



October 21, 2009 – Grand Rapids, MI

Three Down

If you pay attention to the health headlines, you probably know that three men died during the Detroit Marathon this past weekend. They were 26, 36, and 65 years old respectively, and they had all trained for the race. The conditions were ideal for running a marathon with low temperatures. We don't know the results of the autopsies yet, but how can three fit men die while exercising?

Here's my guess: you just can't outrun your genes. I know. I tried. My Dad died in his sleep when he was 41. So 21 years ago when I was 37, I started running regularly and got my health on the right track. And yet, eight years ago I had a 90% blockage in my coronary artery. I didn't have any symptoms associated with heart disease—no chest pain or fatigue. My lungs burned when I ran, at least during the warm-up, and that's not a typical symptom. But I got it checked out, and seven days after a stent, I was back running again.

There's one more thing you need to know: heart attacks typically don't kill you. It's the arrhythmia that occurs during the heart attack that kills. When the normal pacemaker of the heart fails, the entire heart tries to take over to run things. It never works when there are too many people trying to control things, and it doesn't work here either. The heart just stops and—well, you're dead.

The best way to reduce the risk of arrhythmias is to take omega-3 fatty acids regularly; taking one to three grams of fish oil or flaxseed oil reduces the risk of arrhythmias occurring at any time. During a heart attack, it's critically important to avoid an arrhythmia—that's when you especially need to have those omega-3s already onboard. If you don't already take omega-3s, talk to your doctor and get on it.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

WGUV Straight Talk on Health

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