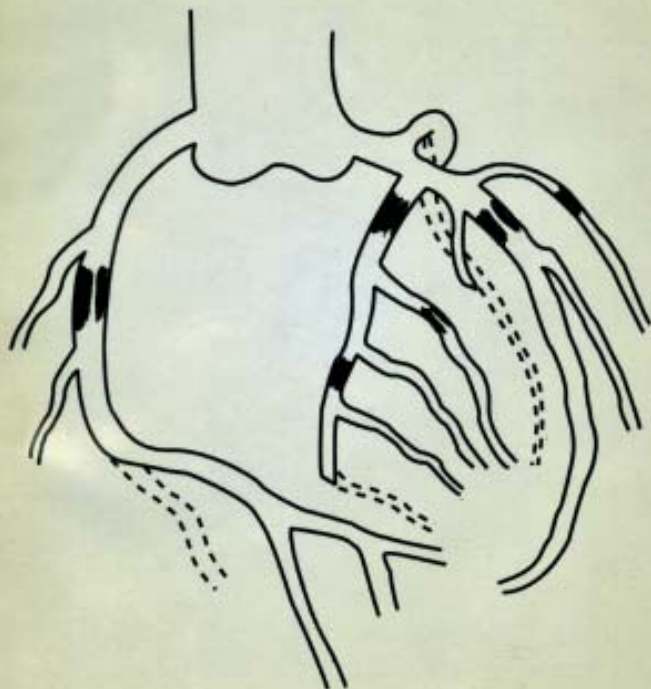


# Prevention of Heart Attack



**DR. RAMESH I. KAPADIA**  
Author of *Primer of Universal Healing*

# Prevention of Heart Attack

Dr. Ramesh I. Kapadia

*It was believed that complete blockage of the arteries due to fat like deposits resulted in heart attack. However, the research shows that most of the heart attacks occur in the arteries less than 50% blocked.*



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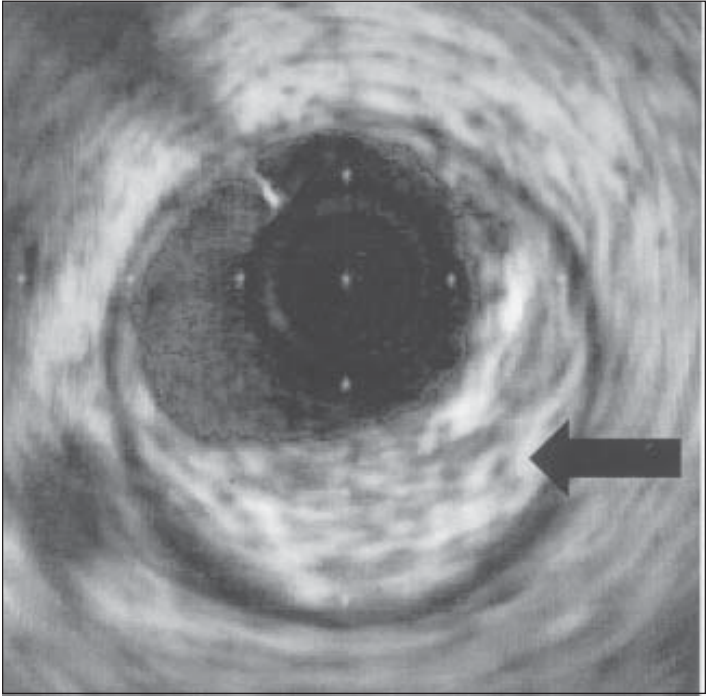
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# Prevention of Heart Attack

Recent research in the field of cardiovascular medicine has improved our understanding of the pathogenesis (mechanism) of acute heart attack. Initially, it was believed that gradual narrowing of the arteries with decades-long accumulation of cholesterol deposition leads to complete blockage of the arteries supplying the heart, resulting in heart attack. However, evidence has accumulated over the years that most of the heart attacks are not due to chronic arterial narrowing. Landmark studies by Ambrose et al and Little et al showed that most of the heart attacks occur in the arteries that had blockage less than 50% as seen by angiography. So, what really causes a heart attack? Dr. Michael Davies, a pathologist from England, observed in patients that die from heart attack that there is a large blood clot at the site of a relatively small plaque (equivalent to angiographic narrowing of less than 50%). The next very important question was, ‘what caused this blood clot at that particular site?’ It was discovered that “something” leads to plaque rupture triggering the development of massive blood clot in the coronary artery. This can cause sudden blockage of a major coronary artery leading to massive heart attack. If the blood clot is not completely occlusive it can drift into smaller arteries resulting in a smaller heart attack.

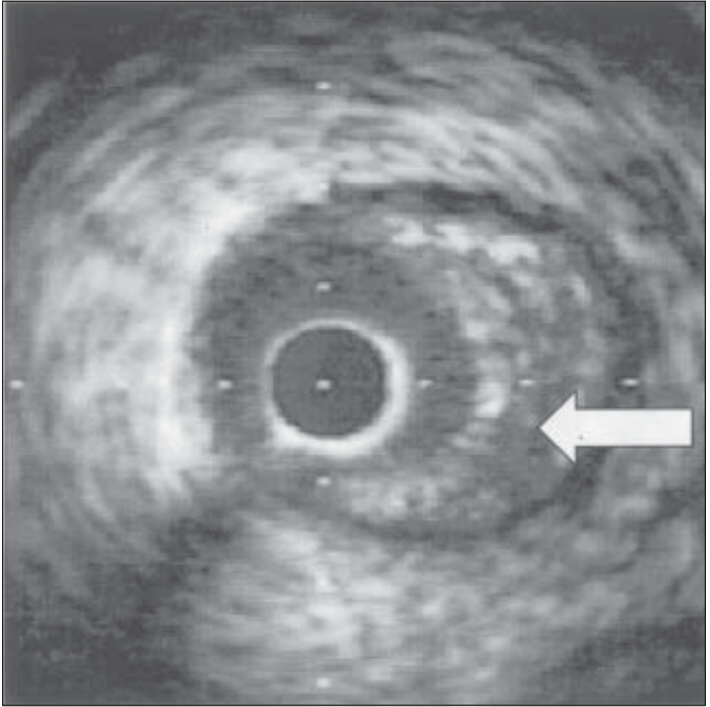
As you can imagine, the most important question is to identify the triggers for plaque rupture, in other words to

# Hard Plaque



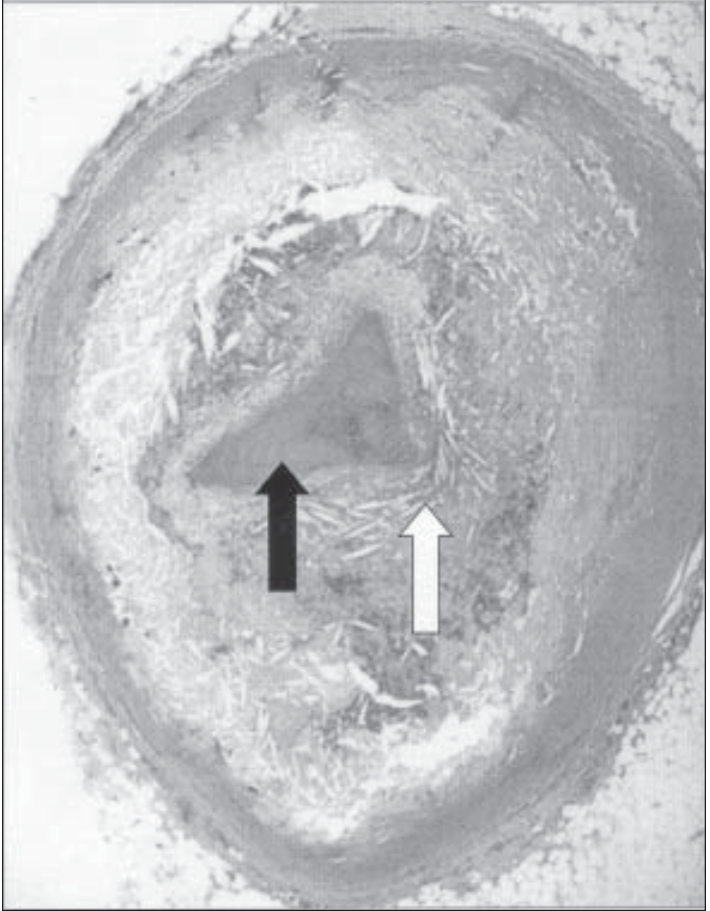
Hard plaque consists of chiefly collagen rich sclerotic tissue with little cholesterol. It leads to narrowing of coronary artery. It may cause chronic stable angina, but is rarely a cause of heart attack.

# Soft Plaque



Soft plaque consists of lipid rich core and a thin fibrous cover. Rupture at the site of vulnerable soft plaque is the most frequent cause of unstable angina, acute myocardial infarction and sudden death. Typically such soft plaque does not cause significant narrowing of coronary artery.

# How Soft Plaque Proves Fatal



Soft plaque ruptures and platelets rush to the ruptured site and a big thrombus (clot) forms, occluding the coronary artery completely and resulting in a fatal heart attack.

identify that “something” that leads to instability of the plaque. Researchers are actively working on various fronts to identify the factors responsible for plaque rupture.

Some researchers have focused on the physical characteristics of a plaque to identify the plaque at risk. When the plaques are visualized by intravascular ultrasound, some plaques appear soft (ultrasounds are not reflected well from these plaques) and others are fibrous or hard (good reflectors of ultrasound waves). **The soft plaques usually contain large amount of cholesterol, which is separated from the artery wall by a thin fibrous cover. Should the cover tear or rupture, blood from the artery wall washes over the cholesterol and triggers the clotting process. This clotting process is initiated by large numbers of platelets circulating in the blood that rush to the damaged artery wall. But what causes these soft plaques? If we can prevent the formation of the new soft plaques and stabilize the ones already present, we can probably avoid a lot of heart attacks and sudden deaths.**

Certain factors responsible for the formation of soft plaque and ultimately plaque rupture are well defined. Cholesterol is one of them. LDL cholesterol, the lethal cholesterol, is the chief constituent of the soft plaque. HDL cholesterol, the healthy cholesterol, removes LDL cholesterol from the blood and carries it to the liver for disposal. So ideally, for the prevention of soft plaque formation, HDL cholesterol, the good cholesterol, should be as high as possible and LDL cholesterol, the bad cholesterol as low as possible.



High density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL) levels are positively affected by lifestyle modification; including weight reduction, smoking cessation and exercise. Even mild to moderate excess weight is associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease (CHD). There is a consistent linear association between weight loss and HDL concentrations in both men and women. Weight loss consistently increased HDL concentration which was maintained as long as reduced weight is maintained. However, HDL benefits of weight loss program should not be assessed during acute calorie restriction as HDL levels decrease temporarily during acute calorie restriction.

Sixty days of smoking cessation always resulted in increased HDL levels. However, in those who began smoking again HDL levels returned to lower levels after sixty days.

Although there continues to be debate about optimal dietary and life style modification necessary to reduce Coronary Heart Disease, there is a consensus that smoking cessation, exercise, weight reduction, and reduction in the intake of saturated fats will benefit most individuals.

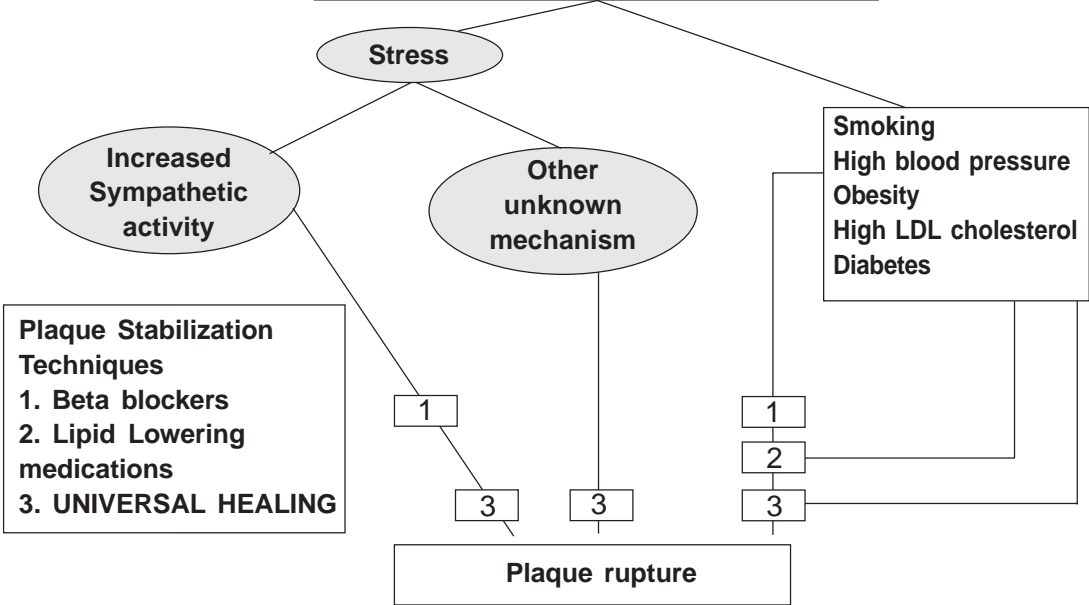
**Today's challenge is to identify and treat the dangerous vulnerable plaques responsible for myocardial infarction and death; to find and treat only angina-producing stenotic lesions is no longer enough.**

Most people can maintain a healthy balance of HDL and LDL cholesterol by eating a diet that is low in saturated fats and high in fibre, which is found in whole grains, vegetables, legumes and fresh fruits. Other

preventive measures for controlling cholesterol and reducing the risk of plaque rupture include, not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, getting regular exercise and controlling high blood pressure, which can damage the arteries and encourage the formation of soft plaque. Some individuals cannot lower cholesterol to ideal level despite dietary discretion. It has been proven beyond doubt that these individuals can benefit from cholesterol-lowering medications. **Many effective and fairly safe lipid-lowering medications are available which, when given in adequate doses, can stabilize the soft plaque in patients suffering from unstable angina. For prevention of soft plaque formation these medications should be used in all individuals who are at high risk of coronary events.** The high-risk individuals are people with strong family history of heart attack in immediate family member below the age of 60, smokers, those having high blood pressure, diabetes mellitus, and those who have recovered from a coronary episode. **The use of lipid lowering medications to prevent or stabilize soft plaque could reduce the risk of heart attack as well as the need for invasive procedures such as coronary bypass surgery or balloon angioplasty.**

Other factors that lead to the formation and subsequent rupturing of soft plaque include oxidation of LDL cholesterol, high blood pressure, and bacterial infection. During oxidation, oxygen in the blood makes cholesterol sticky and more likely to adhere to artery walls. High blood pressure causes turbulence in blood that may damage the delicate linings of the arteries. Bacterial infection may cause inflammation that makes plaque weak and unstable. **Physical and mental stress has been shown**

# Factors causing plaque rupture



**Plaque Stabilization Techniques**  
 1. Beta blockers  
 2. Lipid Lowering medications  
 3. UNIVERSAL HEALING

UHP by increasing inner strength, controls all factors of plaque rupture

to significantly contribute to plaque rupture. Further it increases the stickiness of the platelets, which predisposes to clot formation. The effects of stress are partly mediated by an increase in the sympathetic activity. Beta-blockers, medications that decrease sympathetic activity, have been recommended to prevent heart attack.

The above research findings have thrown new light and have given us further insight into the benefits of the yoga program for coronary heart patients that we have undertaken for the last nine years (since October 2, 1991). In our participants, we have observed that those who practise the program regularly have maintained high HDL, the protective cholesterol. The incidence of unstable angina or recurrence of heart attack and sudden death below the age of 60 has also been remarkably low.

At this juncture, we remember with gratitude Maharshi Patanjali, Father of Yogasutra, for the beneficial effects of the simple yogic disciplines of abdominal breathing, *Shavasan* and meditation in keeping the sympathetic activity under control. Maharshi Charak, Father of Science of Ayurved, has also become very relevant today as he always emphasized holistic approach to healing. The conventional medicine has also now realized the importance of holistic approach. Hippocrates, Father of conventional allopathic medicine, has also become more relevant than ever with these advances of research in conventional allopathic medicine. He said that the human body has the inherent capacity to heal and a good doctor's duty is to enhance that healing potential. His golden teaching was "*Primum Non-Nocere*" i.e. doctor's prime duty while treating his patient is not to harm. He may not cure or relieve the symptoms, but he should take

abundant caution not to harm.

All studies related to coronary heart disease done in USA and Europe till this date have shown conclusively that **beta-blockers, which reduce the sympathetic activity, are helpful in preventing the recurrence of heart attack. However beta-blockers only partially neutralize the deleterious effects of increased mental and physical stress. Our program has proved to be a beta-blocker *Par Excellence*.** It is not only effective like beta blockers in controlling the increased sympathetic activity but is also without any side effects whatsoever. Moreover, it protects against other mechanisms by which increased stress can lead to plaque rupture. Cytokine activation and neuro-inflammation are some of the putative mechanisms but the exact mediators of deleterious effects of stress are not fully known. **Therefore, this program that helps to control all the harmful effects of stress, which is the chief culprit, provides a more robust method than hitherto known therapeutic measures to prevent plaque rupture and achieve plaque stabilization.** Furthermore, it has plenty of other benefits like increasing the inner strength of the individual and promoting healthy life-style changes without the feeling of deprivation. **It heals isolation, reduces hostility, self-centeredness and cynicism-proven toxins to the heart and the body as a whole.**

Many of today's common diseases, such as heart problems, diabetes and immune system disorders, are believed to be due to gene mutations which result from complex interactions between genes and environmental factors. This is because the human genome changes continuously due to errors in DNA replication. Universal

Healing Yoga Program has a potential to prevent the mutation of healthy genes into disease-causing ones.

The modern research helps us to understand and solidify our conviction in the effectiveness of Universal Healing program, conducted at Ahmedabad in India for the last nine years with proven benefit to hundreds of coronary heart patients. **This program provides a successful and cost effective integral approach and should have its rightful place, in the modern management of coronary heart disease.**

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# Success Story

On the occasion of this ninth anniversary of Universal Healing Program, we are very happy to observe that many centres in Gujarat, at Mumbai and even in USA are now regularly practising our program with the help of our audio cassette. **It is to be noted that for successful conduction of this program yoga instructor is not essential.** The experience at these centres is similar to ours in the sense that participants experience great benefit in their strength to face the day to day stresses and almost all of them lose the fear of the disease.

The centre at Rajkot has completed four years and has the support of physicians and surgeons of two public hospitals. Dr. Kamal Parikh M.D. at Virani Hospital specially came to Ahmedabad to study the program and is taking keen interest in the follow-up checkup of participants. On public demand a second centre has been started at Rajkot with the help of Dr. Sushilaben Sheth.

I frequently visit Rajkot and am pleased to see very satisfying results of the program. Shri Mansukhbhai Rindani, Shri Balvantbhai Desai and Shri M. M. Thakkar are rendering great selfless services to this centre. They have started a scientific study of the participants, the results of which are likely to be published in near future.

Rotarian Dharendra B. Shah of Mumbai, a heart patient, benefited by Universal Healing Program, has started UHP in Central Ghatkopar. Rotary District 3140 launched a project during 1999-2000 on UHP under the

Chairmanship of Shri Dhirendra Shah. The centre became very popular and hence had to be moved to a bigger place. I have visited the centre on three occasions and have addressed heavily attended public meetings organised by the centre.

A senior MBBS doctor, Dr. Gajjar is running a UHP centre at Mandal in Gujarat for the last three years very successfully.

I was invited to address a public meeting organised by Rotary club Visnagar and APP1 Preventive Health clinic. The Hall was packed to capacity and T.V. monitors were kept outside the hall to accommodate the audience. They have also started a U.H. centre.

Shri Kumar Shah, another heart patient and a businessman of Navsari who has also been benefited by our program, has started a centre at Navsari.

Even in USA Universal Healing Program is conducted at different locations. Vasanthi Bhat conducts it at San Fransisco, Jay Bhavsar at Los Angeles, Girish Modi at Harrisburg. Surendra Naik at Dallas and Janak Dave at Nebraska – all are taking great interest in the activities of UHP. Jayant Zalavadia is associated with UHP from its inception and has been responsible in starting the centres in USA. He also arranges my meetings with Dr. Dean Ornish and Dr. Naras Bhat at San Fransisco. When I visit USA every year, these centres invite me for a talk. During the summer of 2000, I visited Harrisburg. At this centre the program is conducted regularly once a week for the last three years with the help of our audio cassette. During my visit to different centres, all the participants impressed me with their new found confidence in themselves.



Over and above this, a MD Doctor from Lucknow, Dr. Kharbunda visited Ahmedabad to become familiar with all the aspects of the program and has started a similar centre for heart patients at Lucknow. Fernando, a doctor from Cleveland Clinic, USA, who came to see balloon valvuloplasty work at Institute of Cardiology, Ahmedabad as rheumatic heart disease is more prevalent in India, took every opportunity to study the Universal Healing Program. He was so impressed with the program that he plans to start a similar program in his home country, Argentina, when he returns home after his training at Cleveland Clinic, USA.

Furthermore, one American student from the University of Florida is visiting Ahmedabad for six weeks during December this year to study the beneficial effects of Universal Healing Program on coronary heart patients. The education department of the University in USA has approved this rotation.

I have addressed public meetings arranged under the auspices of service clubs like Rotary, Lion, Jain Social Group, The Vegetarian Society, Mahavir Heart Foundation, Indian Medical Associations, Garden Group of Matunga, etc. at various places in Gujarat, Mumbai, Calcutta and even Jamshedpur (Tisco). We conducted a three-day workshop on Universal Healing for two consecutive years for the executives suffering from coronary heart disease at Tisco, Jamshedpur.

At Mumbai late Shri Dahyabhai Shah of Mahavir Heart Foundation and Shri Naginbhai Shah, a devoted social worker have been amongst the first public figures who recognised the importance of UHP in the treatment of coronary heart disease.

I was invited on 7 July 1994 to deliver a talk on “Meditation and Longevity” at Duke Medical Centre, N.C. USA to commemorate 50th anniversary of Dr. Kempner’s Address to the American Heart Association in 1944, on treatment of heart failure.

Dr. Larry Dossey, M.D. a most seminal thinker of USA on mind-body medicine has been a guiding light and a great supporter of our program. He says that Universal Healing Program continues to show the way to the medicine of the future which will be a synthesis of the scientific and the spiritual. He further says that program has brought together a physical, mental and spiritual approach into a literal cure for heart disease, one of humankind’s major afflictions.

In spite of very busy schedule Swami Satchidanandaji of Yogaville, Virginia, America honoured our invitation and visited Ahmedabad on 29th December 1998 to bless our program. On this momentous occasion we presented Swamiji the following scroll of honour.

“We the members of Universal Healing Family, feel blessed and honoured to express our deep sense of gratitude to His Holiness Swami Sri Satchidanandaji of Yogaville, Virginia, USA who has been our guiding light.

The History of medicine will record Swamiji’s great contribution to the medical science with profound indebtedness for making the ancient science and art of meditation an integral part of the holistic management of coronary heart disease.

Swamiji has carried the light of the East to the West by initiating Dr. Dean Ornish to blaze the trail. Both Dr. Dean Ornish and Dr. Larry Dossey have all along supported us in the new direction opened up by Swamiji.

Our program inspired by Swamiji not only heals coronary heart disease and other stress related ailments but also has a potential to heal and transform the individual and society as a whole.

Humankind will remember for ever revered Swamiji for this unique gift.”

Such is the satisfying story of Universal Healing Program. The credit entirely goes to the utter simplicity of the program directed by Swami Satchidanandaji of Virginia, USA.

# Obesity

Obesity is on increase worldwide. It is a complex multifactorial disease of appetite regulation and energy metabolism. Besides many factors affect how much or how little food a person eats and how that food is metabolised, or processed by the body, Hence losing weight is not simple.

Obesity creates many health problems. It can cause high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, osteoarthritis, accident, certain types of cancer, etc. It also affects longevity.

Many attempts have been made to reduce excessive weight. Haphazard attempts to control obesity are usually not effective. Dieting, fasting and excessive physical exercises also do not help in the long run. When you are on diet, the fat cells shrink, but their number is not reduced. When you are on diet, you have a continual feeling of remaining hungry. Besides the body slows down the basal metabolic rate (BMR), the rate of energy consumption. As a result the weight does not reduce in spite of reducing the intake of food. Repeated dieting further slows down the BMR. This may aggravate the problem of obesity. Some people take medication to reduce appetite and do crash dieting to reduce weight, but such attempts have at times proved injurious to health.

## Defining Obesity

The amount of fat in the body is determined in terms

of body mass index (BMI), which can be easily computed. Your BMI can be arrived at by dividing your weight in kg by the square of your height in metres. For example, if your height is 1.70 m (5'-7") and your weight is 70 kg, your BMI is  $70 \div 1.70^2 = 24.22$ . BMI upto 23 is ideal, upto 25 it is considered moderate overweight and more than 30 it is considered dangerous overweight. Waist measuring over 35 inches in women and over 40 inches in men indicate BMI over 30.

### **Factors Contributing to Obesity**

Too much of fat in diet is at the root of this problem. Body needs only four to six per cent of fat of the total calorie intake, whereas most people consume 35 to 40 per cent of total calories as fat. Vegetarians use too much oil in their diet. It is well to remember that all oil is hundred per cent fat. Our fat consumption has reached unbearable levels by increased use of milk, ghee, butter, cheese and fried food.

Further, consumption of sweets, icecream, chocolates, biscuits, soft drinks, etc. has increased manifold as a part of modern life-style. All these contain too much of simple carbohydrate in the form of sugar which is an important factor in causing overweight.

Moreover, imbalance in calorie intake and calorie consumption through exercise and metabolism results in overweight. Sedentary life, hypothyroidism, corticosteroids antidepressant medications and heredity are also major causes of overweight.

However, there is still more to the problem of obesity.

## **Metabolism of Fat**

Our daily food consists of three major ingredients. One gram of fat contains nine calories, while carbohydrates and protein have only four calories to a gram. Also, the dietary fat is easily converted into body fat. To convert hundred calories of dietary fat into body fat, only 2.5 calories are used, while conversion of hundred calories of carbohydrates and protein into body fat requires ten times as many calories. Hence only one per cent of ingested carbohydrate is converted into body fat. Thus, there are two advantages if you reduce fat intake. The body gets fewer calories and there is correspondingly reduced conversion into body fat.

## **Sugar**

Sugar is present in diet in two forms: as complex carbohydrate and as simple carbohydrate; sugar in the complex carbohydrate is absorbed in the blood stream slowly because of the presence of fibres. Hence, blood sugar level is maintained without much ups and downs. Cereals, vegetables, fresh fruits, etc. contain complex carbohydrates with plenty of fibres, which increase the bulk and quickly give the feeling of fullness. Consequently, one does not overeat and does not feel hungry quickly. But when you eat fatty food, you consume large amount of calories by the time you feel that you have eaten enough.

Sugar in the simple carbohydrates like sugar products, soft drinks, fruit juices and alcohol raise the blood sugar level quickly. This stimulates the secretion of insulin in the blood which brings down the blood sugar level. This again creates hunger which is satisfied by sugar. This

results in habit of eating sugar. Shorter the gap between the urge of hunger and subsequent satisfaction by sweets, the habit of eating sweets becomes stronger. This is a vicious circle. **Thus simple carbohydrate is the second major contributor to obesity next to fat.** A diet of cereals, vegetables and fresh fruits is ideal for reducing weight. Fine wheat flour, polished rice, potato, sweet potato, etc. should be used sparingly as they contain more of simple carbohydrates and less of complex carbohydrates.

### **How to increase Fibre in Your Diet**

Fibre exists in abundance in all plant-based foods. It is that part of the plant which cannot be digested. Therefore it passes through the GI tract unchanged. It does not provide energy or nutrients, and yet it is of utmost importance to keep us in good health.

The soluble fibre found in guar gum, psyllium husk, skin of apples, oat bran and most fruits and vegetables, is effective in reducing cholesterol, controlling appetite and controlling blood sugar in diabetics. It acts as a barrier and delays absorption of carbohydrates by lowering cholesterol and triglycerides; it reduces risk of heart disease. It also helps to lower blood pressure and promotes growth of friendly bacteria. The insoluble fibre found in wheat bran, rice bran and most cereals like jowar, bajri and naachini has a laxative effect, which promotes stool regularity, cleanses the bowels efficiently, aids elimination, as well as improves digestion. Because of its effect on reducing transit time of the stools, it greatly reduces the risk of colon cancer.

Foods deprived of fibre create more hunger and one

tends to eat larger quantities of such refined foods (due to lack of bulk). The convertibility into fat of fibre-stripped foods is also high. All this leads to weight gain.

**Eating fibre-rich food helps the body to get rid of excess hormones, and normalise body processes.** Normal hormones mean less risk of hormone-related cancers like breast cancer, cervical cancer, prostate cancer and ovarian cancer.

Tips to increase fibre in one's diet –

1) Eat only whole grain cereals, e.g. whole wheat bread, jowar, wheat or bajri roti.

2) Add wheat bran to your regular wheat flour in a proportion of 1:1.

3) Apart from the regularly-consumed wheat chappatis try to consume jowar, bajri and naachini chappatis too.

4) Grind alsin seeds into a powder after roasting them. You could make it like dry chutney by grinding it with 2 cloves of garlic, green chillies and some salt. You could have this regularly with your food. Apart from being rich in fibre, it is also very rich in Omega-3 fats.

5) Sprouted pulses like mung, channa, moth, masoor and choli are an excellent source of fibre.

6) You could also regularly take a fibre supplement like guar gum or isabgol or psyllium husk. But make sure you take it mixed in water and drink enough after that, as it needs water to swell.

## **Salt**

**Use of excessive salt in diet tends to retain water in the body. Hence, it is difficult for lovers of salt to reduce weight.**



## Function of Insulin

Insulin also plays an important role in the metabolism of fat. When you consume more sugar in the diet, the blood sugar level rises; this leads to more insulin secretion from the pancreas. When there is more insulin in the blood, it increases the level of lipoprotein lipase. Lipoprotein lipase draws fat from the blood and stores it in body cells as fat. Thus when the level of insulin in the blood increases, more of dietary fat is converted into body fat.

When you reduce the quantity of diet without any change in the quality of food, your body reacts by raising the level of insulin and lipoprotein lipase. Consequently the body draws more fat from the blood stream. This prevents reduction of weight. Again, when the level of insulin rises, the liver increases the production of cholesterol. Moreover, insulin tends to distribute fat to the upper part of the body.

## Development during Evolution

The human body developed mechanisms for survival during evolution. When there was a problem of getting enough food the body developed the system to store fat for conservation of energy. Similarly a mechanism to reduce the metabolic rate to save the energy was developed. Both these mechanisms in the present times support obesity.

Hence, when you observe fast or skip a meal to reduce weight, your body slows down the metabolic rate. When the basal metabolic rate (BMR) is reduced body stops losing weight. Thus you do not succeed in your strategy for weight reduction. Those who do yo-yo dieting

repeatedly, find their BMR set at lower point. When one stops dieting, many a times the weight increases more than before.

### **Isolation**

Isolation also plays an important role in the cause of obesity. Present social structure breeds isolation. Some seek the cure of isolation in tobacco, others try to fill their inner emptiness by overeating. This is a kind of compulsive obsession. Many indulge in it in spite of knowing its ill effects. **On such occasions if one meditates for a while, his compulsive behaviour can be transformed into a behaviour of choice.** Meditation calms down your body and mind to such an extent that you discover why you overeat. Then you do not feel the need to overeat. Meditation is an antidote to isolation. **It creates a feeling of oneness and heals isolation.**

### **Exercise**

**To reduce weight, experts recommend walking at moderate pace for 30-40 minutes daily.** Body tends to burn fat while walking at a moderate pace rather than at a fast pace. **During heavy exercise body tends to burn carbohydrates as carbohydrates burn quicker than fat.** On the other hand, **prolonged rhythmic light exercise provides opportunity to body to burn fat as fuel.** Research has further shown that regular light exercise reduces hunger. Thus, when you are under stress or experience isolation, you benefit doubly by doing light exercise.

### **Correct Way to Eat**

People today do not have time to eat at ease. They eat

while doing other activities. Food is often gulped down without proper chewing. This leads to overeating. Adequate chewing makes food more enjoyable. If you concentrate on eating, you know what and how much you have eaten. It enables one to make a rational choice to avoid sweet and fatty food.

Acute hunger militates against rational choice in eating. Hence it is easier to control weight by eating small quantities more frequently. Intake of light snacks or fruit twice a day besides two regular meals reduces fluctuation in blood sugar. One should eat enough to satisfy hunger but avoid overeating.

### **Taste**

When you choose food with moderate fat and sugar, you need to pay adequate attention to taste. Diet should be such that can be adopted easily and acceptable to the whole family. It should be made tasty by using a variety of clever art in cooking.

Nature has bestowed every object of food with unique taste and smell, which can be strengthened by adding salts and spices. Some vegetables contain natural oils. Use of non-stick utensils in cooking reduces the need for oil. Similarly, one can reduce the use of sugar to some extent by depending on the natural sweetness of fresh and dry fruits. Sprouted beans add variety to meals. Green salads and curd “*raitas*” with fruit are also tasty to eat.

One needs to get used to new taste by controlling one’s mind. Our taste buds are renewed every 15-20 days. Our tongue therefore easily adapts to new taste after three weeks.

## **Meditation**

Meditation for a few minutes everyday helps in healing of isolation, reduction of stress and training of mind to choose food with less oil and sugar. Thus it helps in reduction of weight. Meditation has helped people to become vegetarian.

There is a Zen proverb “As you perform one activity, so you perform all activities.” If you eat fast, you are likely to live your life fast. If you feel nourished by food, you learn to look for nourishment in many other ways. If you choose healthy food, you look for health in other spheres of life too. **If you eat with concentration on your food, you are inspired to lead your whole life with full consciousness and awareness.**

## **Self-imposed Restraint**

If we ourselves choose restraint in life its effects prove more beneficial. Self-imposed restraint creates a sense of freedom. When you decide to abstain from fatty foods and sweets to reduce weight, you easily obtain the strength to achieve your goal, because you have accepted the restraint without any pressure from outside. Strengthening of will power by meditation helps in getting rid of any obsessive behaviour, compulsion or addiction.

## **New Scientific Approach**

- Limit intake of fat to ten per cent of total calories to reduce excessive weight.
- Carbohydrates should account for 75 per cent of total calories.

- Simple carbohydrates are as unhealthy as fat if not more at times. Hence they should not exceed ten per cent of total calories.
- The balance of 15 per cent calories may be obtained from protein in pulses and legumes.
- Another ideal distribution of calories is : cereals 40 per cent, vegetables and fruits 40 per cent, pulses and legumes 10 per cent and skimmed milk, curds and oil 10 per cent.
- Breakfast is recommended. And light snacks or fresh fruit twice a day besides two main meals.
- Walk daily for 20-40 minutes at medium pace.
- Practise meditation regularly.

It is necessary to understand overweight individual's social, familial and psychological background to deal with the problem of obesity. While counselling a person with gross obesity, one should have adequate patience and compassion. **It should be explained that even small reduction in weight leads to large benefit in health. A weight reduction of just 2-3 kg. yields appreciable relief in pain in the knees and significant improvement in a heart patient's ability to work.**

## Paulie's Album on Universal Healing



The light is becoming golden inside the campus of C. N. Vidyalaya, one of the finest schools in the heart of Ahmedabad, an industrial city of Gujarat. Prayer Hall of the school has become the centre for the program. People are gathering in the prayer hall at one end of the school campus. It is a large open sided building with a corrugated roof and a concrete stage at one end. A statue of Gandhi overlooks everything going on below as people greet one another and gather in small groups for discussion. Sitting by the entrance to the stage are two men, taking attendance and collecting token fees for participation. A bag full of books, audio and video cassettes lie beside them, attracting visitors' interest. Newcomers are directed to the stage, where they sit in a circle around Janak Acharya, the yoga instructor, who explains what they will be doing for the next 45 minutes in the program. At 5.55 p.m. the doctor's car appears. Dr. Kapadia mixes with the participants and responds to their questions. At precisely 6.00 p.m. Janak Acharya stands in front of a microphone, participants stand up in rows to be led by him. In unison they raise their arms. *Hari Om*.

Janak leads them through some light stretching and relaxation exercises, followed by progressive deep relaxation-*shavasana*, preparing them for meditation and

visualization. It is a meditation program designed especially for them by Swami Satchidananda of Virginia, in the U.S. All these people who gather here every Tuesday and Friday are heart patients and they are trying to reverse their heart disease through faith and meditation, using Dr. Kapadia's Universal Healing Program.

Dr. Ramesh Kapadia has been practising cardiology in Ahmedabad for over thirty years. He was born in Valsad, a town in the south of Gujarat. He was first educated in Bombay, where he met his wife Kokila, also a student of medicine. They continued their studies in London—Ramesh in cardiology and Kokila in pediatrics.

After completing studies in UK the two doctors moved to Philadelphia. It was here that their first child, their daughter Bina, was born. After living in the US for a year, the Kapadias decided to settle in their homeland among their own people. They came back to India, and settled in Ahmedabad.

Within a few years, their second child, son Samir, an interventional cardiologist on the faculty of University of Washington, Seattle, was born.

Dr. Kapadia had nurtured right from his young age ideas about how meditation could help heart patients to reduce their stress and help them to become more calm. In 1973, with the help of some of his long time patients, he arranged meditation sessions for his patients, in the early morning hours. This first program varied greatly from the Universal Healing Program of today. Because of the early hour, few people came. When the yoga instructor leading the sessions passed away, the program came to a halt. But Dr. Kapadia did not forget his dream.

It wasn't until 1991, when Dr. kapadia and his wife



*The Programme Venue*



*Group Discussion*





*Yoga Instructor with the new participants*



*Light Exercise*

were visiting their children in the US that he was introduced to Dr. Dean Ornish, researcher on the reversal of heart disease and author of three books on the subject.

Dr. Ornish's research was the first of its kind in the world. When he was finishing medical school, he began controlled studies on the effects of vegetarian diet, meditation and exercise on American heart patients who had chosen not to have bypass surgery. The results of his studies shocked the medical world. He found that in the patients who followed his program, the heart disease not only stabilized, but in many cases began to reverse. The more strictly they followed the program, the more the heart disease reversed.

When Dr. Kapadia learned that there was now scientific research proving the effectiveness of meditation on disease, he lost no time. As soon as he returned to India he quickly organized the Universal Healing Program and wrote his first book, *Primer of Universal Healing*.

The Program began on October 2, 1991, also Gandhi's birthday. It became an auspicious date for the Universal Healing Program. All six of Dr. Kapadia's books were published on this date, by the Navajivan Publishing House started by Gandhi.

The Universal Healing Program is based on the patient's inner strength to heal the body. Dr. Kapadia recalls the words of Charak, the ancient Indian physician, in saying he cannot treat a person by only treating his body or mind alone. But he must treat the whole person—mind, body and spirit.

In his books Dr. Kapadia talks about how isolation plays a key role in disease. In part, the Universal Healing

Program is geared to cure that isolation. “Isolation is painful because it saps the real joy of living,” he says in *Heart Disease : A New Direction*. It distances us from the inner source of joy, peace and strength. It is a great drain on one’s potential as a human being. In the treatment of isolation there is a need to connect with the world within (vertical connection) and the world without (horizontal connection).

**Both yoga and meditation are forms of connection.** The root of the word *yoga* lies in Sanskrit, meaning literally to yoke together, to connect. The connection within one’s self is important, for all other connections follow.

**Meditation does other things as well.** When one meditates, the brain wave pattern reduces its frequency to what is called alpha activity. It is uniformly noted that when an individual achieves this relaxation, slow rhythmic alpha activity is recorded from the frontal lobe of the brain. Various chemical changes occurring in the body promote healing by increasing the immune status of the individual. In only 15 minutes of meditation the brain slows itself down to alpha activity, that is not reached even after eight hours of sleep.

**Visualization also plays a key role in meditation.** Patients are told to visualize their coronary arteries, where blockages occur. Then they visualize the blockages dissolving, or disappearing. Studies show that during meditation the mind has more control over the body.

**Family and group support also help to heal isolation.** Families are urged to participate. Spouses of heart patients also come to the meditation sessions, and group discussions are held where participants are encouraged to share their feelings.



*Light Exercise*



*Light Exercise*



*Meditation*



*Meditation*

The program also advocates a low fat high fibre vegetarian diet. They even have a book on diet published, *Wealth of Food, Health of Heart* describing healthful varieties of typical and special Indian foods.

Dr. kapadia stresses that the Universal Healing Program is in no way a replacement for the traditional medical treatment of heart disease. He points out that his brother had a bypass surgery while under his care, and his wife has had an angiography performed on her. He hopes the program will be used as a prescription for practising meditation twice daily. The side benefits are all positive, and the cost is next to nothing.

“See, meditation is remaining in the present moment. Most of the time during our activity during the day, 16 hours of our waking time, we are hardly in the present moment one and half hours. In the sense that, suppose I am talking now, and you are listening. That is present moment. But at this time, you may also be thinking of something else. So we are doing something, but our thoughts may be somewhere else. We are never in absolute present moment, unless we train ourselves. When you are treating someone in an emergency, how concentrated you become ! You become one with the thing, and whatever you do, you do it wonderfully.

We are made up of mind, body and Spirit. If we were only mind and body we would not exist. I wouldn't be able to talk, you wouldn't be able to listen. There must be something else in us. Whatever you call it, we call it Spirit, or Consciousness, which keeps us alive. My mind is different from yours, basically. I'm talking about the local mind. We have a local mind, we have a local body. But the Spirit by which the mind and body function is the



*Dr. Kapadia explaining the Program*



*Jayesh Gujarati*



*Shirish & Mina Mehta*





*Mr. Riyazuddin*



*Dinesh and Dipak*

same. Spirit in the sense of your inner spirit or inner strength is different but the basic thing which keeps the mind and body alive is not different.

Suppose I stretch these muscles (makes a fist) and while stretching these muscles, the mind is somewhere else. This is not yoga. But while stretching these muscles and bringing my attention to this group of muscles, which are being relaxed, I bring the body action and the mind action together. This is yoga. This is connection. In the program, while stretching and relaxing, we gradually bring the whole body and the mind together and at the end both the body and mind are relaxed. Then we forget the body, and become one with the breath. We are breathing right now, but we are not one with the breath. We are not so much aware that the breath is coming in and going out. Try now to become one with your breath for just one minute. Don't breathe differently — you're already breathing — but just watch it. Your breath is going in through the nose and coming out through the nose. Other thoughts may come, but you don't pay attention to the thoughts. Keep your attention on the flow of air going through the nose, inside and out. You find when the air goes in, the whole body is quiet, the tummy comes up. When the air goes out, the tummy falls. This is natural. And when you become one with the breath, if you mentally say "I" when you breathe in, and "Am" when you breathe out, that is meditation. When you meditate with your breath like this for one minute you not only become one with the breath, but one with the Universe. Because we all breathe the same breath. By practising this more often you begin to have the feeling of connectedness, oneness. This program teaches a simple way to connect."

The program is simple, flexible and useful even to those who can perform only part of it.

Here is Mr. Jayesh Gujarati, a polio victim who also has heart disease. He regularly attends the program, as well as handles the recording equipment for open discussions that are arranged for the program members.

### **Shankar Iyyar's Story**

“Hello. I am Shankar Ayyar, I am a civil engineer, still working as a consulting engineer. I've had a very vigorous life up to 1998. I had a heart attack, which I did not know was a heart attack. The doctor advised angiography and then angioplasty was done. After 6 months the doctor, who was an Indian doctor, a D.M., in cardiology, advised me to get the stress test done. There was a problem. The stress test was positive. Then I was advised to go for repeat angiography. Everything was normal. But I was very much worried. My family (wife and a daughter) was more worried about me. My boss advised me to consult Dr. Kapadia. And so I went to him. After seeing the reports, he invited me to come to this program. Now, since 1998, I have had no trouble whatsoever.

“*Shavasana* and Meditation help to get rid of fear, not only from the participants but also from the family members.”

### **Shirish and Mina Mehta**

The Mehtas have been attending the program since its first day in 1991. Shirish had bypass surgery in July, 1989. In 18 months, his problem with angina returned, and he had a positive stress test. He was put on a

*Jitendra Bhow*



*Nandlal Shah*

*J. D. Trivedi*



*Govind Mistry*

restricted diet and medication and was advised to walk with very slow pace. As Shirish's problem worsened, his wife Mina became very worried. His heart problem played a major role in their life, and they feared that his condition would only get worse.

Mr. Mehta says he began to improve after the first day of meditation. After two years he was 60% better. And now, eight years after beginning the program, he has recovered 90%. They lead a vigorous, normal life. They follow the diet prescribed by the program, with very little oil or fat, and meditate together twice a day. Shirish now has an occasional angina only, for which he always carries nitroglycerine tablets. It is a far cry from the days of heavy medication he used to take everyday. Mina has joined the program to support her husband, and plays an active role in the social activities of the program. Most importantly, they are both happy, and no longer fear his disease.

### **Mr. Riyazuddin**

Another young member of Universal Healing. He has suffered from high blood pressure and angina for the last seven months. After attending the Universal Healing Sessions, within six months, his condition has improved. He says both his work and home life are happy.

### **Deepak and Dinesh**

Deepak is 29 years old, one of the youngest participants of Universal Healing. When he was 28, he suffered a heart attack. His illness came at a very stressful time of his life as his son was in the hospital. He was also both smoking and chewing tobacco, which his doctor said contributed greatly to his heart attack. His doctor

advised angiography. Instead, Deepak joined the Universal Healing Program.

He heard about the program through his friend Dinesh, another young sufferer of heart attack. When Dinesh was 32, he had a heart attack, believed to be brought on by the stress of managerial burden in a factory. His angiogram showed 99% block in one of the arteries. His doctors advised surgery; instead Dinesh joined the Universal Healing Program. Now 40 years old, he has fully recovered and enjoys his life with his wife and son. Both cases show just what severe stress can do to the body, and what happens when the stress is removed. As Dr. Kapadia often says, “You may not be able to control the situation, but you can always control your breath.”

### **Jitendra Bhow**

Mr. Bhow has been associated with Universal Healing since its inception. He has been a heart patient since 1980 and had to pass through several extremely challenging stressful situations.

An angiography in 1997 showed fairly satisfactory condition of his arteries. He ascribes his tenacity to overcome stress and fairly good health to Universal Healing. He says practice of abdominal breathing and *shavasana* has helped him a great deal during stressful situations.

### **Nandlal Shah**

He works with great enthusiasm for Universal Healing at the age of 74. He is helpful to Dr. Kapadia in handling correspondence, in the publication of books and production of audio-visual aids. He also helps Dr.

Kapadia in many ways in fulfilling his commitments for lectures and seminars related to Universal Healing.

Nandlal says that because of constant touch with Dr. Kapadia he keeps fit and enjoys life. He observes, he has formed a habit of bringing his awareness to the breath and abdominal breathing several times during the day.

### **J. D. Trivedi**

Mr. Trivedi has been Dr. Kapadia's patient since 1973. His heart trouble started 27 years ago, when he held a high government office which produced a lot of stress. Mr. Trivedi has played very active role in the administration of the Universal Healing Program. He was also associated with the meditation program that preceded the Universal Healing Program.

Mr. Trivedi arrives early every Tuesday and Friday before the meditation session to deal with attendance and preparations for the program. He is also involved in coordinating various events of Universal Healing.

Mr. Trivedi observes that he used to have a very bad temper. He was always getting upset with his family and at his work. He concedes that this probably led to his heart problem. After joining the Universal Healing Program, his temperament has changed. He is more calm now and does not get easily upset. He looks serene and peaceful. He says his family is very happy with the change in his personality.

### **Govind Mistry**

Govind Mistry arrives early for each meditation session to help Mr. Trivedi with the administration work regarding attendance, sale of books, audio and visual



material, etc. Volunteers like Mistry and Trivedi are an asset to Universal Healing.

Dr. Kapadia is invited to talk at number of places every year. In March, 2000 he addressed the Rotary Club of Visnagar, a town in North Gujarat. This Rotary Club is sponsored by the American Association of Physicians from India. They send \$1,000 every month to help run a dispensary for the poor by the Club.

Dr. Kapadia was very well received by an audience of over 500. To accommodate the crowd, a closed circuit TV was set up in another room. He spoke for over an hour, followed by a question and answer session. Two weeks later, the Visnagar Club decided to start a Universal Healing Centre on their premises, where participants would perform *shavasana* by following an audio tape of the program. Such centres are scattered all over Gujarat, reaching as far away as even Mumbai.

Later that day, Dr. Kapadia also spoke at the Vanikar Club of Mehsana, near Visnagar.

