



## The Trinidad & Tobago Heart Foundation

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## Hypertension ... A Mounting Epidemic

Dr. Joel David Teelucksingh, Specialist in Internal Medicine

High blood pressure (hypertension) is the most important preventable cause of premature death in developed countries. There are more than a billion hypertensives worldwide who are at an increased risk of strokes, dementia, kidney failure, heart attacks, heart failure, abnormalities with heart rhythm, eye and circulation problems.

The heart is a wonderful organ and **pumps** billions of times throughout your life-time. Your blood pressure is expressed as two numbers - systolic (when the heart contracts) and diastolic (when it relaxes). A "normal" blood pressure should be considered as the lowest possible reading that can be attained without feeling unwell. It is usually taken as <120/80 mmHg.

The development of hypertension represents a complex dynamic interaction between genetic and lifestyle factors. In **95%** of patients, no definite cause can be identified and this is referred to as "essential" or "primary" hypertension. The remaining **5%** may have separate medical conditions that cause their blood pressure to rise — "secondary" hypertension. In this article, we will explore non-pharmacological modifications which are essential in the management of this challenging disease.

All hypertensives should be encouraged to lose weight if necessary as this helps with blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol - a potent cluster of medical problems with deleterious effects to health.

*(Continued on page 2)*



### A Message from Dr. Allan McKenzie President, The T&T Heart Foundation

I am happy to introduce to you our first Newsletter for the Year 2009. Caught up in making plans for a reorganized Heart Foundation Membership and Executive Election Procedure, we held our hand with this project.

Let me however, thank all our donors who contributed generously to the continuity of our Newsletter. Our main objective in the Heart Foundation is preventive education against Heart Disease and the risk from Stroke. From time to time we bring valuable information from the Inter American Heart Foundation with which we are affiliated. Our specialist doctors at the local level so far have made valuable contributions.

Our informational articles are intended for a wide readership within the country. Medical jargon and sophisticated details, therefore, ought not to be expected.

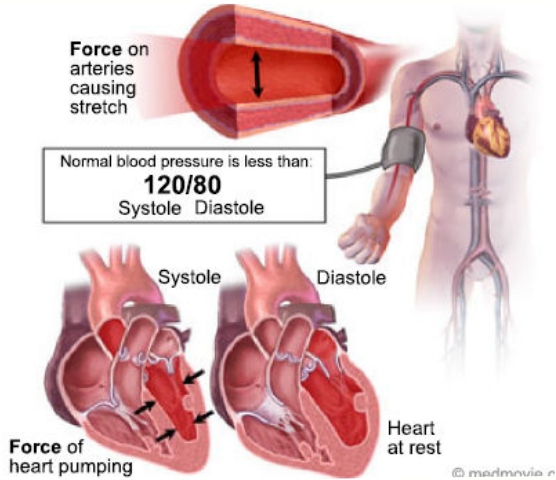
Listed on the back page of this issue are the schools which contributed to our publication. Many individuals also made donations but their names will not be listed as publicity might not have been intended. Once again the executive of the Trinidad and Tobago Heart Foundation is very grateful for your kind generosity.



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Continued from page 1



Salt restriction to <6 grams per day (i.e. a teaspoonful) significantly lowers blood pressure especially in the elderly and Afro-Caribbean people. It is advisable to not add salt at the dining table or when cooking and limit the intake of crisps, hamburgers, sausages, bacon, “ready meals” and stock cubes. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts, peas, beans, grains and low-fat dairy products definitely assists in achieving a normal level. The beneficial effects of fish oils remain uncertain.

Regular exercise such as brisk walking for at least thirty minutes on most days of the week reduces blood pressure as well as the risk for cancer and osteoporosis (“brittle bones”). It is also essential to stop smoking and limit alcohol use.

Stress reduction may be attained by meditation, yoga and breathing exercises.

These principles should be used along with any medications that your doctor may recommend. Nevertheless, these strategies may be as effective as a single antihypertensive drug thus reducing the burden of the aforementioned complications of high blood pressure in the community. ♥

## Heart Healthy Recipe

### Mango Avocado Salsa



#### Ingredients (serves 6)

2 avocados, peeled and chopped  
 1 mango, peeled and chopped  
 1 tbsp. fresh cilantro, chopped  
 2 tsp. lime juice  
 1/8 tsp. sea salt  
 Pepper to taste

#### Directions

Combine avocado, mango, cilantro, lime juice, salt and pepper; toss gently. Garnish with cilantro sprigs, if desired. Chill for at least 10 minutes before serving. Serve with blue corn chips, black bean chips or other tortilla chips, as desired.

Tip: Chilled mango is easier to chop and serve in salsa.

#### Nutritional Information per Serving

Calories: 130	Carbohydrates: 12g
Total Fat: 10g	Cholesterol: 0mg
Saturated Fat: 1.5g	Dietary Fiber: 5g
% of Calories from Fat: 90%	Sodium: 25mg
Protein: 2g	

★ This salsa makes a great topping for seafood dishes like fish, scallops and shrimp!



# A HEART-RELATED CONDITION LEGS

That Has

BY ALISON PALKHIVALA  
Heart Insight Magazine -  
American Heart Association

## Why PAD Is Bad — And What You Need To Know About Prevention And Treatment

Everyone knows that chest pain can be a sign of a serious cardiovascular condition. Guess what? So can leg pain.

Atherosclerosis is most often associated with blockages in the blood vessels supplying the heart, which can cause a heart attack. But clogged blood vessels in the legs are a sign of peripheral arterial disease (PAD).

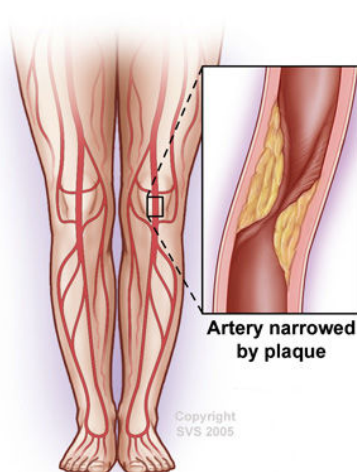
Chances are, if you have atherosclerosis in your legs, you have it everywhere. “PAD is an indicator of widespread atherosclerotic disease and is therefore an indicator of risk for both stroke and coronary heart disease,” explains neurologist Larry B. Goldstein, M.D., Director of the Duke Center for Cerebrovascular Disease at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, NC.

Who is at risk for PAD? Look in the mirror. PAD is not a disease of old people. A 38-year-old woman who smokes could have very severe PAD. The risk factors for both PAD and heart disease are the same: high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, smoking and obesity. The more risk factors you have, the higher the odds that you will develop PAD.

The risk of developing coronary artery disease (CAD) or having a stroke among people who have PAD is two to four times higher as compared with those who do not have the condition, and heart attack risk is between 20 and 60 percent higher. When doctors at medical research firm Caro Research Institute in Concord, MA, followed 16,440 patients diagnosed with PAD, they found that within six years, 10 percent suffered a stroke, another 10 percent had a heart attack and half had died of a cardiovascular event.

### What To Look Out For

So how do you know if you have PAD?



The classic symptom is claudication — leg muscle discomfort, fatigue or pain that occurs in the buttocks, thighs or calf muscles when you’re walking or working out. Never had this kind of leg pain? Sorry, but you’re not off the hook.

At least half of the individuals with PAD in the USA are unable to report classic symptoms of PAD, just like people with heart disease don’t always have known angina before they have a heart attack. Some people may have leg pain without exertion, which can easily be confused with muscle strain, nerve pain, arthritis or other leg conditions. Complicating matters further, some PAD sufferers have no symptoms at all.

Left untreated, circulation in the leg can become compromised enough to require amputation. “Hundreds of thousands of preventable amputations every year are attributable to undiagnosed and untreated PAD” says Dr. Alan T. Hirsch, Adjunct Professor at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health in Minneapolis.

So how do doctors detect and diagnose the condition, especially when a patient has not complained of any telltale symptoms? By focusing not only on those who tell them of leg pain, but also on those who have one or more risk factors for the condition, or signs of

poor circulation in the legs - particularly, wounds that won’t heal, or gangrene.

If you think this is casting a wide net, “there is no diagnostic test for any illness, cardiovascular or otherwise, as accurate, safe and cost-effective as the measurement of ankle pressure to detect [PAD],” says Hirsch. In doctor lingo, the diagnostic test is called an ankle-brachial index. Using a standard blood pressure cuff, the doctor takes the blood pressure in your arm and the blood pressure in your ankle and compares them. The blood pressure in your ankle should be the same or slightly higher than in your arm, so a normal ankle-brachial index is 1 or 1.1. At or below 0.95, you probably have some significant narrowing in one or more blood vessels in your leg.

Some people may need additional testing, such as an ultrasound or scans of the leg arteries with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or computed tomography (CT), but these diagnostic tools are usually used in severe cases that will likely require surgery.

### Treatment Options

When PAD is caught early, walking is the first line of treatment. “[Whether] you can only walk one block or six blocks, exercise is still likely to be very effective,” says Hirsch. Doctors may also prescribe supervised exercise sessions on a track or a treadmill in a rehab facility three times a week for 12 weeks. Over the course of the supervised program, the intensity of the exercise is slowly ratcheted up to build muscle strength in the legs. Some patients balk at exercise because of leg pain, so they are typically treated with medication to treat claudication by dilating the arteries and inhibiting blood clot formation.

Inactivity can make PAD worse, because the microscopic arteries that supply muscle fibers lose the ability to



## TAKE OMEGA 3 FISH OIL TO HEART

Article provided by: Oscar Francois Ltd.

Fish Oils are good for the heart. Heart death is virtually unheard of among the Greenland Inuits (Eskimos). Decades of research and hundreds of studies have confirmed that it was the omega 3 fish oils in their diet that protected them from heart disease.

In an article published in the British Medical Journal earlier this year, researchers from the Edinburgh University reviewed the worldwide evidence and found that fish oils look after the heart in several ways:

Helps reduce platelet aggregation (the clumping together of red corpuscles that can form a potentially fatal blood clot in a coronary artery.)

Atherosclerosis is a condition where fatty deposits narrow the artery and hinder the blood flow. Fish oil supplementation has produced some modest improvements in the condition

but, more importantly seems to make fatty deposits less likely to rupture and trigger a heart attack.

Help regulate heartbeat. A sudden change in the heart's normal rhythm (arrhythmia) can cause a heart attack or

sudden death. (when death occurs without earlier signs or symptoms.

Inflammation of the arteries is thought to be an important indicator of future heart attacks and strokes. Men with high blood levels of C reactive protein have an increased risk of coronary heart disease and stroke. Omega 3 fatty acids have a recognized anti-inflammatory action.

Abnormalities in the lining of artery walls are linked to heart disease. Omega 3 fatty acids maintain arterial health and widen arteries to improve blood flow.

Back in Greenland, the Inuits are adopting the eating habits of their American neighbours except in the smaller villages that still maintain hunting and fishing traditions. As a result heart disease and arthritis are making an unwelcome appearance where once they were virtually unknown.

*Information extracted from the DART trial (Diet and Reinfarction Trial) MRC Epidemiology Unit, Cardiff, and West Wales Hospital Carmarthen.*

## A HEART-RELATED CONDITION LEGS

That Has **LEGS** *Continued from page 3*

dilate, adversely affecting the proper function of nerves and ultimately causing the muscles to become progressively weaker. "PAD becomes an illness that affects the whole leg, not just the blood vessels," says Hirsch. But physical activity can reverse these changes and keep legs strong — even when there is artery blockage.

In severe cases, surgery may be needed to clear blockages in the blood vessels. One such procedure is leg angioplasty. During angioplasty, the doctor threads a balloon-tipped catheter through the arteries right up to the blockage and inflates the balloon, which flattens the cholesterol plaque against the wall of the artery, creating an opening through which blood can flow. The balloon inflation is followed by insertion of a stent, a small mesh device designed to prop the artery

open. A blood thinner may also be prescribed to help prevent clots.

Angioplasty "is most effective in the arteries toward the top of the leg and pelvis — between the belly button and the groin — [but] is less effective and less durable as one enters the thigh, and is rarely used below the knee," explains Hirsch.

Bypass surgery is often recommended when symptoms are severe or the leg is threatened. Typically, a portion of another vein from the same or opposite leg is removed and connected to the clogged artery above and below the obstruction. As with stents and angioplasty, vein grafts are more durable when they are placed toward the top of the leg and less so below the knee.

Effectively treating PAD involves more than dealing with leg pain or clearing

blockages. Doctors will also prescribe appropriate lifestyle changes and medications to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke. "Patients with PAD should be aggressive in their management of general cardiovascular and stroke risk factors," says Goldstein. "Have [high blood pressure] treated and diabetes controlled. Stop smoking and avoid exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke. Try to reduce weight if [you are] overweight or obese. Ask your doctor about exercise and the use of aspirin or another similar [anti-clotting] medication."

If you or your doctor suspect PAD, Hirsch urges prompt action: "The clock is ticking. The risk [for heart attack or stroke with PAD] is high within even one year. You can't exactly sit around and think about it." ♥



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# Heart Beat

*New Research Findings You Can Put To Use — Now*

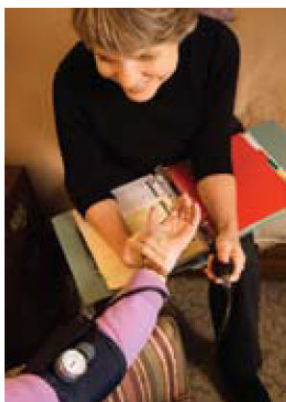
## Post-traumatic Stress



**M**ale Vietnam veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are twice as likely to die from heart disease as those without PTSD, according to a study published in *Psychosomatic Medicine*. Researchers followed 4,328 male Vietnam veterans who were healthy when they enrolled in the study in 1985 and found that the most serious cases of PTSD are correlated with early death from heart disease. The researchers believe that stress hormones associated with PTSD may cause inflammation that damages the cardiovascular system — a plausible hypothesis, since these men were also at increased risk of developing psoriasis, arthritis and other inflammatory diseases.

## Pre-Diabetes

**T**he American College of Endocrinology (ACE) and the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists (AACE) have issued joint recommendations on managing pre-diabetes — elevated fasting blood sugar levels or impaired glucose tolerance — to reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and related cardiovascular complications. The first step is to identify those most at risk, and the experts recommend regular screening to check blood pressure, measure waist circumference, and get fasting glucose and lipid levels. Where appropriate, doctors should recommend changes in diet to reduce fat and cholesterol intake and promote weight loss, encourage increased physical activity and treat elevated blood pressure and cholesterol levels. An estimated 56 million Americans may have pre-diabetes without being aware of it.



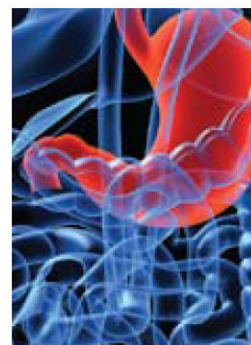
## Heart Failure

**B**ased on data from more than 48,000 heart failure patients admitted to 259 hospitals nationwide, doctors have a new way to gauge the severity of the condition so as to more quickly identify patients at highest risk of imminent death and to more aggressively monitor and treat them. As part of the OPTIMIZE-HF (Organized Program to Initiate Life-

saving Treatment in Hospitalized Patients with Heart Failure) study, researchers correlated risk of in-hospital death with such factors as medical history, vital signs and lab results at admittance, and heart failure characteristics or history. A history of vascular disease, liver disease or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, as well as increased age, creatinine levels and systolic blood pressure (the top number), were all associated with a higher risk of death.

## Stroke

**P**eople who develop gastrointestinal (GI) bleeding after a stroke are three times more likely to die during their hospital stay or to be severely disabled and dependent on others at discharge than those who do not, according to research published in *Neurology*<sup>®</sup>, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.



In the study, which involved 6,853 Canadians who had ischemic strokes that reduced or blocked blood flow to the brain, GI bleeding was also associated with a higher risk of death six months later. Follow-up research is needed to determine whether treatment with antacids to prevent this complication will improve patient outcomes.

## Physical Activity

**I**nactive, healthy older adults who took part in a supervised physical activity regimen that included about an hour of walking, running or cycling three to five days a week were able to turn back the clock on heart function, according to a study published in the *American Journal of Physiology*. Researchers measured heart glucose metabolism in six men and six women between the ages of 60 to 75 years at the start of the study and after 11 months of endurance training, and found that their hearts had doubled glucose uptake during exertion — the same way younger hearts do. Improved cardiac function during periods of physical stress is associated with lower risk of ischemia (inadequate blood supply to the heart) and heart attack.





# Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension

[www.dashdiet.org](http://www.dashdiet.org)

The DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet is recommended to many people with hypertension (high blood pressure) or pre-hypertension by their physicians. The DASH eating plan follows heart healthy guidelines to limit saturated fat and cholesterol. It focuses on increasing intake of foods rich in fruits and vegetables, and low-fat or non-fat dairy, nutrients that are expected to lower blood pressure, mainly minerals (like potassium, calcium, and magnesium), protein and fibre.

The DASH eating plan has been proven to lower blood pressure in just 14 days. Best response came in people whose blood pressure was only moderately high, including those with prehypertension. For people with more severe hypertension, who may not be able to eliminate medication, the DASH diet can help improve response to medication, and help lower blood pressure. The DASH diet can help lower cholesterol, and with weight loss and exercise can reduce insulin resistance.

New research shows that following the DASH diet over time will reduce the risk of stroke and heart disease. And the benefits of the DASH diet have also been seen in teens with hypertension. The DASH diet truly is the diet for everyone.

### Specifically the DASH diet plan includes:

Type of food	Servings 2000 Calories
Grains and grain products (at least 3 whole grain foods each day)	7 - 8
Fruits	4 - 5
Vegetables	4 - 5
Low fat or non fat dairy foods	2 - 3
Lean meats, fish, poultry	2 or less
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	4 - 5 per week
Fats and sweets	limited

## How to Create a Rainbow ... on Your Plate!

Variety and colour provide a broad range of nutrients:

- Make a tropical rainbow fruit salad with fruits of each color
- Saute your own medley of mixed vegetables using each color
- Make fruit-sicles: Puree your favorite fruit such as melon, banana, and/or mangoes with 100% fruit juice. Freeze in ice cube trays or paper cups for a refreshing treat.
- Make a refreshing summer beverage using 100% juice and iced tea.
- Roast a whole head of garlic to make a delicious spread for an appetizer or on sandwiches.
- Make confetti coleslaw: shredded green and red cabbage, grated carrots, and finely chopped red and yellow peppers.
- Make a Mexican pizza with tortillas, refried beans, salsa and grated low fat jalapeno cheese. Bake.
- Make a dried fruit and nut mix for snacks: dried apples, papaya, cranberries, peaches, pears, cherries and mixed nuts. ♥



**FACT:**  
 CHOLESTEROL REDUCING DRUGS MAY BE LOWERING MORE THAN YOU KNOW...!  
 LOWERING YOUR CHOLESTEROL IS A GOOD THING. BUT A RECENT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY STUDY SHOWED THAT STATIN DRUGS CAN DEplete COQ10 LEVELS IN THE BODY INCREASING HEART FAILURE RISK.

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**NIACIN INOSITOL COMPLEX**

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- INCREASES GOOD CHOLESTEROL
- IS FLUSH FREE
- REDUCES STATIN DEPENDENCE

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## Good Fat Bad Fat

Not all fat is bad for you. We require certain types of fat as part of a healthy diet.

1. Include a small amount of unsaturated fat each day and limit saturated and trans fats.
2. Polyunsaturates, one type of unsaturated fat, includes Omega-3 fatty acids. As our bodies cannot make Omega-3 it must be obtained from food.
3. Omega-3 fatty acids are found in plants and marine animals. Coldwater fish, like the sardines and herring, used by Brunswick® contain Omega-3.



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The Trinidad & Tobago Heart Foundation wishes to express its sincerest thanks for the generous donations made by the schools listed below:

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- ♥ San Francique Hindu School
- ♥ Eldorado South Hindu School
- ♥ Freeport Hindu School
- ♥ Longdenville Presbyterian Primary School
- ♥ Union Presbyterian School
- ♥ Cushe Government Primary School
- ♥ Golden Lane Government School
- ♥ Mafeking Government Primary School

### SECONDARY SCHOOLS

- ♥ ASJA Girls College – Tunapuna
- ♥ Zenith Educational Institute
- ♥ Naparima Girls High School
- ♥ Presentation College Chaguanas
- ♥ Fyzabad Anglican Secondary School
- ♥ St. Stephen's College

If you too would like to make a contribution, call us at **662-6993**, or simply cut out, complete and mail the form at right together with your donation to us at:

The Trinidad & Tobago Heart Foundation  
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Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex  
Mount Hope.

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**The Trinidad & Tobago  
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