

# Heart TALK

Heart-healthy and Stroke-free Living with Amy L. Doneen, MSN, ARNP

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## Amy's Notes

Thoughts from  
Amy Doneen  
MSN, ARNP

### June is National Fruits and Vegetables Month!

Isn't it great that there's a month to celebrate fruits and vegetables? Most fruits and veggies offer superior nutritional benefits, especially those that provide high fiber and are low on the glycemic index.

This month we feature some low glycemic fruit and vegetable recommendations and also link you through to two handy reference charts. One features glycemic index information for common foods. The other chart presents information on fiber content. They are both handy tools.

This month we also highlight new research that helps define optimal amounts of exercise. I have long believed that consistency is the key to fitness. Recent research data has confirmed that we only need about 30 minutes of cardiovascular activity each day to reduce our risk of heart attacks and strokes. Previous data showed that 22 minutes per day was adequate. I believe this research supports that statement.

The recent data, published in a paper by Dr. Chip Lavie and colleagues, showed

that exercise reduced all-cause death by 19 percent compared to no exercise. While the study looked at running specifically, I would suggest that the findings apply to any cardiovascular exercise.

With that being said, more is not always better. A U-shaped relationship showed that endurance exercise was not beneficial to many of the participants. In fact, it actually increased death rates in some. (See more about this study on the next page.)

Tests that we utilize today give the ability to quantify our efforts and help understand if our level of exercise is being tolerated well by our body. The benefits of regular exercise have been shown to reduce depression, stress, and insulin sensitivity, while assisting with weight management, increasing HDL, helping with blood pressure management, and more.

We must recognize that exercise is a potent medication and everyone should work towards optimal goals which I translate to be "individualized." Recognize that it takes time to develop a strong base of 22-30 minutes of exercise per day.

It is also important to avoid muscle memory – do something different every day. Include stretching (Yoga), strength (Pilates, weights), and cardiovascular (walking, jogging, biking, swimming, etc.).

Most important of all? Have FUN! Laughter and exercise go well together – try it!

~ Amy

### Aspirin Therapy: Is it for You?

I have been receiving a *lot* of questions lately regarding a recent aspirin publication. This publication questioned using aspirin therapy in "primary prevention." Following are my thoughts.

The current standard of care defines all of us as either primary (never had a heart attack or stroke) or secondary (*have* had a heart attack or stroke). The question is whether primary prevention individuals should take baby aspirin every day.

The role of aspirin therapy is to prevent a clot from forming if plaque was to rupture through the artery wall or if the artery wall was to erode. The decision on whether to use aspirin then becomes quite clear. If plaque exists anywhere in the arterial system, aspirin (81mg) is a critical element of treatment.

The Bale/Doneen Method is a disease treatment paradigm and we define people into three categories:

- **Primary** – we have looked in all available vascular beds and we cannot find plaque – NO Disease!
- **Secondary** – plaque exists in the artery wall anywhere in the body – YES Disease! – Aspirin IS necessary.
- **Tertiary** – The patient has had a heart attack, stroke, or has a stent – Aspirin IS necessary.

Please just ask if you have questions about your personal needs for aspirin therapy.



## Did you know?

Most veggies have a glycemic index of zero!

Fruits? Be more selective. ==>

## The Healthiest Fruits & Veggies: Low Glycemic, But High on Flavor

It's true. Most vegetables have a glycemic index at or near zero. That's certainly good news for our appetites and our taste buds! With the exception of starchy veggies like carrots, peas, and corn — all having glycemic index numbers more akin to fruits — veggies are a super healthy component of our diets.

While also very important for our diet, fruits carry much higher glycemic counts and care should be taken to include low glycemic fruits into

our meals and snacks with much greater frequency than high glycemic fruits.

### Some of the best fruits to enjoy on a regular basis:

- \* Apples
- \* Blueberries
- \* Cherries
- \* Grapes
- \* Oranges
- \* Peaches
- \* Pears
- \* Plums
- \* Strawberries
- \* Raspberries

Link through below to a handy glycemic index chart from Berkeley Heart Labs. At the end you'll find low, medium, and high index ranges.

Strive to include low index foods on a daily basis, leaving high index foods for special occasions. Find the GI chart at <http://bit.ly/K17KaC>

Another useful reference is a fiber chart from Harvard. <http://bit.ly/MD7a3Q>

Enjoy!



**Dr. Carl "Chip" Lavie**  
Ochsner Health System  
New Orleans, LA

*"Amy's consistent message of remaining active and being consistent with exercise is validated by our recent research."*

~ Dr. Chip Lavie ~

## The Not-So-Long Run: Moderate Exercise is Better Than Excessive

It's no secret that regular exercise equates to markedly lower rates of disability. In fact, regular exercise results in a mean life expectancy that is seven years longer than that of their physically inactive peers. However, what may come as a surprise, is the fact that too much exercise can actually diminish the health benefits of exercise.

Benefits of regular exercise include reduced cholesterol, obesity, blood pressure, stress, depression, and glucose, along with an improvement in insulin sensitivity, endothelial function and smoking cessation efforts. It will also increase coronary flow reserve and collateral circulation and a decrease in morbidity and mortality.

At the same time, high-intensity endurance exercise activity can have an inverse relationship causing an increase in biomarkers for myocardial (heart muscle) injury and a reduction in cardiac output.

A new study that looked specifically at running, suggests the benefits of running are realized when running shorter distances — less than 20 miles per week. In fact, at longer distances, the researchers observed a U-shape relationship. On one end is little to no benefit aligned with little to no exercise. At the other end is markedly diminished

benefit when running longer distances. At the optimal point of the U-shape is moderate exercise — running <20 miles per week.

**Dr. Carl Lavie**, one of the study investigators, states: "There is not going to be a set cut point where we say this is the magical amount of running. But certainly, it looks like you get the benefits at relatively low, modest amounts. If you shoot for super high amounts of running, you're certainly not getting more benefit, and it actually appears from our data that you could be getting less benefit." Read the complete paper at: <http://bit.ly/LjJYZG>

For the reasons cited in this recent publication, it is imperative that we maintain a realistic, life-long exercise pattern of 22-30 minutes daily of cardiovascular activity. Endurance activity such as marathon running, endurance cycling, and ultra-marathon running is not safe for everyone and should not be considered optimal fitness.

The Bale/Doneen Method for CV Prevention focuses on identifying hidden atherosclerosis and embraces the ability to monitor biomarkers for artery wall and heart muscle health. This provides insight into determining whether a given individual's exercise program is safe and beneficial.