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# Heart to Heart Talk

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## Aspirin: Anti-Cancer?

### Does caffeine hurt our health?

Researchers have found that coffee chasers have increased blood pressure, faster heart rate, higher stress hormone level, compared to non-coffee drinkers. The substance responsible for these changes is caffeine, which is also found in cola drink and chocolates. These changes in the physiology of the body are considered harmful to health. Somehow, tea, which also contains one variety of caffeine, has been deemed to be good for our body, especially green tea.

### Does aspirin protect us against cancer?

Yes, according to clinical studies conducted on patients taking daily aspirin (Acetylsalicylic Acid) for conditions like arthritis, etc., or among heart patients taking aspirin to thin their blood to prevent blood clots and blockages in the coronary (heart) arteries. The findings show that those taking daily dose of aspirin (as low as 81 mg a day) have almost 43% lesser risk in developing pancreatic cancer, compared to those who do not take aspirin daily. More investigation is underway to find out the explanation for this apparent link, and also if aspirin similarly protects us against colon cancer, other malignancies and against other conditions. Indeed, our longtime household friend, aspirin, so commonly simple and inexpensive medication for the usual headaches and pains, is truly an amazing wonder drug.

### How does wine protect our heart?

Wine, more especially the red variety, contains a chemical called Resveratrol, which has been found to be cardio-protective, among other benefits of moderate and disciplined drinking. The recommended "dose" is one to two glasses of red wine with dinner. Exactly what mechanism is at play to protect the heart when Resveratrol enters our circulation is not totally clear, but clinical investigations have shown that red wine is good for our health. The one particular red wine that is supposed to contain the highest level of Resveratrol is Pinot Noir, followed by Cabernet Sauvignon. The caveat is, of course, moderation and discipline.

## **What is the cause of stomach ulcers?**

**In the past, the medical community thought that stomach ulcers were caused by hyperacidity (high acid content in the stomach), by eating spicy food, alcohol ingestion, or even by prolonged hunger. This was what physicians and other healthcare personnel were taught, and the prevailing scientific opinion at the time. Today, we know better. The cause of majority of stomach ulcers is an infection, caused by H. pylori bug. When the researcher who discovered this initially presented his theory and findings to the world medical community, he was scorned and literally laughed at...until various independent and extensive laboratory and clinical studies proved him right. He became a hero who had revolutionized the treatment of gastric ulcers, transforming this disease entity from a surgical illness to a medical condition manageable by pills, instead of by a knife in the operating room.**

## **Can vasectomy be reversed?**

**Vasectomy is a sterilization procedure in the male where the left and right vas deferens (about 4 mm in diameter) are surgically cut and tied to prevent the sperm from getting through, thus rendering the man infertile. The ejaculation thereafter contains seminal fluids devoid of sperm. With modern surgical technology utilizing microsurgical procedure with the aid of surgical loops (magnifying eye lenses with built-in light), vasectomy can be reversed. The cut ends of the vas deferens on both sides are prepared (trimmed and cleaned) and re-anastomosed (re-connected) together, like joining two water pipes end to end. This will then allow the sperm to pass through, making the man fertile once again. This reversal is desired by men whose only child had died or by those who had remarried, etc.**

## **Why is the combination of viagra and nitrates fatal?**

**Viagra (Sildenafil citrate) is the very effective “anti-impotent” pill prescribed for male erectile dysfunction, whose chemical action allows the veins in the penis to dilate and fill with more blood to cause engorgement and erection, enabling the individual to successful penetration and intercourse. Nitrates are heart medications that also dilate blood vessels (arteries and veins in the heart and all over the body). When the blood vessels in the body are dilated “too much” (as the combination of Viagra and nitrates will do), the blood pressure of the person falls very low, and uncontrollably leads to shock, and death in some patients. Viagra is a very safe drug to take, as the millions and millions of men taking it could attest, as long as it is taken under the supervision of a physician and not taken by heart patients who are on medications that contain nitrates.**

## **Are there medications without side-effects?**

**No, there is no medication, not even common vitamins, that are totally**

devoid of potential side-effects, good or bad. There are some side-effects of a drug which are good, like Viagra, for example, which was originally studied for its coronary artery-dilating effect to prevent a heart attack, and was found by serendipity to have an excellent anti-impotent effect. The bad side-effect of a medication is exemplified by a common drug, like aspirin, which could cause stomach bleeding, or some drugs which could cause allergic reactions, or even fatal sequelae. This is the reason why we do not recommend (and are very much against) self-medication.

## **Do we really need sleep?**

Many times, we hear people (young and old) claiming that they do not need sleep, or that an hour or two was enough sleep for them. It is unhealthy not to have adequate sleep. While there is no magic number, having at least 8 hours of a restful sleep is considered good for the body. This brief “hibernation” gives our body time to recharge and repair itself, including our immune system. With inadequate sleep, our body functions less than optimal, our brain and other organs less efficient, and our disposition a bit cloudy and irritable. Those who have enough restful sleep also feel and look better, and are more pleasant, positive and productive. On the other hand, sleeping more than 10 hours daily (except for babies and young children) does not confer extra benefits, and might even make one lazier and more sluggish.

## **Is it bad to wash our face often?**

Washing our face 2 or 3 times a day, and as needed, on top of a daily shower, is not bad, provided we do not use harsh soap and we replace the moisture that is lost with washing by applying moisturizing cream or lotion after each wash or shower. Washing our face cleanses our face of bacteria and dirt, so it is healthy to do it at least twice a day, followed by a facial moisturizer.

## **Why does blood not clot inside our blood vessels?**

This is one of the wonders of our body, which is replete with various multi-layer defensive mechanisms (and offensive ones against bacteria, viruses and other intruders or potential diseases or injuries), mediated by chemical reactions within us, all aimed at protecting us and keeping us healthier by constantly maintaining homeostasis (physiologic balance within our body). Blood circulating in our arteries and veins does not clot because we have natural built-in anticoagulant (anti-clot) substances produced by our body. Also, the smoothness of the endothelium (lining of the inner wall of the blood vessels), which contains negatively charged protein, repels the clotting factors and platelets to maintain the fluidity of blood. These chemicals keep our blood “just right,” not too thin for us to have spontaneous bleeding and not too thick to produce clotting and blockages in our blood vessels. Our lifestyle (including smoking or medications we take) could adversely affect this homeostasis and throw it helter-skelter. When this homeostasis is off-balance, an

**unphysiologic condition ensues and an ailment develops.**