



October 3, 2009 – Overland Park, KS

## Shortcuts

Before I talk about health shortcuts, let's take a short timeout for the latest news in Dr. Chet World:

### ***Straight Talk on Health is back online!***

Just go to [www.wgvu.org](http://www.wgvu.org) and click on the green "Streaming Live" box at the top at 7 p.m. Sunday in the Eastern Time Zone and choose WGUV-FM. And remember this is National Public Radio—no commercials—so if you're moved to make a contribution to help WGUV cover the costs of streaming my show and others live online, I'd be very grateful. There's the link on the home page and the "Listen Live" page for that, too.

*Now back to our regularly scheduled health message:*

I think we all seek shortcuts: the best route to get to work to avoid traffic, the best time to see a movie so the theatre isn't crowded, the best time to get a seat in our favorite restaurants. The same is true for health—we'd all like shortcuts. There really aren't any, but there may be a way to get the most benefit with the least effort. So I'm going to give you one food, one drink, and one exercise that will help you become healthier with less effort, plus one tip to make you look thinner instantly.

### **One Food: Broccoli**

Broccoli seems to be a magic food. Eating this vegetable regularly boosts your immune system, reduces the damaging effects of free radicals on cells, which reduces the risk of cancer, and can reduce inflammation as measured by C-reactive protein. You should get at least one serving several times a week, preferably every day. While broccoli is the most studied, the same benefits probably apply to all cruciferous vegetables. That list would include cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and a whole lot more. Whether it's the high-carotenoid content or the sulforaphane-phytonutrient content, eat broccoli or another cruciferous vegetable every day as a shortcut to immune health.

### **One Drink: Green Tea**

The research on the benefits of green tea keeps growing every day. Drinking green tea regularly seems to have a myriad of benefits including reducing inflammation, helping with weight loss, lowering cholesterol, and reducing the risk of cancer. I just wish it tasted better. Just like the cruciferous vegetables, green tea has a unique and pungent taste. It's probably due to the phytonutrients known as catechins. The nice thing is that you can mask the flavor with lemon, sweeteners, and milk. Paula puts it in her recipe for sugar-free sweet tea along with other better-tasting teas. Find a way to drink green tea every day for another shortcut to good health.

### **One Exercise: Intervals**

Intermittent exercise with rest intervals are a great shortcut to get fit faster. It taxes the cardiovascular system to a high degree for a short time, and then you get to take a break with active rest. Even though it seems like you're resting, your muscles and your heart get the benefits of the higher intensity work. The nice thing is that no matter how unfit you may be, you can still do a version of intervals once you have your doctor's approval to exercise.

If you haven't tried intervals, check out the Research Update **Interval Training** on my website. Because you asked, I'm working on the same approach for increasing muscle strength. I'll send out an e-mail announcing it—look for it soon.

## One Tip: Stand Up Straight

It sounds easy, but it takes effort and persistence to retrain your body. It's really worth it: you'll instantly look younger, more confident, and five to ten pounds thinner. It's better for your neck, spine, and spinal cord, and it may even be better for your digestion—after all, if your stomach and guts aren't all crunched up, they'll probably work better.

If you need to stretch your muscles, etc., to get moving toward the right shape, here are two easy exercises you can do several times a day almost anywhere, anytime; sets of three are best. Try to touch your elbows together behind your back and hold it for 10 seconds. Relax. Then clasp your hands behind your back and straighten your arms; hold that for 10 seconds.

Here's the easiest way to improve your posture throughout the day: lift your sternum. That's something Paula and I learned in our dance lessons, and it really works; don't think about your shoulders or your stomach, just lift your sternum. When you feel your shoulders drooping, whether you're sitting or standing, remind yourself "Sternum up!" Eventually it will become automatic—and you're going to look a whole lot better.

## The Bottom Line

If you've read the message for any length of time, you know it takes effort to get healthy and fit. But that doesn't mean you can't apply current research and take a few shortcuts to get where you're going. Eating broccoli, drinking green tea, and getting an interval workout can help you get where you want to go a little faster; improving your posture can make you look better immediately. It all comes down to one question:

What are you prepared to do today?

**Dr. Chet**

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## Straight Talk on Health

Hear Dr. Chet's take on the latest health news and research—listen to *Straight Talk on Health* at 7 p.m. Sundays in the Eastern Time Zone on WGUV-FM 88.5 or 95.3, or listen live via the Internet by going to [www.wgvu.org](http://www.wgvu.org) and clicking on the green "Streaming Live" box at the top.

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