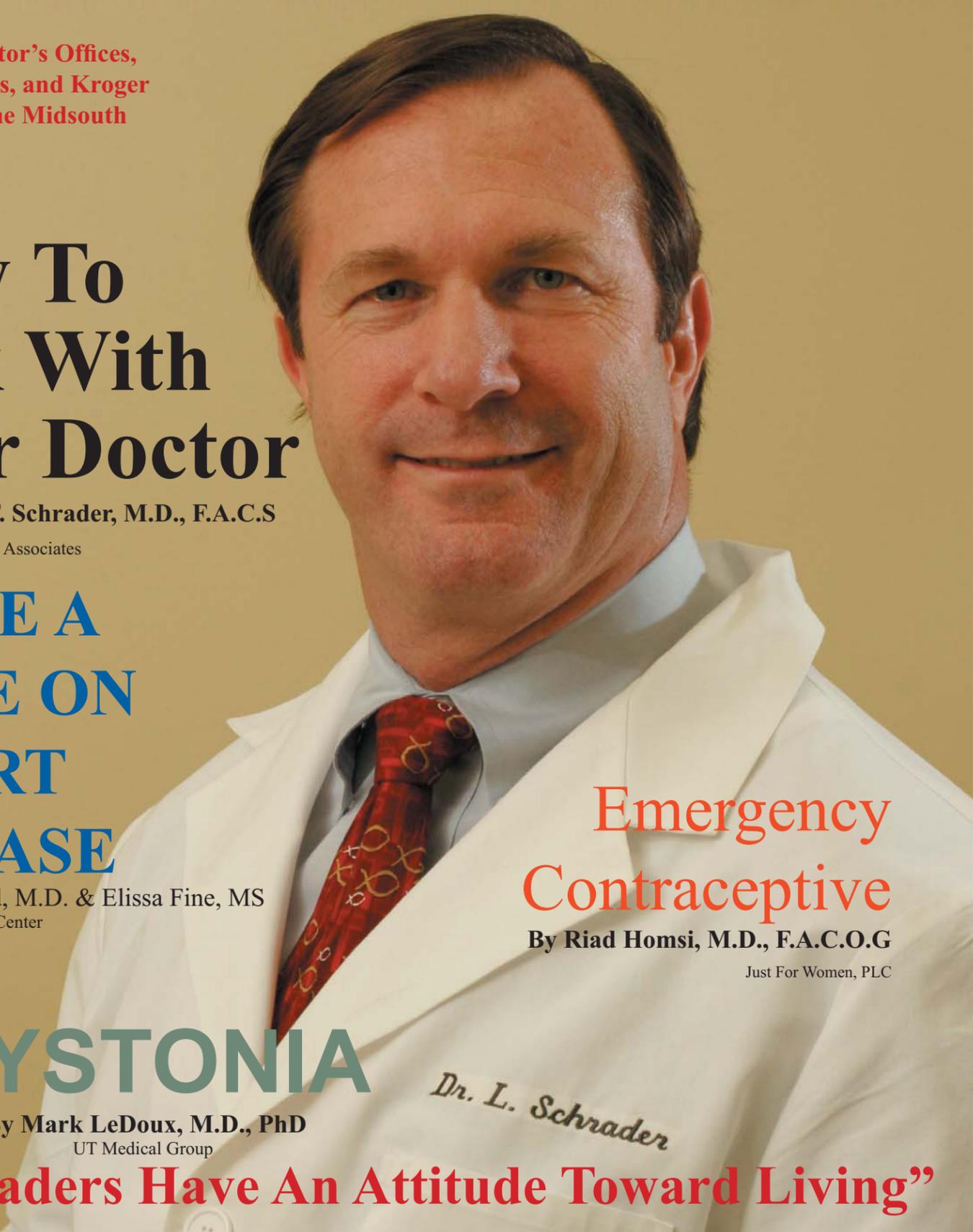
By Riad Homsy, M.D., F.A.C.O.G

Just For Women, PLC

DYSTONIA

By Mark LeDoux, M.D., PhD
UT Medical Group

“Our Readers Have An Attitude Toward Living”



Make A Note On Heart Disease

By Jason Infield, M.D. & Elissa Fine, MS
Stern Cardiovascular Center



Research is moving quickly in the area of heart disease and there are bulletins and updates in the news constantly about what's new and important. Here's a "tack on the bulletin board" update on what's the real skinny not only on the issues you're hearing about but also what's important that you may NOT hear about. Any changes you may be considering based on this or any other book, article, etc. should be discussed with your own doctor.

Should I take a daily aspirin?

Any one who has been diagnosed with heart disease or is diabetic should be taking aspirin. Studies have shown that aspirin reduces the risk of heart attack by as much as 33%. Generally the dose is 81mg and in this situation it should always be coated.



For those at risk, but who have not actually been diagnosed with disease the decision on aspirin must be made on a case by case basis according to your risk of heart disease. In general, those with multiple risk factors for heart disease should take aspirin (high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, family history, and smoking).

Should I take fish oil?

If you have triglyceride or glucose problems, fish oil can really help. Fish oil can be easily found in drugstores and discount stores. It is not the amount of fish oil itself that is important. It's the amount of the two omega 3 fatty acids in it that is important. These have very long names but the abbreviations are EPA and DHA. You want a total of a 1000mg daily of EPA and DHA.



For women of childbearing age, one needs to be careful the amount of mercury that

is in some fish oils. Go online to www.oceansalive.org to see the amount of mercury in each particular brand.

If you don't have a serious triglyceride or glucose problem it is important to realize that studies have shown that people who eat fish on a regular basis have a lower risk of heart disease and heart attacks. Eating 2 servings each week of cold water fish has been shown to prevent sudden cardiac arrest. In the general population we are suggesting 2 three ounces serving of cold water fish per week. However, frying the fish seems to negate all of the health benefits.

Can I take flax seed oil instead?

Oddly, flaxseed oil does not work, but flaxseed does. You can buy a whole lot of flaxseed for next to no money in the health food store but then you have to grind it up. You can ingest it by adding it to cereal and other foods.

Should I take vitamins or other supplements?

Don't take vitamins C and E. We know now that vitamins C and E are not helpful to your heart and in some cases could actually be harmful.

If you were advised to take B vitamins or folic acid for elevated homocysteine levels, check back with your doctor to get a more current decision. Recent studies suggest that it may not be as helpful as we once thought.

Should I take garlic?

Garlic has been shown to be of no value in heart health.



Should I take cinnamon?

There is no research to tell us that it is any help, either. Do take a multi vitamin. This is mostly to insure that you get enough folic acid even if you don't have a homocysteine problem. It's also a little bit of insurance in other areas.

DO take 2 grams of plant sterol every day in addition to whatever you get in your food. Fruits and vegetables actually lower cholesterol and the part that does this has been isolated and is being added to margarine and various food products. Two full grams of plant sterol can lower your LDL as much as 14%, which is the same effect as increasing lipid medicines such as Zocor and Lipitor from 20mg to 80mg! Benecol and Take Control margarines contain plant sterols and so does Minute Maid Heart Wise orange juice. Some of the Nature Valley granola bars have it as well. Any number of companies in your local grocery stores also sells it in capsule form.

Which butter, margarine, or spread should I use?

Benecol and Take control margarine should always be the first choices in spreads because of the plant sterol they contain. Other margarines may keep your LDL from going up but Benecol and Take Control are the only



ones which will actually lower it. For some people, these spreads can mean the difference

between using cholesterol medicine and avoiding it. Compared to other spreads, they may seem expensive but think how much cheaper they are than cholesterol medicine! Or heart surgery!

If you choose not to use these, try to use the ones with no trans fat. These are going to become very common. And if your taste buds are just not quite ready for no trans fat margarine try one that is lower in overall fat. Full fat margarine has 120 calories per tablespoon. Challenge your taste by getting one that has fewer fat calories, say 90 or 60 calories per tablespoon.

Should I have other blood testing done beyond a basic lipid profile?

Everyone with a cholesterol problem should have his or her thyroid checked. Underactive thyroid function can be the underlying cause of cholesterol elevations and when it is treated, the cholesterol problem may disappear.

What about expanded lipid testing?

This has to be decided on a case by case basis. In addition to a standard lipid profile which tells you total cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, triglyceride levels, and estimates LDL, more extensive lipid testing exists. First of all, LDL can be measured directly rather than being derived mathematically. Since most people take medicine because of what their LDL level is, this may be an important consideration in some patients. Further testing can actually break HDL, LDL, and VLDL down into their component parts and sometime the totals are okay. but the parts are a problem. Small and dense cholesterol is a more potent cause of artery buildup and may influence treatment decisions.

What is hsCRP and should I have it tested?

Inflammation has been shown to substantially increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. High-sensitivity C-reactive protein (hsCRP) is a simple blood test that shows how much inflammation is in the arteries. If this test is elevated, your doctor may decide to be more aggressive in the treatment of your other risk factors for heart disease.

What about my habits? Should I worry about trans fat, saturated fat and hydrogenation?

Saturated fat is the worst kind of fat and is what really raises your LDL (bad) cholesterol. Saturated fats are mainly found in meats, cheeses, and dairy products. It also can be found in processed foods and some vegetable

Midsouth Wellness Guide

oils. Unsaturated fats such as olive oil and canola oil have minimal effects on cholesterol levels.

Should trans fat be the number one concern? Often the answer is no. Making food choices by evaluating the amount of trans fat often ignores other important dietary concerns.

The number one thing you must do is get 45 minutes of aerobic exercise daily. This means walking (on a treadmill or the sidewalk), riding a bicycle (stationary or traditional), swimming, dancing, etc. You may need to start off with just 10-20 minutes or even 3-4 minutes. That is fine. You may also break



your exercise into 3 separate bouts. In this case, since you are doing 5 minutes 3 times, you will actually be doing 15 minutes. If you do 15 minutes 3 times per day you will actually reach your 45 minute daily goal. Do not break up your exercise time into more than 3 parts. Move at a pace that allows you to continue to talk, but not sing. That's about the right amount of effort. Check with your doctor but we all know he/she has been urging you to do this anyway. And yes, do it everyday. Your normal daily activities are NOT giving you enough movement to be fit or healthy.

Do keep in mind, however, that this rule about breaking your exercise time into no more than 3 parts applies only to the designated exercise program. In other parts of your day feel free to increase your activity in ways such as parking far away from the grocery store doorway so you have to walk farther!

But getting back to food, it is critically important for you to eat to meet your body's nutritional needs. In the past 10-20 years we have been dragged from one extremist nutrition program to another. We were told that only calories matter so as long as you keep the calories low it doesn't matter if you substitute chocolate cake for whole grain bread. Later we were told to eliminate fat. Then we were told to eliminate carbohydrate. Then eat lots of protein. The truth is that all three categories are important. They should all be eaten, but all in their appropriate amounts.

SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Research indicates that for carbohydrates, about 9 servings daily of whole grain bread and cereal, whole grain rice and noodles, and dry beans are appropriate. Adding in 3-4 fruits and 4-5 vegetables will give you about 25-35 grams of fiber. In the Far East they get 75 per day. Eating to achieve 25 grams daily is not asking a lot.

Eat 2-3 servings of lower fat dairy products daily. These are important for strong bones and keeping blood pressure low. Eat about 6 ounces daily of low fat meats.

And of course, if you are eating 9 servings daily of whole grain bread, cereals, rice, noodles and dry beans, 3-4 fruits, 4-5 vegetables, 2-3 servings of dairy and 6 ounces of low fat meat, how much room are you going to have for junk food? And junk food is where you really find trans fat. What has often happened is that we didn't eat enough food to achieve good nutrition and end up binging on higher calorie, nutritionally poor treats. Keeping calorie intake low at the expense of good nutrition can cause its own array of problems. Just remember that food is actually your friend. Maybe even one of your best friends. But also keep in mind that little Debbie's are not food.

It is wonderful to live in an age where research is providing us with answers to many complicated questions and increasing our doctors' ability to relieve pain and suffering. At the same time we are having to accept unprecedented responsibility in our own health care in terms of both understanding and involvement. Our effort here has been to give you enough information to do your part just a little better. By all means, join in the effort to improve your health. Together you and your health care team can insure the best chance possible for you and your family to lead long, healthy lives.



About The Authors

Jason Infeld, M.D., is a board-certified cardiologist and echocardiographer at the Stern Cardiovascular Center who specializes in preventative cardiology, coronary artery disease, valvular and congenital heart disease. Elissa Fine, MS has been the coordinator of the Stern Cardiovascular Center Lipid Clinic since its inception in 1993. She is a member of the Southeast Lipid Association. She may be reached by phone at 901-271-2254.