

## **Excessive 12 ounce steak and alcohol will dispose you to a Stroke and Heart Disease**

*Jun 10 2009 ~ Scripted by Rachel Senko for Elizabeth Storjohann BSc, ND*

It is that time of year again when our porch and patio furniture become an extension of our living rooms. As the sun warms the social atmosphere, we gravitate towards the barbeque and beer takes precedence over water. In the presence of friends and family, you may notice a lighter feeling, a precipitant of sunlight and a stable social network. Laughter releases endorphins which are beneficial as it eases anxiety and worry, which are both huge mental stressors. However, throughout our every day hustle and bustle in addition to worry and anxiety, stress presents itself in many other ways; nutritional stress (poor eating habits, excess alcohol consumption) and physical stress (smoking, poor working conditions).

As friends naturally help neutralize mental stress, nutritional stress silently and slowly depreciates our physical integrity. Barbeque season lends to increased meat consumption and although the thought of a 12 oz New York Strip Loin grilled to perfection makes us all salivate we must take into consideration that this diet, in combination with decreased vegetable intake (and other nutritionally dense foods) and increased alcohol consumption, leaves us nutritionally deprived. Nutritional deprivation leads to inflammation inside the body.

Homocysteine, an amino acid which is a product of protein digestion (meat → methionine → homocysteine) is intimately tied to inflammation. Homocysteine wreaks havoc on our arteries. It does so in a manner analogous to a corrosive agent, working away at the arteries. When blood arteries are constantly bombarded with homocysteine, inflammation occurs and the amount of precious blood and oxygen available to our brain decreases, predisposing us to a higher risk of stroke.

However with dietary improvements and proper supplementation, inflammation can be reversed.

From a preventative viewpoint, with ample amounts of B complex vitamins (B<sub>6</sub>, B<sub>12</sub>, and Folic Acid) in the diet, harmful homocysteine is converted back to methionine, which is not damaging to the blood vessels. B<sub>6</sub>, for example protects by converting homocysteine to cysteine and other compounds that are excreted in the urine.

A diet rich in fresh foods (vegetables and whole grains) will help gain back precious nutrients (including B complex vitamins) reduce inflammation. Processing of foods (i.e. the milling of whole grains) and the addition of preservatives to foods significantly decreases their nutritional value. Therefore the more 'alive' and unprocessed a food is, the greater its nutritional value. At Woodside Clinic we are able to measure homocysteine levels in the body through a blood test. Once elevated levels are detected, a preventative mindset is necessary to repair damage. It all comes back to eating right, exercising moderately and keeping toxic levels down (smoking drinking, exposure to pollutants) because they will quickly use up the B<sub>6</sub>, folic acid and B<sub>12</sub> complexes, leaving homocysteine free to cause damage in your body.

For further information on homocysteine, a great reference is "The Homocysteine Revolution" by Kilmer S. McCully MD.