

# HEALTH REPORT

VOLUME 12

ISSUE 15

## KNOWING ABOUT DIET INFLUENCES CAN LEAD TO A HEALTHIER HEART

The health of the heart and the death rate due to heart disease has made an interesting increase over the past 150 years. In the 1800s, death by heart attack was almost unheard of. Now, it has taken the position of the single largest killer of American men and women.

According to statistics provided by the American Heart Association (AHA) in a "2007 Update on Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics," cardiovascular disease accounted for 36.3% of all deaths in the United States in 2004. The AHA says that some 80 million US adults have cardiovascular disease. Statistics say that nearly 2,400 people die in the US each day as a result.

An interesting evaluation of these statistics over these past 150 years and how the rate of death increases have correlated to changes in food intake and lifestyle was recently presented in a booklet by chiropractor Kurt W. Donsbach, DC. One study pointed out in the materials shows heart failure statistics collected from 1855 to 1985 in the area of Yorkshire, England.

From the years 1855-1900 the death rate from heart failure was only 1 in 22,000 people. From 1900-1925, the figure rose to 5 deaths per 22,000. From 1925-1985, that death figure jumped to 35 per 22,000 people. Understanding some of the changes that occurred during these years and taking a look at lifestyles and food intake today can provide some very enlightening insights into making wellness lifestyle choices.

Two significant changes occurred around 1880: 1) The introduction of bleached white flour which replaced whole wheat flour in most households who could afford it, and 2) Machine-made cigarettes were introduced around this time and were enjoyed by about 80% of the male population. These two factors likely accounted for the increase in heart failure from 1 to 5 deaths per 22,000.

The next major change occurred after 1925 when American homemakers began replacing lard with oil, and margarine became a substitute for butter. By the 1950s it was standard procedure to use hydrogenated margarine, shortening and liquid oils like corn and canola in place of lard and butter. Donsbach points out that it was during this period that deaths from heart disease increased most dramatically.

Two additional negative factors affecting the health of our population are the reduction of magnesium and vitamin E in our daily diets, both of which contribute to general heart health. Magnesium reduction occurs in two ways: One is through the use of bleached white flour and the other is drinking soft water. Hard water generally contains a higher concentration of minerals in general but notably a greater quantity of magnesium. Finally, wheat bread is a reasonably good source of vitamin E, yet bleached white flour is basically stripped of this health-producing vitamin.

Certainly exercise and wellness activities can go a long way to producing a healthy body, but knowing this interesting historical perspective can shed some light on good heart health choices. Wise choices include no smoking, the use of wheat flour, a careful look at oils and margarines and making sure that adequate levels of magnesium and vitamin E are included in the diet. For persons with questions about health and diet, a consultation with an alternative medical practitioner such as a chiropractor or an acupuncturist about a comprehensive healthy lifestyle would be an excellent place to begin.