



## Patient Googles His Way Out of Bypass Surgery\*

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One of the most common operations performed in the world today is coronary artery bypass graft surgery (CABG). I would like to share with you the remarkable story of a recent Cardiac Wellness Program patient here at Montefiore Medical Center (I'll call him Mr. J), who changed his diet as a bypass alternative.

Mr. J is a middle-aged man with high cholesterol and a family history of heart disease. Understandably, he desperately wanted to avoid the problems that many in his family had faced, so he ate a "healthy" diet of chicken, fish, and low-fat dairy, with a few fruits and vegetables mixed in. And he exercised. A lot. In fact, he loved exercising so much that he would do it for two to three hours a day — brisk walking, playing sports, etc.

Mr. J. first visited a cardiologist at age 55, after having experienced several weeks of tightness in his neck during physical activity. The condition had worsened to the point that only 30 to 45 seconds of exercise brought on significant discomfort. The doctor ordered a stress test, to see if heart disease could be contributing to this symptom. The test results were so wildly abnormal that he was sent immediately to the hospital for a cardiac catheterization, to look for cholesterol blockages in the vessels that supply his heart with blood. Such severe blockages were found that he was admitted directly to the hospital for coronary artery bypass graft surgery. In less than one day, his life had changed dramatically.

While lying nervously in his hospital bed, he began to think that maybe there was another way to approach this disease, so he went online. There, he read about the impact of a whole-food, plant-based diet on heart disease, and he decided that was the path for him. He called the nurse, gave back his hospital gown, and despite the pleas of his medical team, signed himself out of the hospital against medical advice. Mr. J's nurse was so concerned that before he was able to leave, she called his wife to have her convince him to stay. He did not. Later, the nurse even called Mr. J at home to plead for his return. He politely declined.

Soon thereafter he found our Cardiac Wellness Program

at Montefiore. He was already taking all the appropriate medications, and he chose to completely change his lifestyle as well. He fully embraced a whole-food, plant-based diet without oil and had perhaps the most remarkable turnaround I have ever seen. Within one week, he went from being able to walk only a block before feeling tightness in his neck to walking 25 blocks without incident! Fast-forward three months and he was back to exercising two to three hours each day without symptoms. That is what I call remarkable!

A few weeks later, Mr. J got another call from his nurse. *She* had just been diagnosed with cholesterol blockages in her heart, and *her* doctors were recommending cardiac procedures. With Mr. J in mind, she told her doctors *no way* and called him to learn how to do exactly what he did: embrace a whole-food, plant-based diet!

Mr. J never did get that bypass surgery, nor did he get a coronary stent. In fact, he did not need to have any procedures at all. He got healthier with appropriate medications and by wholeheartedly embracing a whole-food, plant-based diet.

The key to health, it seems, lies at the end of your fork.

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\*Postscript: While many heart patients may reverse their disease with lifestyle change alone, Mr. J also continued his prescribed medications, given the severity of his condition, and their doses were lowered as his health improved. Please note that I am not recommending lifestyle change over medical intervention for any particular person, as every case is of course different. Some cases are fraught with more risk than others, so please consult with both your physician and a physician trained in lifestyle medicine before making significant lifestyle changes.