The Reason Symptoms Hit Suddenly (Interventional Cardiologist Reveals) Transcript

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Introduction to Artery Plaque and Heart Attack Risk

Look at that, that's not a theory. That's a living human artery choked down to a slit. Now, most heart attacks, they don't come out the blue. The damage actually begins to build one bite at a time.

I say they bite. that means every meal is either feeding your plaque or helping you fight plaque. And I used to tell my kids, are you feeding the good guys or the bad guys?

I'm Dr. Columbus Matisse, interventional cardiologist and a lifestyle advocate, which means when prevention fails, when lifestyle changes don' happen soon enough, I'm the one in the cath lab at 2am trying to restore blood flow and keep your heart muscle alive.

So today, I am not doing the hype. I not do the opinions from influencers. Im doing science, backed on 20 years of clinical experience. im going to show you what a clogged artery looks like, whats actually inside of it, and how food patterns can shape your arteries over time.

Now, here's why this matter is big picture. On a large global analysis, they estimate that roughly 70% of cardiovascular disease cases, are tied to modifiable risk factors.

Now translation, your kitchen has more power than your genetics. Let me say it even plainer, Your family recipes, not your family genes, Are what really threaten your heart and are passed down generationally.

Now, quick clarity, modifiable isn't just food. That includes blood pressure, cholesterol, smoking, diabetes, all inputs that we can change and in part may be affected by food Now if we zoom in on food specifically, there are analyses in the United States that have estimated poor diet contributes to roughly 45% of cardiometabolic deaths.

Why Food Patterns Matter for Heart Disease

Now on a global stage, it's the major driver of coronary deaths as well. So when I say that most of this isn't fate, food is a huge part of that story.

Now that means that the next meal isnít just food. Itís not just about flavor, although flavor matters. It's a vote for your arteries. In a minute, I want to give you my top 3 food frenemies and the top three heart saving Swaps that you can start today.

All right, but quick check in first What's been hardest for you to cut back on that? You know, it's not health promoting cheese processed meats bacon sausage deli meat or the late-night snacking All, right.

Let's be truthful drop it in the comments. Alright, let's go back to the screen. This is a coronary angiogram Now, the dark line? It isn't the artery itself.

It's the dye that fills the arteries, outlining the pathway for blood. Now normal should look smooth and wide open like this. And here, that pinch point?

That's a stenosis, a narrowing. Blood is supposed to move easily like water through a hose. But this? This is water through a straw somebody is squeezing.

But here's the cath lab truth that oftentimes I'm discussing and still surprises patients. I have seen healthy looking people with arteries that don't match the outside.

All right, now I know some of you may be thinking, all right doc, what is this thing called coronary artery disease? Here's a simple truth, the translation.

Corneal artery disease aka also known as atherosclerosis is when plaque builds up in the wall of the arteries over years. Now early on the artery can expand outward actually to make room so you feel fine there's no internal obstruction but over time it can only expand hourly so far that plaque can crowd the opening and the blood flow gets limited when you need it most.

Angiogram Basics and How Coronary Disease Develops

Like walking fast, carrying groceries, or going uphill. And here's the part people really don't expect. One meal? It can affect your arteries. Yes, one meal.

Even one high fat, fast food style meal can temporarily paralyze or make your artery lining work worse for a few hours. So no, One Meal may not cause a heart attack.

But one meal, it can stress the lining. And when that becomes your default, that's when stress becomes disease. One meal after the other, after other.

Now, most of the time that damage, stays quiet. You don't feel plaque building. you don' feel atherosclerosis. You feel it when it starts limiting flow.

Or you feel when suddenly turns into an emergency. That brings me to a big picture that your brain will not forget. On really making it clear what plaque is, what this area is.

It's almost like a pimple, I always describe to my patients, right? So we understand what a Pimple is because most of us have had this. And it starts on the surface, it's inflamed, and it swells quietly for a long time.

But if that pimples gets irritated enough, It can burst. Now your skin, is a little nasty, a lil' gross. In your coronary artery, that can be a heart attack.

Because when that plaque pops, your body tries its best to form a clot on top of it. And it does it very fast. Let's dig in deeper and see what the pimple, I mean the plaque, is actually made of.

So here's the cleanest way to remember what a plaque is made up. It's three buckets. Grease, fire, and concrete. All right, so first up, grease. That's really the cholesterol, especially the LDL or low-density lipoprotein cholesterol.

It gets stuck to the artery wall. Think of it like grease building up inside the walls of a pipe. Now, food patterns can actually keep your LDl high. And so there's more grease that's circling through your system.

The high blood pressure, the smoke, They rough up the artery lining making it easier for the LDL to slip in and stick to the wall of the pipe.

Plaque Rupture and What Plaque Is Made Of

Alright, number two is the fire. That's your immune system saying, listen, that doesn't belong here and it creates this inflammation. And that's what makes the plaque angry and unstable.

Last you have concrete. This is a healing phase. this is where your body is trying to wall it off. It's trying patch it up. So it lays down scar tissue in calcium.

Now over time, it hardens. So if you remember anything, I want you to remember this. Grease starts it, fire, inflammation worsens it and concrete locks it in.

Now let's connect that to symptoms because this is where people say, Doc, why do I feel fine? At least until I don't.

Most blockages, they grow quietly for years.

So as a matter of fact, oftentimes when I'm seeing patients, i will ask them, when is the last time you felt normal? And how long was that? They say, Doc, I felt fine for years, just until yesterday.

Well, the blockage didn't just happen yesterday, these blockages grow quietly for the tiny vessels downstream, your microcirculation can open up to keep resting flow pretty stable.

So you can actually have plaque building and still feel normal while you're sitting on the couch. But when you start moving, walking fast, going uphill, you heart needs extra blood flow.

Now if your micocirculations already opened up, just to up you don't have much reserve left. in order to counter that. Another way to look at this is through the lens of a 60% blockage narrowing that progresses to a 70% blocking.

It's not a magical cliff for everyone where all of the sudden you're having symptoms. Its more like traffic. Now I want you to imagine for a moment that you are driving on a highway that already lost a lane.

Traffic is fine at 2am in the morning. If there's no construction, at least. But at rush hour, everything jams.

Why Symptoms Can Stay Hidden for Years

Everything slows down. And that's why a small change in narrowing or a smaller change of demand can be the difference between I feel fine and why am I getting this sort of tightness walking up this hill now or carrying the groceries in.

Now, one more truth for accuracy. Percent blockage is never the whole story. Two people can have the same looking narrow in totally different symptoms because the microcirculation and the overall vessel health aren't visible on the angiogram.

That's why as cardiologists, we use additional tests. We may use something called stress testing or something call fractional flow reserve because the question isn't just what the vessel looks like.

It's really what is the performance of the best? What is a flow? It is whether it limits flow when you need it most. So here's why you can't wait for symptoms.

At least I don't want you to wait. This process starts early. Most people think that heart disease doesn't start until you're a bit older, around 55 or so, when symptoms show up.

But the truth is, the story often starts decades earlier. As a matter of fact, there's research in teens and young adults has shown early artery changes.

can be present long before symptoms. And then they quietly grow for many years. So yes, this can start before you even have a driver's license and stay silent until midlife.

All right, now I want you to stay with me because in the next 60 seconds, I wanna show you the exact food patterns that turn that grease into fire and keeps that plaque under construction.

Alright, here's the three food frenemies, right? The evil triad. They feel like friends, a comfort, tradition, convenience, but your arteries, they pay the price.

Friend of meat number one, the butter buddy. I'm talking about butter and cream and heavy cheese, saturated fats that push your low-density lipoprotein up, and that LDL is the raw material or the grease that gets stuck in the artery wall.

Now, friend of me number two, this is red meat eaten regularly, especially that process.

Three Food Frenemies That Feed Plaque

Bacon, sausage, hot dogs, deli, these tend to amplify your inflammation. They turn it up. and that feeds to fire the angry part of the plaque. Now, friend of mine number three, this is the packaged snack foods, right?

We're talking about the ultra-processed, low fiber. In other words, think of it, if your calories come in a bag, a box, or a bottle, you're usually buying less fiber and more inflammation.

And guess who's paying the price? Your arteries. Now this isn't just opinion. There was actually a study in the Journal of American College of Cardiologists, the PESA imaging study, and they found that social business eating patterns, more red than processed meats, sugary drinks, frequent snacking, eating out, sounds like a regular business day, right?

Is linked to silent plaques and more arteries. Now let's flip it, same categories bear outcomes. Here are the top three heart healing swabs that you can make, because it's not just about what you don't eat, it is about WHAT you are eating for your health overall.

So swap number one studies have revealed is that when we swap butter for plant fats, olive oil, avocado, nuts, and seeds, swap, number two, red and processed meats for plants proteins, beans and lentils and tofu and tempeh and amami.

Swap number three, ditch the packaged low fiber and turn to whole food fiber, recognizable ingredients of fruits and oats and beans, vegetables and whole grains.

All right. Quick question for you, which swap feels the most doable this week? Switching out the butter to olive oil, the meat to beans or lentils, or packaged snacks to whole foods?

Drop that in the comments, right? You know, so we can kind of work on this together. Now, why these swaps work so well? It's simple. Whole plant foods, the fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts, and seeds, they fight plaque on three fronts.

Yes, lower the grease, but it means cholesterol. Plants are naturally cholesterol free. They're usually lower in saturated fat, in their fiber, it acts as a sponge to pull the cholesterol out through your gut over time.

Heart-Healthy Food Swaps and Plant-Based Benefits

The second part is they calm the fire. plants bring the antioxidants and protective compounds that will support the artery lining and they actually give extra fiber that feeds the healthy gut bacteria and it helps dial down the inflammation.

Thirdly, they support your metabolism. So the high fiber plant meals, your digestion becomes slower, so blood sugar and insulin swings are a lot less.

The visceral fat signaling is less, which means overall lower background inflammation It's not about being perfect, it's about shifting your default. It is about substituting.

All right, quick science guard well. Now some randomized trials with Mediterranean style dietary eating patterns, they've suggested that plaque can actually improve.

That means regress, especially in some people who already have moderate disease. But the strongest evidence is that these patterns will prevent progression in stabilized plaque.

Always remember, there's only two goals from your cardiologist, your doctor, you healthcare provider. Help you feel

better, help you live longer. So overall translation is we're not chasing a miracle.

We're chasing better blood flow and fewer events. So here's the point. This is about stacking small wins that improve bloodflow and stabilize your plaque over time.

If we make this real, I'm actually gonna eat tomorrow. Now for breakfast, i'm playing oatmeal with berries and ground flax. Lunch, bean bowl, greens and salsa with little avocado.

Dinner, some tofu with vegetables and brown rice. Not a cleanse, a pattern of intentionally making an effort. Quick recap of what we talked about. Your plaque, grease, fire, and concrete.

Once you remember, you can feel fine at rest, then struggle with exertion because your reserve runs out.

Daily Habits, Safety Notes, and Final Takeaways

Third, your daily eating pattern. It either feeds a plaque or it's biting plaque formation. All right, and do me a favor. Send this to a person who always is saying, listen, I know I might get it.

My mom had it, my grandmother had. This is inevitable. my DNA is my destiny. Because I want them to understand that family recipes, not family genes, are what really threaten your heart.

Now, if you do nothing else this week, why don't you this? Add one cup of beans or lentils every day. Just one daily for seven days. If you want to do a simple score bar, I want you to look at beans daily, 30 minutes of walking, five days a week, simple beats, perfect.

Now one quick safety note, always, if you're making changes, recognize that food is medicine. I wanted you have a conversation with your doctor because it's about shared decision making.

That means that we work for you, you don't work us. And always remember if have chest pain with exertion, Don't self-diagnose, don't wait, get evaluated.

All right, last thing I want you to know is that if you want to go fast, go alone. If you wanna go far, goal together. Let's go farther together, building healthier hearts and stronger communities.

I hope you like it, share it send it and save a life. See you next time.