Why This Interventional Cardiologist Stopped Eating Meat and Went Plant-Based Transcript

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Why I Stopped Eating Meat

Doc, why don't you eat meat? Now, I can't tell you how many times I've heard that same question. This particular time, it was after a lecture. A woman walked up to me and she asked me that question, she told me how she had been watching a famous YouTube physician for years and that he had recommended going keto.

And he also suggested that maybe the medical community did not want the truth getting out. Now she wasn't angry. She was searching, and now she was conflicted after hearing my lecture.

And what I told her next changed how I look at every single meal. I open blocked arteries for a living, yes. So at one point in my life I had to ask myself a hard question.

Why would I keep eating in a way that may help fuel the same disease I spend my time trying to treat? Today, I'm going to show you why this is much more than just about cholesterol.

This is about the artery wall. It's about microbiome. Its about inflammation, about oxidative stress, bout clotting, metabolism. And before this video ends, listen, I'm going to give you the simplest place to start, even if you never go fully plant based.

My name is Dr. Columbus Batiste. I am an interventional cardiologist and a lifestyle advocate. This my answer. Not to attack anyone, not to be tribal, Not tell you to just trust me.

this is my evidence based explanation for why I personally went whole food plant-based. Now, let me start with a number, 529,299. Let that sit for a second.

That's not a statistic, that's a stadium full of people, several stadiums, who died because of what was on their plates. And as an interventional cardiologist, I'm the last stop.

I'm downstream. I treat what that food eventually becomes. The heart attack, the stroke, blocked artery, I treated the consequence. And that number, it made me realize I was treating explosions while the sparks were still flying upstream.

The Artery Wall and TMAO

That's when I changed my thinking. Because when most people think about food and heart disease, they think of one villain at a time. Salt, sugar, cholesterol, seed oils, red meat.

But biology does not work one villan at time, That is the mistake. When I was trained, the story sounded like this. Saturated fat raises LDL. True. LDl gets into the artery wall, becomes oxidized.

Plaques form. All true. Arteries narrow. Heart attacks happen. That story is not wrong. It's just incomplete. Because what changed my mind was realizing that meat does not only act through cholesterol, it may affect the system through the gut, through oxidative stress, though endothelial injury.

through clotting, through inflammation, to metabolic dysfunction. So here is how I want to walk you through this. Three things meat may be doing inside your body right now.

And then the part people don't expect, what plants actually do in return. Because this is not just about removing something bad. We can never remove something from our lives without replacing it with something good.

It's about replacing with with that's actively working on your behalf. Here is the phrase I wanted you to hold on to through the entire video. The package matters.

Yes, the package matter. It's not just the protein. It is not the calories. The package matters. You ready? Let's start with the artery wall. One of the most underappreciated pathways is TMAO.

Red meat contains compounds like L-carnitine and phosphatidylcholine. Gut microbes can convert these compounds into trimethylamine, and the liver then turns them into Tmao.

That would be fair. red meat is not the only dietary source connected to this pathway. Eggs, fish, shellfish, and L-carotene supplements, they also can influence it as well.

But red meet is one of the major players and one the most studied. Now there was a landmark feeding study from Stanley Hazen's group and they found that eating red mead as the main protein source for just four weeks, it raised circulating TML about three-fold.

This is in comparison to white meat or non-meat protein diets. Now when the participant stopped the red meat diet, guess what happened? The TMAO levels dropped back down.

The red me diet also reduced how efficiently the kidneys cleared Tmao. So you may be asking, well, why does that matter? Because TmAo is not just a lab number.

Now it's been linked to atherosclerosis related processes and Hazen's group also showed that TMAO, it can directly increase platelet reactivity and enhanced thrombosis, that means clotting.

So this means food is not just changing your labs, It may be changing you plaque biology and clot biology. And that matters to me because I treat the moment the clot forms.

That's what results in a heart attack or a stroke. I've been in that room a thousand times. The patient in front of me, they're semi-awake. the family, They're nervous, their pensive, pacing in the waiting room.

And I'm there threading a wire through a blocked artery trying to get the blood moving again.

Heme Iron, AGEs, and Vascular Damage

Now what I want people to understand is this. That moment didn't start in a cath lab. It actually started years earlier at the table, right? So when someone says my cholesterol isn't bad, I think, Well, that's not the whole story because arteries do not respond to one number in isolation.

They respond a total biological assault. Now let's stay with the artery wall for just another moment. Most people hear iron and they think strength, but heme iron, the kind found in animal tissue, it's packaged differently from non-heme iron found plants.

That matters because hee iron is more capable of driving oxidative chemistry, which can reduce nitric oxide availability and contribute to that endothelial dysfunction.

Now remember, nitric oxide is your arteries best friend. It helps relax the vessels, it protects the endothelium, and it helps resist abnormal clotting.

Alright, now there's another component to this. Its AGE's, advanced glycation end products. And when meat is cooked at high temperatures, you know what I'm talking about, grilling it, broiling, frying, roasting, charring it.

it generates large amounts of AGEs. That same browning people often associate with flavor can create compounds that become a problem inside the body. AGEs can cross-link structural proteins like collagen and elastin, which makes the arteries stiffer over time.

Now stiff arteries, they drive your systolic blood pressure and they result in a wider pulse pressure as you age. AGs also can bind a receptor called RAGE, and this switches on inflammatory pathways and enrages them, right?

and adds another vascular layer of vascular stress. And this doesn't just stop at the artery wall. This AGE cross-linking, it stiffens the heart muscle itself, contributing to diastolic dysfunction.

Now remember, diostolic disfunction is when the hear is too stiff and it doesn' relax, which increases the filling pressures and results in heart failure with preserved ejection fraction.

So when I see someone with high blood pressure, thickened ventricles, metabolic dysfunction, and vassular disease, I'm not just thinking about the salt.

I am thinking of the cumulative injury, the years of oxidative stress, of endothelial salt, inflammatory signaling, high heat, low fiber, and low phytonutrient eating.

Let me pause right here. This is why I stopped seeing meat just as protein, fat, or calories. I started seeing it as a package. And that package, once again, it matters.

That question changed how I eat, not just how much protein, but what comes with the protein. Now there's another fascinating reason that mammalian meat may affect humans differently.

Red meat, It contains a molecule called NEU-5GC. Most mammals, they make it naturally, But humans don't. So when humans eat mammalians meat that means from any animal, small amounts of that molecule may get incorporated into human tissue anyway.

And because the body can recognize it as foreign, that may contribute to a chronic low-grade immune response. In other words, inflammation. Now I want to be honest with you here, right?

This is early science. This does not be saying that this one molecule explains heart disease in completion, but it's a package. And here's what I kept noticing.

Why Plant Foods Protect the Heart

Every time I dug into a new pathway, a study, new mechanism, the pattern was the same. Meat is not just protein, it's not fat, not calories. It is the package.

And that package carries signals the body has to respond to over and over again, meal after meal, year after year. In saturated fat, it may do more than just affect the cholesterol.

It may also activate the inflammatory signaling in ways that resemble parts of the body's early warning immune system. In plain English, some meals high in animal saturated fats, they may not just raise the lipid burden.

They may help create this low-grade inflammatory environment linked to insulin resistance, vascular stress, and structural heart changes over time. So here's the big idea.

Two meals can have the same calories, same protein, the fat but create very different biological conditions. And that is why the package matters. All right.

Now here's the part that made the decision clear for me. Plant foods did not just look better in isolation. They looked better when you replace it. That matters because that's how real life works.

You don't eat nutrients fully in the air. Not just eating fats or carbohydrates or nutrients. Replace one thing with something else. Real food, whole food.

Before I go deeper, let me give you the practical promise. Near the end, I'm going to show you the easiest place to

begin so this doesn't feel like an all or none conversation.

But first, here's what really changed my mind. Whole plant foods don't just take harmful things off the table. They actively create different biological environment because when you replace red and processed meat with beans and lentils and peas and soy foods, nuts and seeds and intact grains, you're not just subtracting harmful exposures.

You're adding protective mechanisms. That's the key. If you adding fiber that helps pull cholesterol out of the circulation and it changes what your gut bacteria produce.

You're adding plant compounds that support nitric oxide, which helps blood vessels relax and protects the endothelium. Your adding polyphenols that help quiet the inflammatory signals and reduce oxidative stress.

your adding minerals like potassium and magnesium that supports blood pressure regulation. And you're adding the raw material for short chain fatty acids.

The compounds your microbiome makes when it ferments plant fiber. Now here's the one that stopped me in my tracks. There was a 2024 preclinical study.

This was published in the Journal of American Heart Association. So a real journal. And it looked at butyrate. Buty rate is what your gut makes. When it permits plant fibers.

In the study, it found an increased ejection fraction, the heart contractility. by nearly 40% and it reduced the infarct size by about 82% through direct cardiac contractility and coronary vasor relaxation.

I want you to hear that clearly. A compound your gut produces when you eat beans and whole grains have measurable effects on heart muscle function and heart attack damage.

That's not digestion, that is a gut heart signal. Fiber has also been shown to affect the rhythm control. So there was a 2022 study that found that short-chain fatty acids that are derived from dietary fiber fermentation, they helped alleviate atrial fibrillation development through a signaling pathway, reducing atrium remodeling fibrosis and calcium handling abnormalities in that model.

That means fiber may actually help the heart through pathway completely different than your standard antiarrhythmic drug. So here's the thing, plant foods may also help by shifting the gut metabolite balance away from risk.

There was another prospective study and in people with a high enterolactone, and low TMAO profile.

Meat, Diabetes, and My Father's Story

Now this is a signature link with more whole foods, whole grains, and fiber, less red meat. They had significantly lower risk of coronary artery disease.

Enterolactone, by the way, that's the compound your gut produces when you eat those whole-grains and seeds. And remember, T-MA-O, the molecule that changes the plaque biology and clotting biology.

The dietary pattern that lowered TmaO also lowered coronal artery diseases risk. Those loops are not coincidences. They're the same story told from different angles.

And some plant compounds, they appear to activate the body's own defense systems directly. There's one sulforaphane. This is found in cruciferous vegetables, you know, like broccoli and kale.

It activates the NRF2, a major protective pathway in the bottom. I need to be honest here as well, as I was earlier, this particular research is still in an early stage model, but it adds to the pattern.

Plants do not just remove something harmful, They generate compounds and signals that work with the cardiovascular system instead of constantly stressing it.

What do you want? That's what you have to ask yourself. So this is bigger than plants have less saturated fat. Much bigger. Whole plant foods, they may improve the chemistry around the artery wall.

They may improved cholesterol handling, blood pressure, endothelial function, inflammatory signaling, microbiome metabolites, and may even stabilize the rhythm, all at the same time.

That's why I don't frame plant-based eating as deprivation. I frame it as biological leverage. I frame as reducing your risk. You're not just avoiding damage, you're activating protection.

Now, somebody's thinking, okay doc, but what about chicken? What about turkey? What about lean meat? Fair question. When we look at The Lidger, not Every animal food carries the exact same level of risk.

Processed meat clearly is the worst actor. Red meat? Yeah, it's right behind it. It's strongly associated with harm. More harm than unprocessed poultry in many datasets.

But here's where I landed personally. I was not asking what is a least harmful version. I can get away with. I was asking, what does it take to get an A?

What does take it to develop an eating pattern that best aligns with vascular protection? That's a different question. And when I look through the science, through that lens, whole plant foods kept rising to the top.

Now, if I'm being honest with you, this didn't start just with my patients. It actually started with So my dad had diabetes his entire life. And when I became a cardiologist and I finally had the training, the tools, to procedure the knowledge, I found I thought I could help him.

I though I can finally do something to help change his course. Now what I watched and said was his health declined steadily despite the medications, despite procedures, Despite everything I had been trained to do and did everything that I was trained.

It wasn't enough. When my Dad passed I did what most Docs do. at least when they lose someone they love, and medicine doesn't quite save them. I went searching.

Not just in a textbook, not just clinical guidelines, I was searching for what else could have been available to treat him. What did I miss? And what I found changed everything.

Study after study, it showed that nutrition, real, whole food nutrition had effects on diabetes and cardiovascular disease that pills and procedures I relied on could not fully replicate.

Not because the medicine was wrong, but because we had been treating the fire without ever asking what was fueling it. And my dad, he deserved that question.

He deserved a doc, even his own son, who knew to ask it." Now that loss is part of why I'm here, right? It's part why this channel exists. Part of I will not stop saying this until every person who needs to hear it finally does.

Here's something I found in that search that I need you to here. That same biological pattern I see driving heart disease, the oxidative stress, inflammatory signaling, AGE stiffening tissue, those same patterns show up in the science on insulin resistance and beta cell damage associated with diabetes.

Heme iron, iron in red meat, doesn't just deplete your nitric oxide in your arteries. It generates oxidated stress that damages the very cells your pancreas needs to produce insulin.

How to Start Replacing Meat Meals

They, geez, those compounds formed when meat cooks at high heat, they don't just stiffen the artery wall. They impair insulin synthesis by breaking down the proteins your beta cells need to do their job.

And there's one more of the research documents that most people never hear. Branched chain amino acids, the ones concentrated in animal protein, when chronically elevated, activate a signaling pathway called mTORC1.

And mTORC1, when it stays on too long, it starts to degrade insulin signaling itself. Now here's the part that really stopped me. The people most at risk, the ones already carrying metabolic stress, are also the least able to clear these signals.

They body becomes less able protect itself at exactly the moment it needs protection the most. This is what happened to my dad. A package that stresses the artery wall is often the same package stressing the pancreas.

I just didn't know to make that connection until it was too late to help him. Now at some point, this stopped being abstract for me because I had seen too many patients come back.

A stint in one artery, then disease pops up in another vessel, a bypass, and then progression later with bypass grafts closing. Technically successful procedures, but the underlying disease process kept moving, kept progressing.

And then I have to look at my own self, my arteries, endothelium, microbiome, diabetes risk, plate. And I realized I was asking patients to take their health seriously while I Was still negotiating with what I knew that was ultimately not acceptable to me.

So I changed not overnight, not perfectly, but directionally. And that matters because a lot of people watching think the only options are all in. or not at all.

That's not true. Every small amount of direction you make in the right way for eating, it matters. Direction matters, so here's the simplest place to start.

Don't start with perfection. Start with substitution. Swap one meat-centered meal each day or maybe even each week for a plant- centered one. swap processed breakfast meat for oats and fruit and nuts or even tofu.

for chili made with beans, lentils, and mushrooms. Swap a meat heavy plate for a plate where plants become the center and the animal foods stop being the star.

Because when the centre changes, the biology changes. And when a biology change, s the future changes I became a cardiologist to save lives and yes, procedures matter.

That's why I still do them. But the most powerful intervention I have ever seen is a person who changes what they eat. Not because they were told to, but because the finally understood why.

and that is what I wanted to give you today. I went plant-based because I got tired of treating the explosion while ignoring the spark. I want more flow.

How about you? The goal has never been just to treat the event. It's been to change the terrain that made the even possible. All right, I need you to remember, if you wanna go fast, go alone.

If you want to go far, goal together. Let's go together, building healthier hearts and stronger communities. I just like it, share it. Send it save a life.

See you next time.