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OPTIMAL HEALTH R E V O L U T I O N

How inflammation is the
root cause of the biggest killers

How the cutting-edge science
of nutrigenomics can transform
your long-term health

DUKE JOHNSON, MD



BENBELLA BOOKS, INC.
Dallas, Texas

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BenBella Books, Inc.
6440 N. Central Expressway, Suite 503
Dallas, TX 75206
www.benbellabooks.com

Send feedback to feedback@benbellabooks.com

Printed in the United States of America
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available for this title.
ISBN 978-1933771-82-3

Proofreading by Stacia Seaman
Cover design by Laura Watkins
Text design and composition by Laura Watkins
Indexing by Shoshana Hurwitz
Printed by Bang Printing

Distributed by Perseus Distribution
perseusdistribution.com

To place orders through Perseus Distribution:
Tel: (800) 343-4499
Fax: (800) 351-5073
E-mail: orderentry@perseusbooks.com

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my precious, loving, and supportive wife Tracey. Our marriage is a priceless treasure, and she owns my heart completely and forever. To me, she is the most beautiful woman in the world because she is beautiful both inside and out. Though we've been married for twenty years, it only seems like two. The fruit of our love is manifested in three wonderful daughters: Amber, Katie, and Bethany. These beautiful girls have many God-given talents, but the greatest quality of each is a heart's desire to do what is right.

Secondly, this work is dedicated to my parents, Wayne and Ruthie Johnson. My father is my hero, a genius, oftentimes the wind beneath my wings and the greatest earthly personification of love that I know.

Thirdly, I'd like to acknowledge Dr. Sam Rehnborg, the president of Nutrilite Health Institute. The mentoring I've received from this extremely intelligent and humble man is without equal, and he has significantly shaped my work. His commitment to excellence is demonstrated by the more than one hundred top-notch, full-time scientific researchers at the Nutrilite Health Institute, to whom I'm blessed and privileged to have access.

Fourthly, this book is dedicated to Nutrilite Health Institute, Nutrilite Health Institute Scientific Advisory Board, Amway Corporation, Bill Dombrowski, and all the affiliated corporate staff and thousands of business associates around the world who have entrusted me with their health. It has been a great honor to be the Medical Advisor/Director to Nutrilite Health Institute these last twelve-plus years.

Fifthly, and most importantly, this book is dedicated to my loving God, who's the source of any talent and good within me. (Jeremiah 9: 23, 24). Despite my shortcomings and failures, His love and grace sustain me.

I'm extremely thankful for the outstanding work done by my literary agents, Dr. Uwe Stender, President of TriadaUS Literary Agency, and Lisa Berkowitz at Berkowitz & Associates. Their expertise was obvious immediately. Glenn Yeffeth and his staff at BenBella Books have been wonderful to work with, and I am very blessed to be associated with

such a supportive publishing company. I also greatly appreciate the excellent editing support provided by David Bessmer.

I will be forever thankful to Dr. Reggie Edgerton, Ph.D., who was my major professor at the UCLA Graduate School of Kinesiology where I received a Master's of Science degree. This visionary genius was seemingly twenty years ahead of his time and he not only opened the door to my future but also taught me how to scrutinize a scientific study in order to discern the truth.

Finally, this book is dedicated to Rich DeVos, the multibillion-dollar cofounder of Amway Corporation and a heart transplant recipient. After requesting a description of my preventive medicine work with Nutrilite Health Institute, he responded, "In other words, you want to prevent happening to others what has happened to me." When I responded in the affirmative, he stated, "Then keep it up; it's a good work." Thank you, Rich. I think of your kind statement often.

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PREFACE

A Life-Changing Experience

Some major life decisions take years to crystallize. My decision to switch from emergency medicine to preventive medicine took place in one day—almost in a single moment.

I loved practicing emergency medicine. I loved it for the challenge of the continuous stream of important decisions. I loved it for the feeling of accomplishment at the end of each day. I was fortunate to have received an excellent education at the UCLA School of Medicine and felt well prepared to meet the daily challenges of my job.

The day that changed my life started like any other day in the Southern California ER where I worked—a twelve-hour shift with a stream of patients hurt in auto accidents, suffering abdominal pains, chest pains—people suffering from injuries and diseases both acute and chronic.

Chronic diseases are those that progress for a long time—diseases people live with for months or years. This day would be the culmination of many years of treating young people with devastating chronic diseases. What I'm about to describe had happened many times before in our emergency room, and though every patient is important, my experience with one family changed me forever.

Paramedics brought in a thirty-eight-year-old man in full cardiac arrest—that is, his heart had stopped beating. After following the national guidelines for treating cardiac arrest for approximately forty-five minutes, we were getting very little response from the man's heart, and I knew he had little chance of recovery.

I walked out to the waiting room to talk to the man's family—to tell them what we had done and that the picture did not look good. At moments like this I always feel it is best to ease the families into understanding their loved one's situation, rather than shock them later with a sudden announcement of death. I value life tremendously and believe

that we should do everything in our power to sustain and protect it. After assuring the man's family that we would continue to do everything we could, I returned to the emergency room and fulfilled that promise. But, despite the best efforts of a great emergency room staff, the patient died. We usually won these battles, but we lost this one.

I looked at the door to the waiting room, and dreaded going through it. The man's young wife and sweet ten-year-old daughter were waiting outside. I had already seen the great love they had for the husband and father who now lay motionless on our cardiac gurney. Sometimes the door from the emergency room to the waiting room is the heaviest door in the world.

As I opened the door, both the wife and the daughter could tell by the look on my face that they would never again see alive the man they deeply loved. They clutched one another as if suddenly alone in a terrifying world. The pain expressed on their faces came from the deepest parts of their souls. It was so abject and genuine that my heart was also broken. I couldn't speak. All I could do was put my hands on their shoulders and cry with them. This must have been a great man; his family was very special.

What makes this story even more tragic is that it didn't have to happen. The man had risk factors for heart disease that were largely preventable, if he had only known what they were and what to do. It was at that moment twenty-two years ago that I decided to pursue preventive medicine. Though I have great respect for emergency medicine and the thousands of lives saved every day by the dedicated doctors and nurses who practice it, I felt a new moral compulsion. I could no longer sit in an emergency room waiting for the next patient to land there on account of years of lifestyle behaviors that insidiously but persistently destroy from within. I wanted to prevent chronic diseases from occurring, rather than trying to treat them after it was too late.

As I reflect on the events of that fateful day I still feel the pain, and it still motivates me. In my preventive medicine work, I've been fortunate to witness dramatic improvements in the health of countless individuals who decided to change their lifestyles in pursuit of longer, healthier lives.

If this book causes just one person to change his or her lifestyle to reduce the risk of chronic disease, then all my effort in research and writing will be worth it. My sincere desire is that that one person is you.

PART I:

**The Time for
an Optimal Health
Revolution Is Now!**

CHAPTER 1

What Is the Optimal Health Revolution and Why Is It Essential?

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GET TYPE 2 DIABETES.

You don't have to die prematurely of cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's, or any other chronic disease.

You don't have to spend truckloads of money on health care to give yourself a better chance of living longer.

You don't have to feel old at forty, fifty, sixty, or even seventy years old. It's never too late to add energy and years to your life. It doesn't make any difference how old you are today. What makes a difference is how committed you are to the Optimal Health Revolution. Certainly, those who become part of the revolution as children (or even in the womb) will have the greatest benefits, but it's never too late to join.

The Optimal Health Revolution is a process of changing the way you live, so that you can live longer and in better health—so you can live a life filled with energy and vitality.

Yes, I know.

I know, I know, I know. Many quacks, charlatans, and hucksters in the health business have used the word “revolution” to describe their product.

A plastic and aluminum gimcrack designed to give you twelve-pack abs in only sixty seconds a day? A fitness revolution!

A little pill that causes pounds to melt away like butter in the summer sun and only causes permanent heart-valve damage in *some* of the people who use it? A weight-loss revolution!

A diet book that tells you to eat nothing but orange vegetables every second Thursday and to eat essentially the same diet as a mountain lion the rest of the time? A nutrition revolution!

But we all know that a *real* revolution isn't a gimmick or a quick fix or a fad.

A revolution starts with a fundamental change in what we think. It starts with a new way of understanding the world. Understanding becomes belief. And belief changes the way we live and behave for the rest of our lives.

The Optimal Health Revolution is real. It started with a breakthrough in our understanding of the fundamental cause of the various chronic diseases that are the biggest killers in modernized nations. That understanding lets us see how to live in a way that gives each of us the best chance for a long, healthy life.

And the best news is that joining this revolution is easy and inexpensive. No matter how busy you are, you have time for this revolution. No matter how stressful your life, you can cope with this revolution—it helps relieve stress rather than adding to it. You can adopt these changes into your life (and your family's) one at a time, rather than changing everything overnight. This is a nonviolent revolution.

For me, getting you to take that first step is the toughest part. Once you decide to revolt from your current lifestyle, the path to your best health—optimal health—gets easier and easier with each step you take. It's a great journey because of all the things you'll gain along the way: good health, energy, increased activity, freedom from disease, freedom to do more things with your family and friends, freedom to pursue hobbies and sports and all the things you love best—while avoiding the sorrows of illness and the pain of premature aging.

That seems like an easy choice to make, doesn't it? Yet I know that many people have become discouraged after following failed fads, or simply because there is so much confusion due to the “experts” con-

stantly contradicting one another. Many people have simply lost hope.

This revolution invites you to rise up from hopelessness, cut through confusion and destroy the fad-based health-and-fitness culture that takes your money and gives you nothing but failure in return.

Revolution? Or Just Another Fad?

At this point, you might be asking yourself this question:

Who is this guy, and how do I know he isn't just the latest fad monger?

At least, I *hope* you're asking that. Being a health revolutionary requires healthy skepticism.

Here is my answer.

I am Duke Johnson, M.D., and I hate fads—*especially* if the fads hurt people.

More to the point, I have been blessed with the opportunity to develop a unique view of world medicine.

I have served as Medical Advisor, then Medical Director, for over twelve years at a prominent medical institute in Southern California. Our institute brings in clients from around the world for an entire week of health evaluations and instruction. (When you see your family doctor for your annual physical, you might get fifteen minutes with him or her, if it's a slow day.) At our facility, clients are provided with physical assessments that include things like state-of-the-art preventive blood panels. Clients receive health-care instruction that focuses primarily on preventing chronic disease. I have evaluated thousands of individuals from many different countries, following their traditional diets, beliefs, and lifestyles. We conduct follow-up exams and evaluations after clients have returned to their home countries and followed our advice for a while. Few physicians have had this kind of opportunity. My daily work involves integrating a great variety of culturally influenced lifestyles into alignment with optimal health. Through this experience, we've gained special insight into the development of chronic disease that the vast majority of health-care providers don't have.

Also, I have traveled around the world extensively, both for speaking engagements and to conduct my work. I have visited and performed health evaluations on people in every inhabited continent. I have studied scores of different medical traditions around the world, and I have

found that they *all* have deficiencies. There isn't a perfect system anywhere. However, this experience has provided me with some fascinating and unique insights. The purpose of this book is to share those insights, to help you protect yourself from chronic disease in spite of your busy lifestyle. And the positions taken here are well validated by the nearly nine hundred scientific references in this book.

I have visited the historical locales of other health traditions and interviewed their current practitioners. I have incorporated many of the best global health-care practices, but only those that can withstand scientific scrutiny. Some of this scrutiny has been unwelcome, but I have too many friends and clients suffering from chronic diseases to worry about whether my conclusions are popular or politically correct in every country. We're talking about life and death here. Truth trumps popularity and political correctness.

For more than twenty years I have been deeply involved in a unique method of preventive medicine that is different from what most doctors practice. I practice in an environment that liberates me from the box in which most western doctors are trapped. I call their box "the ICD-9 code mentality" (ICD-9 stands for International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision). In the United States, insurers pay doctors for treating diseases listed in this classification system. A similar coding system is used by the World Health Organization in classifying and tabulating statistics. ICD-9 is a widely accepted and very useful reporting system. However, the practice of paying doctors for reporting treatment of the diagnosis codes has been a major factor in leading the medical profession to focus on treatment far more than on prevention. When doctors can't get paid much for disease prevention, we can't really blame them for focusing on treatment.

To me, this is like focusing all of a society's fire-safety efforts on funding fire departments, while ignoring the concept of fireproof buildings.

Physicians have limited time for reading and continuing education, so they devote most of it to disease management rather than the massive amount of literature available on prevention. I know. I've been there. During the years I worked in emergency and family practice, my preventive medicine work typically amounted to telling my patients to lose weight, writing Lipitor® prescriptions, and so on. I wasn't providing

them with the tools they really needed to keep from getting sick in the first place. This book is my response to all those years of frustration.

Today my work is primarily preventive screening, and it is not dependent on insurance payments. Not only has my focus changed radically; I have had time to study the vast new body of scientific literature on prevention.

To the doctors who read this book: I am in no way trying to impugn your integrity or ethics. I've been mired in the ICD-9 mentality myself. I sympathize with your frustration. One of my goals is to help our profession break out of this box and focus more on prevention.

And of course, doctors aren't the only people who need to break out of the old ways of thinking. This revolution starts with *you*—with taking responsibility for your own health. Not that you haven't wanted to. If you're like most people, you just haven't understood what to do. The result: your thinking, your beliefs, and your lifestyle are leading you down the path to premature death from chronic disease.

This book will take you in the opposite direction. I'll show you the way to optimal health through prevention—and not the token prevention practiced by many today. I'll show you one of the great discoveries of our age: the underlying medical cause of virtually all chronic disease. And I'll show you how we can use knowledge from many disciplines, including the new science of nutrigenomics, to neutralize the enemy.

Optimal Health Defined

Since optimal health is the goal of our revolution, it's probably a good idea to define it at the outset.

Let's start with *your* definition.

What comes into your head when you think of optimal health? Is it an image of a skinny starlet or a fashion model? The ripped muscles of an action hero or professional athlete? If so, the diet and health fad industry has gotten into your head and is running the show, as they are with millions of other people.

But here's the revolutionary question: Is that really what you want to look like? Why? Is it because that movie star is sexy? Is looking hot the ideal, or is living a long, healthy life a better goal?

Think about it. Are professional athletes and movie stars the longest-

living people on the planet? No. Absolutely not. Many of those jocks got bulked up and extremely “cut” by taking steroids. And too many actresses and fashion models are literally dying to be waif-thin. A huge percentage of these people have achieved their body shapes in ways that are destructive to their health—steroids, weight-loss pills, appetite suppressants, amphetamines, malnutrition, anorexia, bulimia or myriad other methods that may be legal but are generally unstudied scientifically and can lead to premature death.

Industrial societies, particularly the United States, are deeply confused about what constitutes health and fitness. The idea is to live as long as you can, free of chronic disease. But most of what we do in the pursuit of “fitness” leads us in the opposite direction—toward an unattainable goal of what we should *look* like, by means that sap us of strength and energy, make us more prone to chronic disease, and ultimately shorten our lives.

So why does the media keep pointing to these impossibly skinny or buff people as our ideal? Why do you think? Money. The fitness and weight-loss industries make billions trying to help you attain a goal that is impossible for nearly everyone, and is unhealthy in the first place. If you hear somebody say, “I’m going to look like her or die trying,” place your bets on the latter. The idea that we *can* look like that is almost as crazy as the notion that we *should*.

This revolution isn’t about how you look. It’s about how you *feel*, about staying healthy and living longer. You and I aren’t going to look like a twenty-something movie-star when we’re seventy, no matter what we do. But when we’re seventy I want us to be healthy, vital, and enjoying life.

Yet every day, every hour, we’re being sold an idea that’s killing us. It’s time we all rise up in revolt against the culture that keeps selling it.

Now here’s *my* definition of optimal health. Optimal health is the best health you are capable of, given your past and your genetic heritage. You may have made mistakes in your lifestyle up to now. You may not have the best genetics. But the optimal health pathway leads you to the longest, healthiest life possible for *you*, starting today. We won’t all live to the same age. But the earlier you start, the longer and better life you can live.

You'll notice I have written an entire book about attaining optimal health. That's because it's a broad subject, and the plan for getting there addresses many aspects of your life. If this were a single-focus plan, I could publish it in a brief article in one of those magazines you pick up in the supermarket checkout line and stuff into your grocery cart along with the corn chips and double-sugared energy cola. The issue of health is so oversimplified in modern culture worldwide, it's a crime. For most people it's nothing more than, "I'm fat. I need to go on a diet." For the few who are naturally scrawny it's, "I'm thin. I can't possibly be at risk."

That kind of simple-minded single focus is making the diet and fitness industries vastly rich while causing the premature death of millions. It's time to revolt against that kind of thinking. The way to optimal health and longevity involves broad lifestyle changes. It's a real revolution, not a phony quick fix. If you join this revolution, you *will* lose weight—assuming you have excessive body fat to start with. But you will lose it as a result of achieving a healthy lifestyle, not the other way around. Losing weight will be a healthy side effect of reducing your risk of chronic disease and early death.

So let's begin. Down with weight-loss diets! Join the Optimal Health Revolution!

A Worldwide Revolution Against a Global Problem

The truth is that the health of essentially everyone in the industrialized world is being impacted negatively, and we all need to join the Optimal Health Revolution. For most of the time that humans have been on this planet, health has been a matter of fate. You got sick or you didn't. You lived a long time or you didn't. However, we live in an age in which there is more and more you can do to maximize your lifespan and the degree of health you will enjoy while you are alive.

With the knowledge and technology now available, achieving optimal health is like a contest between you and the factors that work to shorten your life and damage your health. What are those factors? I'll discuss them in later chapters. But here is a point I want to make first:

The rules of the game have changed.

What made people ill and shortened their lives two hundred, one hundred, or even fifty years ago isn't the same set of health risks as the

ones we face today. Knowing your opponent is the first step in devising a successful plan for winning the revolution. How did we get into this health crisis? Let's take a brief look at history.

Despite thousands of years of experience in Eastern and Western medical traditions, and despite breathtaking scientific advances in our lifetimes, there is still a fundamental global problem that isn't being addressed: We're all dying of the same chronic diseases. It's true around the world, and the prevalence of these diseases is getting worse, not better.

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that there is an epidemic of obesity occurring around the world,¹ to the extent that there may now be more obese people in the world than starving people. On balance, that's a good thing. It is a sign of real social, political, and economic progress that more people are dying from excessive junk-food consumption than from starvation. But both extremes are forms of malnutrition, and the nutritional deficiencies of the affluent also take millions of lives prematurely, even if not as rapidly as starvation.

The WHO also states that there's an epidemic of type 2 diabetes (previously referred to as adult-onset diabetes) occurring around the world.² Expenditures for treating type 2 diabetes have quadrupled in Japan over the last ten years, and have doubled in most other industrialized nations.

For all its advances, medical science still has much to learn—which means I do, too. However, the Optimal Health Revolution doesn't involve complex schemes or formulas. It is based on the best of scientific literature from the last twenty years, combined with our experience with our institute's clientele—more than 15,000 people from all over the world.

Bookstore walls are lined with the work of authors who offer bits and pieces of the master plan for optimal health, but I haven't seen anyone who has been as fortunate as we have been in having the unique view of world medicine necessary to bring it all together.

My first critical insight into global health occurred ten years ago, in the course of customizing our program for each country whose residents came through our doors. This work required gathering information from the WHO and the ministries of health for many nations in order to customize our program for each country. As we gathered data from around

the world, I began to see a disturbing trend. Whether participants of our program were from China, Malaysia, India, Thailand, Japan, Russia, Korea, Hong Kong, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Italy, Poland or the U.S., they all had the same risk factors for major chronic diseases and were beginning to show evidence of these diseases. With technological advances, we have begun to adopt very similar lifestyles globally.

Modern Times, Modern Diseases

At the beginning of the twentieth century, heart disease and cancer were not nearly as high on the list of major causes of death as they are today. However, in the last century industrial civilization has seen the greatest changes in diet and lifestyles in the history of the world.

Automation—on the job, at home, and in transportation—has dramatically decreased our daily exercise and the number of calories we burn. We eat a great deal more meat, most of it produced by industrial means. Our other foods are highly processed.

Hollywood loves to depict primitive humans as hunters—people who feasted daily on buffalo, antelope, wooly mammoth, and the occasional anachronistic dinosaur. In truth, though, until recently most humans' diets have primarily been plant-based. This is especially true over the last few thousand years—that is, since the introduction of agriculture.

Throughout history, meat has been very expensive. The wealth of ancient kings was often recorded in terms of the number of animals they owned. If you were among the very few who were rich, you could eat a lot of meat. Everybody else ate mostly foods derived from plants.

And the rich weren't always better off for it. Consider the case of the *Beefeaters* of London. These guys were, and are, officially called the Yeomen Warders of Her Majesty's Royal Palace and Fortress the Tower of London, and they are the ceremonial guards of that establishment. A few centuries ago they were a real, working security outfit. According to legend, they received the sobriquet *Beefeaters* because their kings believed that a hefty meat ration would result in the strongest and best guards; their payment in meat at least seems well documented. Legend also has it that these fellows became not only beefy, but particularly gout-afflicted. Gout is an inflammatory disease of the joints that results from the

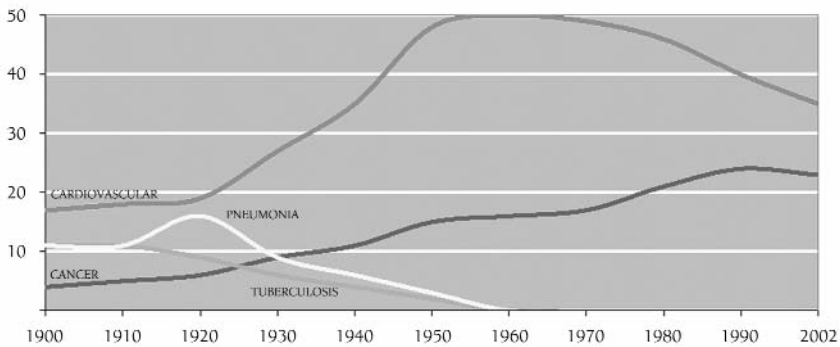
formation of uric acid crystals within the joints. Uric acid is a byproduct of purine metabolism. The Beefeaters, and others of their ilk, got most of those purines from beef. So it is no surprise that gout used to be referred to as a “disease of the rich.” Nowadays it is a disease cheaply available to almost everyone in a developed nation.

With industrialization came many advances in medicine, public health, agriculture and food processing. Infectious diseases (smallpox, tuberculosis, malaria, and others) and malnutrition receded from being the major causes of death that they were at the turn of the twentieth century. Since then, heart disease and cancer have become the two leading causes of death. This happened partly by default; we all have to die of something, and old age is a risk factor for heart disease and some cancers. However, there are other factors that have elevated the rates of these diseases—risk factors ranging from pollution to diet to changing lifestyles. I’ll discuss these factors in detail later.

About one-third of deaths in the U.S. are from cardiovascular disease (heart attacks and strokes.) About 22 percent of Americans die of cancer. This increasing trend in chronic diseases over the last sixty years in the U.S. can be seen in Figure 1.1. Though we have had a decline in heart disease recently, the absolute number of deaths from the six leading causes in the U.S.—heart disease, stroke, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes, and accidents—continues to increase.³

As industrialization has spread throughout the world, the chronic dis-

FIGURE 1.1

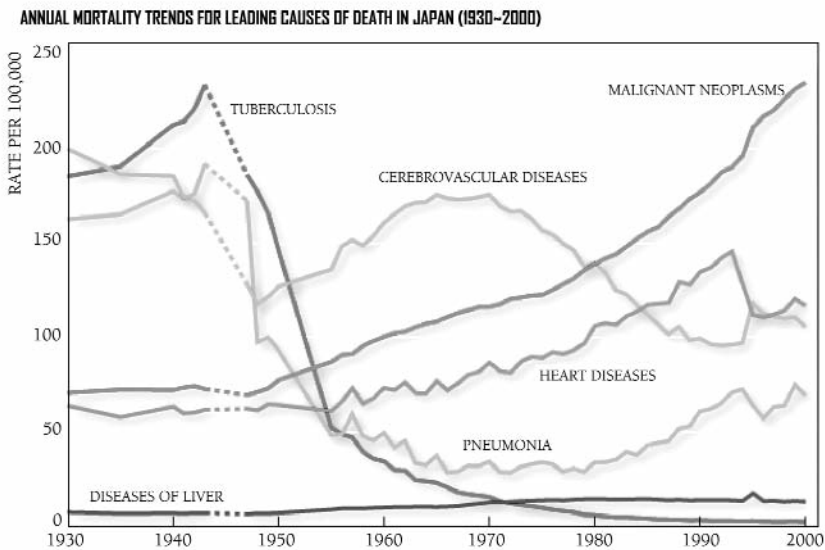


Source: cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/dvs/mortdata.htm

eases associated with our modern lifestyles have become global diseases. Heart disease and cancer are the leading causes of death in almost every industrialized nation on the planet. Some nations' ministries of health list heart disease and cerebrovascular disease (strokes) separately, but they are essentially the same disease process, and when put together they rank first in every industrialized nation.

Japan and the United States are distant and culturally different from each other, yet the history of chronic disease over the last century is similar in both countries. Figure 1.2 shows statistics from the Japanese Ministry of Health. As you can see, their chronic disease pattern changed rapidly—right along with their lifestyle—after World War Two. Heart disease and cancer began to rise almost immediately, and the trend continues. As in the U.S., the rate of heart disease has leveled off, but recent data point to another possible rise in the near future, because of

FIGURE 1.2



Source: Japan Ministry of Health

the dramatic increase in type 2 diabetes. Cancer has been rising at a phenomenal rate in Japan that still continues today.

I could show you local statistics from talks I've given all over the world, and the pattern would be almost identical to those you see in the

U.S. and Japan. The only difference would be the years when the chronic diseases started rising. In South Korea they started in the 1960s, in Brazil and India in the 1980s, and in China in the 1990s. (As of this writing, 43.8 percent of Chinese adults die of vascular diseases and 22.3 percent of cancer.)⁴

There is no doubt that this is a global health trend. The medical traditions of all regions and cultures are fighting to stop these epidemics, and they are all failing.

Doctors, scientists, and ordinary people everywhere have gone to great lengths to reverse these health trends. But we're still sinking deeper into trouble.

Bust That Fad!

The U.S. is the world leader in faddish attempts to combat heart disease, cancer, and every other health condition. If there is a fad anywhere in the world, it was probably tried in the U.S. first. There is no end to the parade of American physicians, scientists, and supplement marketers who offer the latest “scientific breakthrough” in the form of a book, video, treatment or device that will magically turn you into a Greek god or goddess overnight with minimal effort. (There are some supplement manufacturers, though, who act with integrity and support their claims with good science. I'll discuss how to identify these manufacturers in chapter 8.)

Around the world, uninformed, often desperate people spend billions of dollars (or the equivalent in local currency) in futile attempts to improve their health. It pains me to watch the uninformed spend their precious resources on faddish products or books, most of which are swill delivered in pseudoscientific packages. Many of our contemporary snake-oil salesmen are so good, though, that you need a solid scientific background and clinical experience to understand their deception. Fad marketers know this. That's why they are able to make millions—billions collectively—before they are exposed. Recently, while speaking in Munich to a group of physicians from nine Eastern European countries, I was amazed to find out that their patients were more familiar with some of the worst U.S. fads than we are in the United States.

In short, chronic diseases aren't the only opponents you have to beat

to win optimal health. Health hucksters are the enemy, too, and avoiding them has to be part of your strategy. So one of my functions as a leader of the Optimum Health Revolution is to be a Fad Buster. Throughout this book, I'm going to use this symbol:



to call out unscientific fads that are being sold as magic bullets for achieving better health. This concept won't be popular among the purveyors of the fads in question, but I feel obligated to point out these false directions for your protection.

I am certainly not going to address all the fads that are out there. If I did, you would ruin your health trying to carry this book around. But we will be looking at some of the most popular and deceptive ones.

Getting the Big Picture

A major problem with most health-care programs around the world is that they treat various health problems separately, rather than taking a whole-lifestyle approach.

Some approaches come close but are missing important pieces of information. Practitioners of Eastern medicine who attempt to balance all aspects of their patients' lives generally have the right idea, but they often fail to incorporate the latest Western scientific advancements, and are often overwhelmed by the new problems presented by global industrialization. Also, they are often limited by their traditions or spiritual influences.

The problems with both traditional Eastern medicine and expensive Western medicine will be covered in greater detail in chapter 5. Suffice it to say that we must have the courage and patience to forge a new pathway to optimal health. Our global problems with chronic diseases did not develop overnight, nor will they disappear overnight. We need to confront these worsening health trends globally, with maturity and patience.

But I don't want you to worry about that. Global public-health problems are for people like me to worry about. All you have to worry about is yourself and your family. That's the game you're in, and the prize for

winning is a longer, healthier life.

Some of the players on the other side are easy to see and avoid. Others are stealthy and hit you from your blind side. But the good news is that we now have a winning strategy—one that addresses all the aspects of your life that affect your health. The knowledge we've gained from our global experience can help you win your best life.

Thousands of people I've spoken from nearly thirty countries (as of this writing) have let me be their optimal health leader, and I would be honored to be yours, too.

A Lifetime of Prevention Is Worth a World of Cure

Two major problems with most of the world's health-care approaches is that they lack the understanding of what true prevention is and are too exclusively focused on treatment of disease. They fail to fully understand the risk factors for heart disease (chapter 9), cancer (chapter 10), type 2 diabetes (chapter 12), and the causes of obesity (chapter 11), and thus fail to incorporate them into their counsel to patients. Treatments based on incomplete knowledge are sometimes worse than the original ailment.

At my institute, we teach that there are fifteen risk factors for heart disease and sixteen risk factors for cancer. A *risk factor* is any lifestyle component or biological trait that increases the risk of a chronic disease. Most risk factors are preventable, but very few people even know what the risk factors are for the most common chronic diseases. Knowledge of risk factors is so critical for optimal health that almost all of the steps of the Optimal Health Revolution involve risk factor reduction.

A critical strategy in our plan is to help you confront risk factors in a way that is simpler to understand and carry out than you would ever expect. Like a good football coach, I don't want you to have to think about everything you do all day. I want to make executing this game plan instinctive and natural.

Nor do I want you to be afraid of losing the game by making a single mistake. You don't have to be perfect with your execution. Just begin taking the steps you can now, and you will improve your health. Once those steps become second nature, add some more. Once you understand how critical these steps are and begin to make changes, you will

be on the way to winning optimal health.

How will you know when you've won the game? I'll answer that question in the last chapter.

Most medical traditions recognize some of the risk factors for chronic diseases. But why go into a game knowing only part of your opponent's playbook? Our defense against chronic disease is weaker when we don't understand all the risk factors we face. In Western medicine, progress is often slowed by the process of approval and acceptance by governments and the vast majority of the medical community. Eastern medicine often fails to take advantage of the newest and best research and appropriate statistical evaluation. Even if the risk factors are understood, many medical traditions don't deal with them completely or appropriately. There are risk factors for all chronic disease, but I will focus on heart disease, cancer, obesity, and diabetes because of their worldwide prevalence and worsening state.

For Those of You Who Thought This Was Just Another Diet . . .

Sorry. You need to change your focus. Obesity has become a monstrously fad-ridden industry, in which each new fad addresses only one or two aspects of your lifestyle. Most people who buy these books, products and programs lose little or no weight, and fewer still keep the weight off. Many, perhaps most, damage their health in the process of losing and regaining weight.



THE HIGH-FAT DIET

One popular fad, which has finally lost much of its momentum, teaches that we need to lose weight by eating a high-fat diet. Not only is this diet largely unsuccessful in the long run (see chapter 11), but high-fat diets are associated with increased risk for five different cancers, according to the National Cancer Institute (see chapter 10). It may be true that for a generation we were oversold on the value of cutting all possible fat out of our diets. But the recent high-fat fad treats car-

bohydrates—which we get from foods that are often also the source of hundreds of excellent natural antioxidants, phytonutrients, and fiber—as the scourge of mankind, while promoting highly oxidized fats that are loaded with carcinogens. This popular diet is like recommending smoking to someone in order to help them lose weight. Certainly there are poor sources of carbohydrates, but that shouldn't make us conclude that all carbohydrates are bad. We cannot, in fact, live without them. They are the fuel for our bodies' engines. This is one example of why faddish programs based on partial scientific knowledge are not only ineffective long-term, but also sometimes dangerous.

It's time to stop the fad-of-the-year approach to weight control.

The Optimal Health Revolution isn't about losing weight. It's about winning a longer life and living in better health. But if you follow this plan for optimal health, you should in fact lose excess weight. Reducing the risk factors of chronic disease will do that for you. You don't lose weight permanently and safely by cutting out all carbs or all fats or taking a pill or squeezing a spring-loaded gizmo between your knees at a cost of three easy installments of \$39.95. You do it by living the simple, healthy lifestyle taught here.

And the best part is that instead of sacrificing your health in order to look thinner, you'll lose weight as a side effect of lowering your risk of chronic disease.

How to Use This Book

Most health-care traditions don't fully understand the underlying process that is common to almost all chronic disease (chapter 2), including the worldwide epidemics of type 2 diabetes and obesity. I'm incredibly excited about how the vast majority of medical and scientific literature has begun pointing to a very consistent theme for reducing the risk of all chronic disease. Once we can grasp this concept, and some new advances in science (chapter 4), understanding how we need to live in order to reduce the risk of chronic disease will become increasingly simple.

What is this great new insight? I can hardly wait to share it with you. But I want you to truly understand it. That means we have to talk a little science throughout the book. Please don't let that intimidate you! I'll do my best to make it easy for those of you who don't have a scientific background. Stay with me and the reward will be a thorough understanding of how to live for optimal health.

You *could* cheat and skip to the last chapters, but I don't want you merely to *know* how to change the way you live. I want you to *believe* you should—and that requires understanding *why*.

So think of this book in part as a mystery novel. The end won't mean much to you if you don't follow the whole plot.

For those readers who do have a scientific background, I have provided nearly nine hundred scientific references to support the positions I have taken. I will add this caveat: I take positions that many in the food industry will not like, positions that expose that industry's almost universal tendency to value profit above health. I recommend that any doubtful reader check the references provided. You'll find that my conclusions are consistent and scientifically solid.

A couple centuries ago the world was ignorant about health. Now there is so much information, much of it false and conflicting, that even well-educated people don't know what to think, believe, or do. Information and knowledge are not the same thing.

My purpose—my passion—is to unify, simplify, and present the knowledge I have gained, with the help of my colleagues, in my twenty-two years of practicing preventive medicine and evaluating thousands of people from around the world—so you can put that knowledge to work in your life.

I want to help you sort through the scientific literature, which at times provides conflicting results. I want to be your advocate and to open your eyes to the fads and fallacies that are being sold to you daily. I want to break your false, unreachable Hollywood images of optimal health and give you the healthiest one.

If you're looking for a quick fix, you won't find it here.

If you're looking for a path to a lifetime of better health, please read on. Carefully. Take your time. Get it right.

It's time to stop the narrowly focused quick fixes that in fact fix little

or nothing. Let's join the Optimal Health Revolution together. The first step in this revolution is to understand the common theme underlying all chronic disease. That's chapter 2.

It's not too late to lower your health risks. It doesn't matter how often you have failed in the past. This is a completely new approach to health, and as you take the right steps you'll begin to feel the difference.

Our institute has thousands of successful clients who have preceded you. Now it's time for you to know the truth.