

## THE BIG IDEAS

### Putting Out Fires

Quit eating the wrong foods.

### The Rules of the Program

Follow them and you're set.

### Become Immune

To heart attacks.

### Fat & Cholesterol

Are fuels for the heart fires.

### The Mediterranean Diet

+ Olive oil: Not so good.

### Colin Campbell Mojo

The China Study rocks.

### Why Are We Being Misled

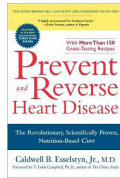
\* Pointing finger at the USDA! \*

### What's \*Really\* Drastic?

Diet changes or being cut open?

### Prevention

vs. Desperate intervention.



# Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease

The Revolutionary, Scientifically Proven, Nutrition-Based Cure

BY CALDWELL B. ESSELSTYN, M.D. · PENGUIN GROUP © 2008 · 320 PAGES

“In this book, I tell Joe Crowe’s story, along with those of many other patients I have treated over the past twenty years. My subject is coronary heart disease, its cause, and the revolutionary treatment, available to all, that can abolish it and that has saved Joe Crowe and many others. My message is clear and absolute: *coronary artery disease need not exist, and if it does, it need not progress*. It is my dream that one day we may entirely abolish heart disease, the scourge of the affluent, modern West, along with an impressive roster of other chronic illnesses.

... I believe that coronary artery disease is preventable, and that even after it is under way, its progress can be stopped, its insidious effects reversed. I believe, and my work over the past twenty years has demonstrated, that all this can be accomplished without expensive mechanical intervention and with minimal use of drugs. The key lies in nutrition—specifically, in abandoning the toxic American diet and maintaining cholesterol levels well below those historically recommended by health policy experts.”

~ Caldwell B. Esselstyn, M.D. from *Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease*

[Dr. Caldwell B. Esselstyn](#) is one of the world’s leading authorities on, as the title of the book suggests, how to prevent and reverse heart disease. He’s also a gold-winning Olympic rower and the father of Rip Esselstyn—another incredible advocate for nutrition-based optimal living whose book (*The Engine 2 Diet*) we also profile! Plus, you can tell that Dr. E is, quite simply, a REALLY good human being: wise, strong, compassionate, and committed to making a difference.

This book is packed with wisdom. As one reviewer put it, “*If you have heart disease, this book should be essential reading. It could save your life.*”

Leaning on extensive, peer-reviewed, scientific research, Dr. Esselstyn walks us through his nutrition-based cure for heart disease in a powerful, easy-to-read, style.

I sincerely hope I inspire you to get the book, study the power of nutrition more deeply, and change your life (and your family’s lives!) in the process!

Let’s jump in!

## PUTTING OUT FIRES

“I often ask patients to compare their coronary artery disease to a house fire. Your house is on fire because eating the wrong foods has given you heart disease. You are spraying gasoline on the fire by continuing to eat the very same foods that caused the disease in the first place.”

Love that metaphor.

The image is clear: If you have coronary heart disease your house is on fire. If you want to put it

*“I have an ambitious goal: to annihilate heart disease—to abolish it once and for all... If you do what I ask, your disease is history.”*

~ Caldwell B. Esselstyn, M.D.

out, you've GOTTA stop eating the stuff that created the problem in the first place. To continue eating all the junk is pretty much like pouring gasoline on a fire. NOT a good idea.

So, what \*should\* you be eating?

Let's take a look at the basics of [Dr. Esselstyn's](#) plan!!

## THE RULES OF THE PROGRAM

*"But he was an intelligent person and what finally won him over was the logic of the program. We were trying to follow the nutritional example of countries where disease was nonexistent."*

~ Caldwell B. Esselstyn, M.D.

"Here are the rules of my program in their simplest form:

- You may not eat anything with a mother or a face (no meat, poultry, or fish).
- You cannot eat dairy products.
- You must not consume oil of any kind—not a drop. (Yes, devotees of the Mediterranean Diet, that includes olive oil.)
- Generally, you cannot eat nuts or avocados.

You can eat a variety of delicious, nutrient-dense foods:

- All vegetables except avocado. Leafy green vegetables, root vegetables, veggies that are red, green, purple, orange, and yellow and everything in between.
- All legumes—beans, peas, and lentils of all varieties.
- All whole grains and products, such as bread and pasta that are made from them—as long as they do not contain added fats.
- All fruits."

There ya go. That's the basic nutritional plan to reverse heart disease.

Why should you care enough to actually follow it?

As Esselstyn tells us, because: "It works. In the first continuous twelve-year study of the effects of nutrition on severely ill patients, which I will describe in this book, those who complied with my program achieved total arrest of clinical progression and significant selective reversal of coronary artery disease. In fully compliant patients, we have seen angina disappear in a few weeks and abnormal stress test results return to normal."

That's amazing.

We KNOW that, by no longer pouring the food-gasoline on our health issues, we can prevent AND reverse heart disease (and other serious health challenges).

So, if you're suffering from angina or have heart issues or have a loved one who faces challenges, PLEASE (!!!) take this stuff seriously!! Get the book, change your diet, and save your life.

(It really can be that simple!!!)

## BECOME IMMUNE TO HEART ATTACKS

"The dietary changes that have helped my patients over the past twenty years can help you, too. They can actually make you immune to heart attacks. And there is considerable evidence that they have benefits far beyond coronary heart disease. If you eat to save your heart, you eat to save yourself from other diseases of nutritional extravagance: from strokes, hypertension, obesity, osteoporosis, adult-onset diabetes, and possibly senile mental impairment, as well. You gain protection from a host of other ailments that have been linked to dietary factors, including impotence and cancers of the breast, prostate, colon, rectum, uterus, and ovaries. And if you are eating for good health this way, here's a side benefit you might not have expected: *for the rest of your life, you will never again have to count calories or worry about your weight.*"

*"As a physician, I am embarrassed by my profession's lack of interest in healthier lifestyles. We need to change the way we approach chronic disease."*

~ Caldwell B. Esselstyn, M.D.

I repeat: If you'd like to be immune to heart attacks (yes, \*IMMUNE\*!) as you reduce the likelihood of getting your butt kicked by all the other scary diseases listed above, CHANGE YOUR DIET.

(Pretty please. With a little agave on top. :)

## FAT & CHOLESTEROL

"It may be years before we understand each step and every nuance of the process by which dietary fat and cholesterol destroy coronary arteries. But we are well aware of the general outlines. Simply stated, just as you need stone to build a stone wall, you need a specific level of fat and cholesterol in your bloodstream to narrow and clog your arteries with atherosclerosis."

He also tells us: "We can do better. We can go right to the source of the disease. We can cut off the supply of fatty substances that accumulate in the arteries to such catastrophic effect. We can go directly to the bottom line. This is it: *if you follow a plant-based nutrition program to reduce your total cholesterol level below 150 mg/dL and the LDL level to less than 80 mg/dL, you cannot deposit fat and cholesterol into your coronary arteries. Period.*"

Dr. Esselstyn goes into detail on the science behind heart disease and heart attacks (and provides some amazing pictures demonstrating how heart disease can actually be reversed following his program). For now, know that the building blocks of heart disease are fat and cholesterol—which is why the good Doctor is so passionate about reducing our consumption of them.

No animal products are allowed because they're sources of both cholesterol and fat. Our bodies naturally create all the cholesterol we need; vegetables contain no cholesterol—only animal products do and when we consume them our cholesterol levels rise above healthy levels.

In Dr. E's words: "Cholesterol is a white, waxy substance that is not found in plants—only in animals. It is an essential component of the membrane that coats our cells and it is the basic ingredient of sex hormones. Our bodies need cholesterol, and they manufacture it on their own. We do not need to eat it. But we do, when we consume meat, poultry, fish, and other animal-based foods, such as dairy and eggs. In doing so, we take on excess amounts of the substance. What's more, eating fat causes the body itself to manufacture excessive amounts of cholesterol, which explains why vegetarians who eat oil, butter, cheese, milk, ice cream, glazed doughnuts, and French pastry develop coronary disease despite their avoidance of meat."

And, no oils because they're literally PURE fat. In fact, oils are the most caloric-dense foods we can possibly consume. A single tablespoon of oil has 120 calories. ALL fat. Yikes. To see results with this program, we need our percentage of fat intake to be around 10%. It's \*impossible\* to do that when we consume oils. So, they're out! :)

But what about the Mediterranean diet you might be asking?!

Dr. E talks about that as well:

## OLIVE OIL AND THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

"But let's take another look at that study. There is no question that the group consuming the Mediterranean-style diet did not fare nearly as badly as those in the control group. But there is another way to look at the results of the Lyon Diet Heart Study. *By the end of the study, nearly four years after its start, fully 25 percent of the subjects on the Mediterranean diet—one out of four—had either died or experienced some new cardiovascular event.*

I feel these are wretched results for a nonmalignant disease. We can do much better. During a panel discussion at the 2nd National Summit on Cholesterol and Coronary Heart Disease, in 1997, Colin Campbell, author of the best-selling China Study, was asked his thoughts on the results of the Lyon Diet Heart Study, and to compare those results with those he found in

*"Among the fully compliant patients, during the twelve-year study, there was not one further clinical episode of worsening coronary artery disease after they committed themselves to keeping cholesterol within the safe range."*

~ Caldwell B. Esselstyn, M.D.

*"My nutrition program is quite different from most others. It is not about making moderate changes to slow the progression of heart disease. It is about embarking on a significant change in lifestyle that will actually \*arrest\* the disease's progression and selectively \*reverse\* its effects."*

~ Caldwell B. Esselstyn, M.D.

studying health and nutrition in rural China, where coronary disease is practically nonexistent. Colin didn't hesitate for a moment. The Mediterranean and rural Chinese diets are practically the same, he replied. "I would say the absence of oil in the rural Chinese diet is the reason for their superior success."

Again, fat is one of the essential ingredients of heart disease.

Oils (olive, canola, coconut, whatever) are essentially PURE fat. If we want to eliminate our risk of heart disease, we need to eliminate our consumption of these oils. Period.

## **COLIN (CHINA STUDY) CAMPBELL MOJO**

"These scientists were challenged to develop what they felt constituted the optimal diet for health, one least likely to develop coronary heart disease. I asked them to answer the question: What do you tell the patient who says, "I'll do anything, but I never want to have heart disease," or, "I have had a heart attack, and I never want another"?"

One panelist replied, "Have him eat beans, beans, and more beans." Another, Professor T. Colin Campbell of Cornell, one of the world's most respected nutritionists and coauthor of *The China Study*, said most clearly and forcibly what other faculty members were feeling:

"If we are reasonably sure of what our data from these studies are telling us, then why must we be reticent about recommending a diet which we know is safe and healthy? Scientists can no longer take the attitude that the public cannot benefit from information they are not ready for. We must have the integrity to tell them the truth and let them decide what to do with it. We cannot force them to follow the guidelines we recommend, but we can give them these guidelines and then let them decide. I personally have great faith in the public. We must tell them that a diet of roots, stems, seeds, flowers, fruit, and leaves is the healthiest diet and the only diet we can promote, endorse, and recommend."

Dr. Esselstyn is a friend and fan of [T. Colin Campbell](#) and his work. Campbell is one of the world's leading authorities on the science of nutrition and is the author of *The China Study*, which documents the results from the most comprehensive study of nutrition ever conducted.

I HIGHLY (!!!) recommend you check out the Notes on [The China Study](#) (along with the actual book, of course). Here's some Campbell wisdom gleaned from his extensive research:

*"What made this project especially remarkable is that, among the many associations relevant to diet and disease, so many pointed to the same finding: people who ate the most animal-based foods got the most chronic disease. Even relatively small intakes of animal-based food were associated with adverse effects. People who ate the most plant-based foods were the healthiest and tended to avoid chronic disease. These results could not be ignored. From the initial experimental animal studies on animal protein effects to this massive human study on dietary patterns, the findings proved to be consistent. The health implications of consuming either animal or plant-based nutrients were remarkably different."*

Campbell also tells us: "One of the most fortunate findings from the mountain of nutritional research I've encountered is that good food and good health is simple. The biology of the relationship of food and health is exceptionally complex, but the message is still simple. The recommendations coming from the published literature are so simple that I can share them in one sentence: eat a whole foods, plant-based diet, while minimizing the consumption of refined foods, added salt and added fats."

## **WHY ARE WE BEING MISLED?**

Fact is, we scientifically know what to do to prevent heart disease—which begs the question: Why aren't things different?!

*"What can we do? I have a fairly radical answer to that question: We should aim at eliminating chronic illness. That is not an unattainable goal."*

~ Caldwell B. Esselstyn, M.D.

Here's what Dr. E tells us: "To begin with, it is true that people have a craving for oil, dairy, and animal fat, and that includes the medical scientists who study the problem. We are immersed in an environment of toxic food that is attractive, tasteful, reasonably priced, and heavily advertised. And there are powerful commercial interests that want no change in the American diet. Over the years, there have been a number of attempts to bring nutritional recommendations more into line with what the science actually shows. In every case, intensive lobbying by industry—the producers and purveyors of dairy products, meat, and poultry—has caused those who set the standards to pull their punches."

We could spend this whole Note on the politics of food and why the recommendations we receive from the US government are so far out of whack with what we KNOW is healthy.

In short, we get our food pyramid and other dietary recommendations from the USDA. The problem with that is the fact that the USDA is run by former members of the meat and dairy industry.

And, as Dr. E tells us: "In my opinion, the Department of Agriculture, which by definition is supposed to protect and promote the nation's agricultural interests, should disqualify itself from responsibility for setting nutrition standards. That duty belongs more properly to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But so far, the USDA still holds the power to advise Americans on what they should be eating, and every five years, when it updates its advice, its guidelines end up misleading the public and betraying science. As long ago as 1991, for example, proposed changes in the food pyramid would have relegated meat and dairy foods to lesser importance. But by the time the lobbying was finished, the USDA agreed on misleading compromises for the new proposals that still emphasized consumption of animal protein."

Check out the book for all the ways the USDA has consistently ignored science to benefit the meat and dairy industries.

For now, know that the info and recommendations we get from the USDA are \*extremely\* biased and, unfortunately, it's not a wise idea to follow the USDA's standards if we are committed to creating optimal health!!

## WHAT'S \*REALLY\* DRASTIC?

"My colleague Dean Ornish succinctly sums up the dilemma faced by those of us who believe in this healthy way of eating: "I don't understand why asking people to eat a well-balanced vegetarian diet is considered drastic, while it is medically conservative to cut people open.""

Think about it.

It's OK to cut someone open but weird to change our diets?

Dr. E puts it this way: "At this point, if you are like most of the patients I see in person, you are probably thinking something like this: "How on Earth will I be able to give up cheeseburgers, French fries, steak, mayonnaise, cheese, olive oil, and the other things I love?" One friend of mine, a lawyer, was so put off by the idea of giving up all those foods that he asked me whether he couldn't keep eating his high-fat diet until he developed symptoms of coronary artery disease—and then stop eating fat. I dissuaded him from this approach by explaining that in fully one of four patients with heart disease, the first symptom is sudden death."

Yowsers! How's \*sudden death\* for a "first symptom"?

If you're like Dr. E's typical patients, you might be thinking: "Wow. That's pretty amazing that this Doctor can totally prevent and even reverse heart disease by following his program, but COME ON! Cutting out all animal products, dairy and oils?! That's crazy!"

If so, remember that the FIRST symptom of 25% of heart attacks is \*sudden death\*!! And,

should you survive that, what's more radical, changing your diet or getting cut open?!

Exactly. So, let's get committed and rock it!!!

## PREVENTION VS. DESPERATE INTERVENTION

*"Remember—I cannot stress this enough—\*attention to detail is the key.\* If you eat in this wonderful way, you need never develop heart disease. If you already have heart disease, you will conquer it. That is my promise to you, the sum of everything I have learned. Pay attention. You are in control."*

~ Caldwell B. Esselstyn, M.D.

"I still cherish the naive dream I had when I started this research. We have shown that the number one killer in Western civilization can be abolished, through consumption of a plant-based diet. But we can do much more. If the public adopted this approach to preventing disease, if, by the millions, Americans abandoned their toxic diets and learned a truly healthy approach to eating, we could largely limit all those diseases of nutritional extravagance—strokes, hypertension, obesity, osteoporosis, and adult-onset diabetes. Meanwhile, we would see a marked reduction in cancers of the breast, prostate, colon, rectum, uterus, and ovaries. Medicine could relinquish its primary focus on pills and procedures. Prevention, not desperate intervention, would become the order of the day.

Even I am not optimistic enough to believe that this could happen overnight—that the entire population of the United States would switch to a plant-based diet the moment its benefits are widely known. But we can get there. The first step is to educate the public, teaching the truth about what we know about nutrition and the ravages of the traditional Western diet."

Dr. Esselstyn's passionate commitment to completely eradicating heart disease and other chronic illnesses is deeply inspiring.

As he says, it's about PREVENTION, not desperate intervention after things go wrong. Of course, we've got a long way to go but as each of us commits to living in integrity with what we \*know\* is best for us, we can literally change the world!

B

**Brian Johnson,**  
*Chief Philosopher*

If you liked this Note,  
you'll probably like...

[The Engine 2 Diet](#)

[The China Study](#)

[The RAVE Diet](#)

[The Thrive Diet](#)

## About the Author of "Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease"

CALDWELL B. ESSELSTYN, M.D.



Caldwell B. Esselstyn, JR., M.D., was a researcher and clinician at the Cleveland Clinic for more than thirty-five years. In 1991, he served as the president of the American Association of Endocrine Surgeons and organized the first National Conference on the Elimination of Heart Disease. In 2005, he became the first recipient of the Benjamin Spock Award for Compassion in Medicine. Dr. Esselstyn and his wife, Ann Crile Esselstyn, have followed a plant-based diet for more than twenty years. They work together to counsel patients in Cleveland and at the farm in upstate New York where Dr. Esselstyn grew up.

## About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at [brianjohnson.me](http://brianjohnson.me).