

## BANDOLIER'S SUMMARY OF ADVICE ON HEALTHY LIVING

This sheet is a quick summary of ten lifestyle tips to help avoid seeing a doctor about heart disease or cancer, based on good quality information. For more details, see the healthy living pages off the *Bandolier* home page at [www.ebandolier.com](http://www.ebandolier.com).

- 1 Eat whole grain foods (bread, or rice, or pasta) on four occasions a week. This will reduce the chance of having almost any cancer by 40%. Given that cancer gets about 1 in 3 of us in a lifetime, that's big advice.
- 2 Don't smoke. If you do smoke, stop. Nicotine patches, gum or inhaler won't help much, and acupuncture won't help at all. Try to reduce your smoking, as there is a profound dose-response (the more you smoke, the more likely you are to have cancer, or heart or respiratory disease). So cut down to below five cigarettes a day and leave long portions of the day without a cigarette.
- 3 Eat at least five portions of vegetables and fruit a day, and especially tomatoes (including ketchup), red grapes and the like, as well as salad all year. This protects against a whole variety of different nasty things:
  - It reduces the risk of stroke dramatically
  - It reduces the risk of diabetes considerably
  - It will reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer
- 4 Use Benecol instead of butter or margarine. It really does reduce cholesterol, and reducing cholesterol will reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke even in those whose cholesterol is not particularly high.
- 5 Drink alcohol regularly. The type of alcohol probably doesn't matter too much, but the equivalent of a couple of glasses of wine a day or a couple of beers is a good thing. The odd day without alcohol won't hurt either. Think of it as medicine.
- 6 Eat fish. Eating fish once a week won't stop you having a heart attack in itself, but it reduces the likelihood of you dying from it by half.
- 7 Take a multivitamin tablet every day, but be sure that it is one with at least 200 micrograms of folate. The evidence is that this can substantially reduce chances of heart disease in some individuals, and it has been shown to reduce colon cancer by over 85%. It may also reduce the likelihood of developing dementia. Folate is essential in any woman contemplating pregnancy because it will reduce the chance of some birth defects.
- 8 If you are pregnant or have high blood pressure, coffee is best minimised. For the rest of us drinking four cups of coffee a day is likely to reduce our chances of getting colon cancer and Parkinson's disease.
- 9 Get breathless more often. You don't have to go to a gym or be an Olympic marathon runner. Simply walking a mile a day, or taking reasonable exercise three times a week (enough to make you sweat or glow) will substantially reduce the risk of heart disease. If you walk, don't dawdle. Make it a brisk pace. One of the benefits of regular exercise is that it strengthens bones and keeps them strong. Breaking a hip when elderly is a very serious thing.
- 10 Check your height and weight on a chart to see if you are overweight for your height. Your body mass index is the weight in kilograms divided by the height in metres squared: for preference it should be below 25. If you are overweight, lose it. This has many benefits. There is no good evidence on simple ways to lose weight that work. Crash diets don't work. Take it one step at a time, do the things that are possible now, and combine some calorie limitation with increased exercise. The good news is that in a few years time we may have some appetite suppressants to make it easier.