Unlocking The Secrets Of Aging & Heart Health Transcript

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Introduction and Dr. Greger's Background

Hey. Welcome, everybody. I'm glad you're so glad you're joining us on this. You know, reversing cardiovascular disease, reversing heart disease summit.

It's so critical that people get this information. And today I'm excited to have with us doctor Michael Greger, one of the heroes in this plant based movement and a friend of mine.

And, you know, and so respect the work he does, is so terrific to have him join us today. So here he is, Michael Greger. And let me just give you a brief bio of Doctor Greger for a minute, and then we'll get started with his wisdom.

And that is, doctor Greger has been a founding member of the and a fellow of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine. So way back, you know, 30 years ago when this all this stuff was started, he was one of those people, as I was to actually.

And he's a physician, an internationally recognized speaker on nutrition and nutritional science. And his science based nonprofit Nutritional Nutrition facts.org, or is a free online portal hosting more than 2000 videos.

You can get information almost any subject related to nutrition and health science. He's presented at the Conference of World Affairs and the world Bank.

He's testified before Congress. He is an expert witness. And Oprah Winfrey's defense trial under the infamous meat of defamation trial. And now he's also an acclaimed author, a bestselling book, his bestselling How Not to Die and the How Not to Die cookbook were huge bestsellers, and then the How Not to Die, How Not to Diet book became an instant bestseller, too, which was so proud of him and and grateful for his work.

And then, and and remarkably, all of Doctor Gregor's, all these proceeds that he receives from his books and speaking are donated to charity. So he's just an incredibly powerful individual putting forth goodwill and good vibes out to the world, trying to make the world a better place.

So welcome, Doctor Greger. There you are, exercising as usual. Thank you so much. I'm honored to be here. And, so excited that you're doing the summit.

Great, great. And we're talking about heart disease and how not to die, so to speak. Right. That's what we're talking about. Because the number one cause of death for adult Americans is heart disease and strokes.

Heart Disease Is Reversible

But so let's start with the is it just aging or is it a longer time of eating unhealthily that cause that causes heart disease and strokes? Well, you're just inevitably going to get heart disease as you age.

What do you think? Yeah. So that's what we used to think. We used to think that for high blood pressure, we think that for heart disease, until we started looking around the world and realized that there were populations that did not die of epidemic, out of heart disease, epidemics of rheumatoid arthritis and osteoporosis and obesity.

And on down the list. So wait a second. Then we have these migration studies that show it's not genetics. When people move and start eating and living like Americans, they start getting sick and dying from American diseases.

And so this is a tremendously kind of hopeful approach. And then, of course, it wasn't until people started putting it to the test, like Nathan predicted.

And Dean Ornish, who was the famous Lifestyle at Heart trial in 1990, proven for the first time with something called quantitative angiography that you could indeed reverse heart disease, open up arteries without drugs, without surgery, just a plant based diet and lifestyle program, right?

So it's reverse heart disease. But we can also stop people from having like a clot that can propagate and cause a heart attack or cause a stroke. And it's this is not just not forming clots and the increased ability of the blood to stick together and from from just aging us.

It's right. It's kind of like it's what they're putting in their mouth, you know? Absolutely. And so it's not just, it's not just, the, the level of cholesterol in your blood, but the so-called cholesterol years, just like we had pack years for smoking.

It's not just how much you smoke, but how long you've smoked for. Same thing. What's your cholesterol? How high is your cholesterol? And how high has it been for how long?

This is critically important. So there are these there's this rare genetic condition, this Pcsk9, mutation, affecting the rare lucky individual, where they have lifelong LDL.

Not that low, but they have it for their entire lives and have dramatically lower, cardiovascular disease rates. Suggesting and you say, well, wait a second.

You know, how can you be walking around with an LDL of, you know, 100 and still not getting the heart disease? Well, it's because they've had it. They haven't been accumulating, you know, cholesterol in the walls, their eyes, their entire lives.

Whereas if you've been eating unhealthy, we really want to get your LDL down more like 70 for primary prevention and then 30 to 50 or really as low as possible for secondary prevention.

If you already had a heart attack, already have known heart disease. We want to push those numbers as low as possible. Right. So, I think you're saying that there's like a, LDL that if you're eating unhealthy, it you got to push it down higher.

Eating healthy doesn't have to go down as far. But wouldn't you think that like a statin lowered LDL is not going to be as protective, generally speaking, as a dietary and lifestyle lowered LDL, right.

The reason. Right. The reason is because there's this panoply of benefits of eating healthy, old, healthy beyond just, what the what the Staten offers now, the Staten is not just cholesterol lowering.

It has an anti-inflammatory effect.

Cholesterol, LDL, and Statins

But you look at diet and exercise, look at healthy eating, and there is this long list of benefits like the blood rheology, which you talked about the the the flow ability of one's blood, lowering blood pressure.

Statins don't do anything with blood pressures. Lowering, excess blood sugar levels. Statins actually increase the rates of type two diabetes. Whereas a healthy diet, the same healthy diet, the, that can prevent reverse reverse heart disease can prevent reverse type two diabetes and so on down the list anti-inflammatory diet.

And so, so you, you you only get the, a small, a narrow spectrum of benefits when you're taking these lifestyle drugs, as opposed to treating the underlying cause of the disease.

If you look at the absolute risk reduction, even in a secondary prevention scenario where someone already has heart disease, we're really only talking about a 2% absolute risk reduction over a period of maybe six years, dropping one's risk of a subsequent heart attack from 6% down to 4%.

Big Pharma likes to advertise that as a 33% drop in heart disease rates, which is true technically, but it is just that 2% drop. So about 1 in 50 benefit, 98% of people during that time frame would not be benefiting from these drugs.

And so, look, if you are unwilling or unable to change your diet and lifestyle, these drugs can be lifesaving, particularly in a population scale. But for the individual, they're really quite impotent.

And, we overestimate the efficacy, both patients and physicians alike. Right. So that's what this summit's about to get people really, truly protected.

And it means they got to make a radical change in how they're living. Of course. So what do you say? I've already done it. Yeah. Yeah, that's very sad.

So let's go over. What do you think are the most important lifestyle changes to. Let's say you weren't eating healthfully for the first 60 years of your life, and then you have high blood pressure.

So what do you think is the most important changes a person can make as they age? Now they change their diet. They're starting to exercise. What should they do specifically?

The most important things they can do to reduce their risk at this point? Well, you know, and how much they reduce once they're 16, they've eaten unhealthy.

How much can they reduce their risk and what should they do? Yeah. I mean, so so first of all, it's important to note that, for example, in orange juice, life's a hard trial.

These were people already in their 60s. They've been eating these terrible diets their entire lives and yet still able to reverse, the, the accumulation of plaque even late in life after a lifetime disease.

So it's never too late to start eating healthier, to start moving, to stop smoking. We really do have the power, unfortunately. Of course, the the number one way most people, a slight majority of people die from heart disease is something called sudden cardiac death.

Meaning you don't even know you have heart disease. And then all of a sudden you're dead within a few hours of showing symptoms. And so that's why you can't just wait until you're diagnosed with heart disease to clean up your diet and lifestyle.

Because an ounce of prevention is worth way more than a pound of cure. Since there is no cure for dead right. I always say the food doesn't taste that great once you're in the coffin.

It's exactly, exactly.

Lifestyle Changes and Diet Priorities

The taste buds just don't quite work as well. Right. Exactly. So in terms of if we really were to prioritize according to the Global Burden of Disease study, sodium reduction would probably be the number one thing.

Just because salt contributes, to mortality for so many different ways high blood pressure, stroke, kidney failure, heart failure, etc.. So reducing sodium consumption, which predominantly really is about reducing the consumption of processed foods in the United States. Wow.

Okay. So after sodium consumption reduction, you take the sodium every day, you cut the processed foods out. Then what foods should they focus on to facilitate this reversal of heart disease?

What are the foods you want them to focus on the most? All right. So yeah, so in terms of the things we want people to cut down on, we want to cut people cut down on sodium primarily.

I would use to say trans fats. So the trans fats thankfully have been removed from the US food supply. But if you have people in the summit internationally, there still may be these partially hydrogenated oils in their, in their food systems, which they should avoid.

But with trans fats largely out of the way and least industrial and produce trans fats, saturated fat would be the next predominately found meat dairy.

But also these tropical oils like palm kernel oil, palm oil, coconut oil these are not healthy oils. These are these rare, highly saturated plant fats found a lot of, you know, vegan junk foods, which, people really need to, reduce.

And the third thing would be dietary cholesterol, concentrated mostly in eggs that encourage people to drop from their diet as well. In terms of flipping to the positive side, we'd like people to be centering their diets around whole, unprocessed plant foods.

So fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, beans, split peas, chickpeas, lentils, nuts and seeds, mushrooms, herbs and spices basically real food that grows out of the ground from fields, not factories.

Those are our healthiest choices here. How does the you know, the I mean, the, advertising in America and brainwashing people? How did they get people to think that eggs are healthy for the heart, you know, and the the egg yolk, right, is the most cholesterol concentrated food.

And they've convince people to think, oh, cholesterol is not going to hurt you if you eat it. Only if you segment that. It's unbelievable because isn't there's more isn't it?

Cholesterol doesn't distort the insulin receptors and make it more resistant. Oh my god. So much on down the list. On down the list. Well how do they do it?

Because they have a, this checkoff program. Every single egg sold. They need to send money into a fund which is operated by the federal government. That goes into general egg advertising, like the Egg Nutrition Center.

And so they have tens of millions of dollars every year to pump out this message. So it's the same reason some way that, you know, Coca-Cola tries to, you know, muddy the waters in terms of sugary beverage consumption, basically all these I mean, there's just that's where the money is.

And so they're able to really push out their message. Despite the overwhelming consensus in the peer reviewed medical literature. Right. So okay. So then if you're, you know there's the medications that doctors use, you know, which as we get older you know, whether they're, they're having some people who, you know, doctors have to wean people off medications that are some medication more harmful for the elderly, you know, that their doctors are using and more critical to come off the medications.

But oh my God, there's like more medications, like doing more harm than good even, you know, well, there's yeah, there's this epidemic of polypharmacy in terms of the number of drugs that people accumulate over time.

And, I forget this. I have the stats in the book in terms of the percentage of Americans at different ages on multiple medications and how many. It's really quite shocking.

How many people are on drugs and really needs to sit down. Why are we on these drugs in fact, some of these drugs aren't even indicated for something like the proton pump inhibitor drugs like promise act.

Prevacid. These are drugs that really only have FDA indication for a few weeks maximum. Unless you have something like a, you know, ascites, creating tumor or something.

Foods to Avoid and Foods to Emphasize

Yet, people end up on these drugs for years, increasing the risk of bone loss, increasing risk, all cause mortality on

down the risk on down the list.

All drugs have side effects. All drugs have downsides. You only want to be on drugs if the benefits outweigh, the risks. And if there's no other alternative non-pharmacological alternative that can do the same thing or better, you know?

Yeah. All right, well, and what about, you should say, certain testing, certain blood tests, certain markers. Do you think people should be watching as they get older to protect their heart, you know?

Well, according to the Uspstf, the United Services Preventive, Task force, they're really the only lab tests that you would get regularly to look at heart is, is cholesterol.

So following the LDL cholesterol, actually the first the recommendation now first LDL cholesterol taken, early in life, just to make sure you don't have this familial hypercholesterolemia.

But then, at regular intervals, we want to make sure your cholesterol is low. And this is, this is important as well for people who, you know, think they're eating healthy diets.

We want to make sure, because heart disease is the number one killer of men and women. As you said, we want to make absolutely sure that your changes in diet are actually translating, into what we would expect it to be.

So just because, you know, the average, LDL cholesterol of someone on a strictly plant based diet comes in at about 68, which is right where we want it for primary prevention.

It's a bell curve. And some people just, because of genetics or other factors, end up higher and have to just work harder, have even a cleaner diet, to, to shove their cholesterol, even lower.

So, regardless of your diet, you really should be getting tested. Make sure your cholesterol goes down and stays down. Right. All right. And of course, you know, eating cholesterol, eating saturated fat.

What about animal protein? Does that also in itself? Like what about if people go to the lower fat animal products like white meat chicken or you know what does that and that is that what the effect of that.

Yeah. Well, I mean even so-called white meat chicken, there's still more fat and then protein, but 20% fat, by calorie. So I mean, a century ago, chicken was could be considered a kind of a high protein food, only about 2% fat.

But they've been so genetically bred, to to have excess body fat that, that is no longer, a anywhere near a low fat food. The, the concern about animal protein is largely about not killing number one.

But killing number two cancer. When we, animal protein increases the risk of increases the levels in our blood of, what's called insulin, like growth factor one or growth ruling, cancer promoting hormone, which at high enough protein levels doesn't matter if you're eating, yeah.

Plant versus animal protein, but at recommended, protein levels, only the animal protein will actually boost in, you know, randomized people to cut animal protein from their diet and their levels fall, quite rapidly.

You can do the reverse. And so, when I think animal protein, I'm more concerned about, cancer and longevity than I am about heart disease. The heart disease, more about animal fat and protein is more about that.

Excuse me. Yeah. Animal fats, more like heart disease. And animal proteins. More like cancer. That's exactly. Exactly. Although. Wow. How about neither? Sign me up for neither.

And try to get your macronutrients from the healthiest foods, which are a whole plant foods. All right, I think that's, Yeah, that's the message, obviously.

So we're getting older and people are feeling I don't know what they're feeling. Not feeling is good. How do they know if they have to worry about their heart?

And I think I think I got the answer from you.

Medications, Testing, and Risk Markers

I think you're saying is that don't wait. So you're feeling something right now, right. And what up? So what do you think about what could you say to help motivate people to get the fat off their body?

Start take it off the chair like you are and start to make a radical change in their diet. So let's see, you know, let's see what could come. What do you have to say about just pushing people to make these more significant changes based on autopsy studies of, children in the United States who tragically died, 100% of children on raising the American diet have a cow.

Fatty streaks are building up inside of their eyes. That's the first stage of heart disease. Already by age ten, in their 20s, 60% of these, these streaks have turned into actual plaques within their coronary arteries, 60%, 20s coronary plaque, coronary artery plaques, and so, no, so so this is a long disease.

In fact, this is similar with many cancers. So the so-called latency time. But, the time between a cancer starts and the cancer is actually diagnosed can be decades long.

Colon cancer, about, average latency time, 50 years. And so, you know, you know, this is, you know, I know we're talking about heart disease, but, yeah, there's a lot of, people who, you know, change their lives, start eating healthier, and be like, oh, I don't have to worry about colon cancer screening because I eat so healthy.

Well, yeah, but the colon cancer might have started in your teens when you weren't eating, so healthy. And yes, eating healthier can slow down. The doubling time slows down the growth of that cancer, but still critically important, maybe particularly important to get colon cancer screen. Why?

Because you're going to live so long, right? We end colon cancer screening often, at a certain age. Because look, who cares if you have cancer, you're not going to live that long and have a heart attack, right?

But if you're not going to have a heart attack, you gotta live long. Well, then we really need to snip out, any any budding tumors is even more important, to make sure, to ensure our survival.

But. Yeah, so. But for heart disease. Right. You cannot wait until your first symptom because particularly for women, first symptom may be your last. But the good news is it's reversible.

And, you know, one of the most amazing things I learned in all my medical training was that I mean, within about 15 years of stopping smoking, your lung cancer risk approach is that of a lifelong nonsmoker.

Exercise, Prevention, and Closing Advice

It's just so amazing, like your lungs and clear out all that tar, and eventually it's almost as if you never started smoking at all. Right? And every morning of our smoking life, that healing process starts to win.

First cigaret of the day, reentering our lungs with every puff. Just like we can reenter our arteries with every boat when all we had to do all along.

The miracle cure is just stop damaging ourselves, stop re injuring ourselves. Let our body's natural healing processes bring us back towards health. Sure, you can choose moderation and hit yourself with a smaller hammer, but why beat yourself up at all?

Right, so yeah. Because why? You know, I guess the why beat yourself up is because these people become

addicted to this self-destructive food that changes the brain.

It's just crazy. But we got to get people to understand these concepts. And okay, so the person's getting motivated, they're going to eat better. We're going to make this radical change.

So how much time do they should they put aside each day to exercise? Well, I mean the most important message is any exercise is better than none. So I don't want and in fact, I'm the reason why physical activity guidelines really only recommend about, 20 or so minutes a day actually, which has been progressively going down because I wanted to be doable for people to be approachable.

I don't want to scare people away, but the science actually suggests you get, increasing benefits in terms of all cause mortality up to 90 minutes a day of moderate intensity activity, or 45 minutes of vigorous activity.

And, and then then maybe it plateaus. We just really don't have studies of people that that exercise longer than that. But we know at least it goes up to that point.

So that really should be the recommendation. Ideally we should be getting as much as 90% of moderate activity, moderate intensity activity, like brisk walking every day.

But again, any amount, is better than none. And even, studies suggesting 15 minutes a day of walking, is associated with, significantly longer lifespan.

Terrific. All right. Well, I think people got an amazing benefit from this. It hit right the most important points. So thanks for being here for being part of the summit.

We're so grateful to you being be part of it. And everybody. We're so grateful to you being here as well and being part of this community, sharing, learning and spreading this word of obviously that we can take charge of our health destiny.

And you don't have to be sick and have happen to you what happens to other Americans. So take care of yourself. Take care of your friends, your family, your neighbors, and let's all do this together.

All right. Bye, everybody. Thank you, Doctor Gregory. And thank you so much. I am honored to be part of anything you're ever doing. Never hesitate to reach out.

Keep up the fantastic work. Thank you so much. Thank you so much. Bye, everybody.