

Should You Take Aspirin Daily to Prevent Cancer?

Millions of Americans already take low-dose aspirin daily for heart-healthy benefits, and the findings of new federally funded research suggests the long-used painkiller may offer protection against colon cancer.

But while the latest findings on aspirin and cancer are promising, a top cancer specialist tells *Newsmax Health* you shouldn't automatically assume the painkiller is safe and effective for everyone.

It's also important to keep in mind that effective diagnostic tests—including colonoscopy—are still the best way to combat colorectal cancer by catching it, and treating it, early.

"Daily aspirin may provide some protection against colon cancer but I'm concerned that some people may misinterpret this recommendation and think that they can skip their colonoscopy," says Bipan Chand, M.D., division chief for minimally invasive surgery and director of surgical endoscopy at Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood, Illinois.

Dr. Chand's comments were made in reference to a new federal health guideline issued this week that recommends aspirin for people at high risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

The recommendation, published in a draft report from the United States Preventive Services Task Force, was the first time that a major American medical organization had issued a recommendation suggesting aspirin may prevent a form of cancer.

The task force is an influential one and its recommendations have often led to changes in the way American healthcare is practiced.

Colon cancer is the nation's third leading cause of cancer death. An estimated 145,000 people are diagnosed with colon cancer each year, and 50,000 die, according to American Cancer Society statistics.

In its recommendation, the influential government panel said the benefits of aspirin outweighed the risk for people ages 50 to 69 who are at high risk for heart disease. The biggest benefit was seen in high-risk individuals in their 50s.

The recommendation is weaker for high-risk Americans ages 60 to 69 because of the concern that aspirin, which is a blood thinner, can cause harmful bleeding in some people. Those younger than 50 or 70 and older are being urged to consult a doctor for a customized recommendation on aspirin.

The risk of bleeding is not only a concern for older people, but can also occur in anyone who takes aspirin, notes Dr. Chand.

"I hope everyone will treat this recommendation cautiously and consult their doctor," he adds. "Most individuals who take aspirin and aspirin-like products are at an increased risk for gastrointestinal upsets ranging from gastritis to a catastrophic bleed, so you have to be careful."

The task force said its recommendation is based on studies that have shown that people who have taken aspirin long-term (at least 5 to 10 years) have a reduced risk of colon cancer.

But Dr. Chand notes that the evidence in favor of aspirin therapy as a means of preventing cardiovascular disease is stronger than in the case of colon cancer—at least at present.

"Aspirin is a blood thinner so it prevents blood clots that can cause heart attack and stroke. In the case of colon cancer, aspirin is associated with lower risk but we don't know if that's a causality," he explains.

To prevent colon cancer, Dr. Chand recommends following the federal government's screening guidelines, which call for most people to begin regularly scheduled colonoscopies at the age of 50.

African-Americans and people at risk for heredity colon cancer generally begin screening at earlier ages, he says.

Although colonoscopies are the main form of prevention, obesity and a high-fat diet are also linked to colon cancer, so people should maintain an ideal weight and eat a diet that is low in fat and high in fiber, he adds.

For the original article, visit .

Alarming Health Trend: More Younger Men Experiencing Heart Attacks

More younger Americans—especially men—are having heart attacks, says one of the nation's top cardiologists.

“These heart attacks are what I call the sneaky, silent killer of young men—and no one is talking about them,” Chauncey Crandall, M.D., tells *Newsmax Health*. “But I see them all the time in my emergency room.”

The average age for a man in the U.S. who has a heart attack is 65 (and women slightly later at about 70) and their risk climbs as they age. Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of men and women in the U.S.

But younger men are increasingly vulnerable and suffering

heart attacks in middle age, says Dr. Crandall, author of the *Heart Health Report* newsletter.

Stroke, also once thought to be a disease of the elderly, has been charting a similar, frightening climb in young and midlife adults.

The rate of ischemic stroke, which accounts for 90 percent of cases, jumped by 47 percent for men ages 35 to 44 and 36 percent for women in the same age group between 1994 and 2007, a recent study found.

For men in their early 20s, stroke-related hospitalizations rose 50 percent, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

In many cases, the cause for heart attacks and stroke are the same—atherosclerosis, which results in the buildup of fatty deposits on artery walls. When those areas become inflamed, it can cause a heart attack. When such buildups cause blood vessels to rupture, the result can be a stroke.

Heart attacks in younger people are particularly frightening and deadly because they often strike without prior symptoms.

But such an increase in coronary disease is not surprising, since it correlates with the near-epidemic rates of blood pressure, diabetes and obesity in the U.S., which all contribute to cardiovascular disease, says Dr. Crandall.

He adds that heart attacks are particularly frightening because they strike suddenly, without warning, in young men who are apparently healthy, with no history of heart disease. And they are often deadly, occurring in the heart's left descending ventricle, the body's major cardiac vessel.

Such heart attacks are aptly termed "widow makers."

"We used to think that these massive heart attacks were mostly caused by a big buildup of plaque in the coronary arteries,

the kind that took decades to develop,” explains Dr. Crandall. “But we realize now that it is the smaller new blockages, the type that occur in men not yet diagnosed with heart disease, that pose the real danger.”

Because these blockages are smaller, they do not hamper blood flow, so they don’t result in angina, which often causes the typical chest pain that sends sufferers to a doctor for help.

But the best news, says Dr. Crandall, is that there is something that young men can do. “I advise all men from the age of 40 up to get a PLAC test,” he said.

The PLAC test is a simple blood screening that can provide information on whether a man is suffering from chronic bodily inflammation, an invisible condition that can cause coronary plaque to rupture, which results in the heart attack.

Says Dr. Crandall: “All men between 40 and 60 need to have this test done.”

For the original article, visit .

5 Ways to Kick Sugar Addiction

Sugar is public health enemy No. 1.

It is the primary driver of the obesity epidemic. It is turning millions into diabetics. And there is new evidence it causes heart disease, cancer and other serious conditions.

That’s the message from Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., in his new book *The Complete Guide to Beating Sugar Addiction*.

Cutting out sugar is impossible for many people, because it not only tastes good, but it's addictive as much as any drug, he says.

"For many people, telling them to stop eating sugar is like telling a junkie to stop taking heroin," said Dr. Teitelbaum. "It won't happen. You have to treat the addiction, and then the sugar cravings go away.

"In most of human history, people have gotten their sugar by eating fruit. Now we are getting sugar in a much more concentrated form. The average American eats 140 to 150 pounds a year. This means we are getting almost 18 percent of our calories from sugar, which is far too much."

Too much sugar is not only harmful in itself, but most of the sugar we consume is refined, which means it's been stripped of any nutritional benefit.

The official panel that shapes the U.S. dietary guidelines recently took aim at sugar, calling on Americans to sharply cut their intake from the current 22 to 30 teaspoons of sugar a day down to 12.

According to Dr. Teitelbaum, the vast majority of the sugar Americans consume come not from the sugar sprinkled directly into foods or in drinks, but is "added sugar" found in soft drinks, bakery items, and other prepared foods.

It's important to be a savvy reader of labels to understand how much sugar you are eating, said Dr. Teitelbaum.

"Here's a key tip: Ignore everything in the 'Nutrition Facts' box on the label except for the grams of sugar per serving. Take that number and divide by four and you'll know how many teaspoons of sugar the product contains.

"Then you can decide if you want to spend your sugar budget that way."

Here are five ways to kick your sugar addiction:

1. Banish guilt. “Most people feel guilty about eating sugary foods so they tend to shovel it in while trying not to think about it. It’s much better if they get rid of the guilt, eat a small portion while being mindful of the fact they are eating sugar, and savor it,” Dr. Teitelbaum said.

2. Cut out all sugary drinks. This includes not only soda, but fruit juices and sweetened coffee and milk drinks.

3. Choose stevia. This natural sweetener is healthier than chemical sweeteners such as aspartame, saccharin and sucralose.

4. Go for quality, not quantity. If you want a piece of candy, get the best you can buy, eat small amounts, and savor it.

5. Share the wealth. When eating at restaurants, order a decadent dessert if you want, but be sure to share it with the rest of the table.

For the original article, visit .

Vitamin C Regains Popularity With New Discoveries

Vitamin C was one of the earliest supplement fads, championed by Nobel Prize-winning physicist Linus Pauling in the early 1970s as a cure for ailments ranging from cancer to the common cold.

However, by the 1990s, the nutrient fell out of favor, and Pauling was accused of quackery by some mainstream doctors. By

the time Pauling died in 1994 at age 93, vitamin C use was in decline. Recent science is showing that the great scientist may have been right all along. Here are new findings about the venerable vitamin:

- **Fights superbugs.** Scientists recently discovered that vitamin C kills antibiotic-resistant tuberculosis germs
- **Cuts the risk of colds in half.** A review of five randomized trials on people undergoing heavy short-term physical stress (such as long-distance runners and soldiers in training) found that taking vitamin C cut the number of expected common colds in half.
- **Reduces shortness of breath.** The vitamin was found to help people who become short of breath or coughed during exercise. Findings in the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) prompted the lead scientist in the study to recommend vitamin C as an inexpensive and readily available supplement for people with lung issues or who have problems exercising because of breathing problems.
- **Lowers cholesterol.** A series of studies, including one that analyzed 13 randomized, placebo-control studies (the so-called “gold standard” of medical research), found that taking vitamin C regularly lowers LDL-cholesterol (the so-called “bad” cholesterol) as well as triglycerides, which are now considered in some cases even more deadly than LDL-cholesterol.

According to David Brownstein, M.D., one of the nation’s top holistic doctors and longtime advocate of vitamin C therapy, the supplement’s comeback is long overdue.

“Doctors lost interest in vitamin C because they wanted to prescribe antibiotics to everyone,” he told Newsmax Health. “Now that the dangers of antibiotic overuse are becoming known, there should be more research on vitamin C to fight infection.

“Before antibiotics became popular, vitamin C was used to cure

diseases like polio and pertussis (whooping cough), so there is no reason why it wouldn't treat those diseases today, as well as the newer diseases."

In his practice, Brownstein uses vitamin C to treat arthritis, asthma, allergies, constipation, infections, thyroid disease, sub-clinical scurvy, constipation and other ailments. He recommends 3,000 to 5,000 milligrams of vitamin C daily for these diseases.

Vitamin C also has potential in treating cancer, he said. He recommends 10,000 to 20,000 mg for cancer patients.

Megadoses of vitamin C generally have no side effects other than diarrhea for some people, which goes away when the dose is decreased, Dr. Brownstein said.

Another proponent of vitamin C is top cardiologist Chauncey Crandall, M.D., who says it is an excellent weapon against heart disease. "Lots of people already take vitamin C to prevent colds, but it does more than that, it also helps protect the heart," he said.

According to Dr. Crandall, vitamin C aids the heart in three ways: First, it helps reduce concentrations of C-reactive protein in the blood. The body produces C-reactive protein during inflammation, which is increasingly being seen as a precursor for heart disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease.

Second, vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant, which means it helps the body's cells reduce the oxidation that occurs with metabolism. Oxidation creates free radicals, which can damage the heart's coronary arteries, setting the stage for atherosclerosis, the disease process that causes coronary heart disease.

And third, vitamin C improves the overall functioning of the heart, in addition to its cholesterol-lowering power, Dr.

Crandall said.

“Along with exercise and a plant-based diet, vitamin C is one of the best things you can do for your heart,” he said.

For the original article, visit .

Statin Alternative: Vitamin B-5 Found to Lower Cholesterol

New research shows that a form of vitamin B-5 called pantethine significantly lowers cholesterol—and the supplement could offer an alternative for people taking statin drugs.

The study “confirmed the efficacy of pantethine in a healthy North American population who had mild to moderate cholesterol levels,” says John Rumberger, M.D., a cardiologist at Princeton Longevity Center in Princeton, N.J., who co-authored the research.

Smaller studies had also previously shown that pantethine has cholesterol-lowering effects, but the new findings mean that vitamin B-5 may be a viable statin alternative, says Rumberger.

“Statins are a great medication, but they are not for everyone,” he says. “Studies indicate that up to 20 percent of the general population can’t tolerate them, and others have health issues that may not make them a good candidate for statin therapy.”

Some 15 percent of statin users report side effects, which can

include headaches, dizziness, muscle soreness and fatigue. Pantethine only rarely causes side effects, with mild stomach upset being the most common. A review of studies found that the supplement led to side effects in only 1.4 percent of subjects.

In the four-month study, Rumberger and his colleagues gave 120 people a Japanese brand of pantethine called Pantestin. Subjects took the supplement daily and also followed a healthy diet. Those taking the supplement experienced a 3 percent greater drop in total cholesterol and 4 percent reduction in “bad” LDL cholesterol than those in a control group, who also followed a heart-healthy diet.

While it isn't exactly known how pantethine works, it is believed to work much like statins, which block an enzyme that the body uses to manufacture cholesterol.

Pantethine's cholesterol-lowering effects may prove to be too mild to allow it to be used as a substitute for statin drugs, says cardiologist Chauncey Crandall, M.D., chief of the heart disease prevention program at the world-renowned Palm Beach Cardiovascular Clinic.

“Statin drugs are disease-specific medications targeted to lower cholesterol, so they provide significant reductions,” he tells Newsmax Health. “These [pantethine] supplements can help, but too often you have to take a large number of pills each day to get the effect.”

For his patients who wish to lower their cholesterol without statin drugs, Crandall has been recommending the following daily regimen: 500 mg of niacin, 650 mg red yeast rice, 2 grams of plant sterols.

“Pantethine could be added to these other supplements to get cholesterol under control,” he says. “To really lower cholesterol, you also have to add in other behaviors, like eating a plant-based diet, achieving ideal body weight,

getting adequate sleep and leading a low-stress way of life.

“We do need an alternative to statins for lowering cholesterol, but this research is early, so we will have to see how it pans out.”

Pantethine is widely available at drugstores, health food stores and through websites. Suggested dosage is 300 mg with meals three times a day.

For the original article, visit .

6 Foods That Can Help Prevent Strokes

A new study shows that the more fiber you eat, the less risk you have of suffering a stroke.

Stroke is the fourth-leading cause of death in the U.S., killing more than 137,000 Americans annually. It is also a chief cause of disability among survivors.

Although the incidence of stroke has fallen, probably due to better blood-pressure control, the number of strokes is still climbing due to the nation's aging population.

In new research, published in the journal *Stroke*, researchers analyzed eight studies and concluded that for every 7-gram increase in daily fiber intake, the risk of suffering a first stroke fell by 7 percent. They found this to be true no matter whether the stroke was ischemic—the most common type, caused by a blockage in a brain artery—or a hemorrhagic stroke, caused by bleeding in the brain.

Government recommendations call for 21 to 25 grams of fiber a day for women and 30 to 38 grams for men, but Americans eat much less than that. Women eat about 13 grams of fiber a day on average, and men eat 17 grams. Just a modest increase, like one serving of whole-wheat pasta or two servings of fiber-rich fruits and vegetables, would provide about 7 grams of fiber.

Here are six fiber-rich foods to reduce stroke risk:

1. Bran. Bran is one of the foods highest in fiber. Sprinkling just an ounce of oat or wheat bran onto cereal or a smoothie will add 12 grams of fiber to your meal.

2. Berries. Berries are packed with fiber, with elderberries coming in the highest at 10 grams a cup. Raspberries are also particularly high in fiber. Blackberries, blueberries and strawberries are good choices as well.

3. Beans. Whether they are lima beans, black beans, garbanzo beans or lentils, all members of the bean family are rich in fiber. They can replace meat in recipes to further lower stroke risk. If intestinal gas is a concern, you don't need to overdo it—just one-quarter cup of kidney beans provides almost 5 grams of fiber.

4. Oatmeal. Eat the slow-cooked rolled oats instead of instant oatmeal to get the most fiber.

5. Spinach. Spinach has lots of fiber, as do other leafy deep-green vegetables, including mustard greens, turnip greens, beet greens and Swiss chard.

6. Almonds. Almonds, along with other nuts and seeds, are packed with fiber and make for a satisfying between-meal snack.

For the original article, visit .

How Hidden Sugar Slowly Kills

Americans are eating more hidden sugar in their foods than they think, and it is putting their hearts at risk.

That's the warning from one of the nation's top cardiologists in the wake of a new study showing that even moderate sugar consumption leads to a higher death risk from heart disease.

"Most people don't realize how much hidden sugar is in the foods—and what they don't know is killing them," Chauncey Crandall, M.D., tells Newsmax Health.

"We've all been hoodwinked into thinking a moderate amount of sugar is OK, but that theory is falling apart with the new research," says Crandall, author of the No. 1 Amazon best-seller *The Simple Heart Cure*.

"We don't even realize how much sugar we are consuming. We think that sugar is in only candy or ice cream, but manufacturers sneak sugar into almost everything, including soups, catsup, canned salmon, cured meat—even toothpaste," he says.

The new study found that consuming even a moderate amount of sugar translates into a higher rate of death from cardiovascular disease. Drinking only two cans of regular sugar-sweetened soda a day significantly increases death risk, according to the researchers.

Previous studies had linked diets high in sugar with increased risks for non-fatal heart problems, and with obesity, which can also lead to heart trouble. But the new research found that obesity didn't explain the link between sugary diets and death. Even normal-weight people eating sugar were found to

have a higher death rate.

“My main concern has been that this higher sugar consumption leads to obesity, diabetes and hypertension, but now this new study shows that sugar can lead to unhealthy inflammatory changes, even in people who are not overweight. This means that everyone is at risk,” says Crandall, director of preventative medicine at the Palm Beach Cardiovascular Clinic.

The study, published in the prestigious *Journal of the American Medical Association*, examined the dietary habits and health of more than 30,000 Americans over 15 years.

“The message is clear,” says Crandall. “We need to reduce the amount of sugar we consume—especially in soda—because it is more dangerous than most of us think.”

For the original article, visit .

Why You Should Be Skeptical of New Blood Pressure Guidelines

Fewer older Americans would take blood pressure medications under new guidelines, but a top cardiologist is warning that people should stick to the previous standards for now.

“There is a body of evidence that shows the current guidelines work, so I think that people should stick with them until we have time to see if relaxing the guidelines are harmful,” says Chauncey Crandall, M.D., director of preventive services at the Palm Beach Cardiovascular Clinic.

One in three Americans, 67 million people, have high blood pressure, known also as hypertension, a condition that leads to stroke, heart failure, and heart disease.

The longstanding current blood pressure standards define a healthy or normal blood pressure as a systolic pressure (the upper number) of less than 120 and a diastolic pressure (the lower number) of under 80, which is expressed as 120/80 millimeters of mercury. High blood pressure is defined as 140/90 or higher.

While the new guidelines continue to recommend a blood pressure reading of under 140/90 for people ages 30 to 59, they suggest putting people age 60 and older on drugs only if their blood pressure is at least 150/90.

The report says that research shows that reducing blood pressure below 150/90 in this age group reduces stroke, heart failure, and heart disease, but that there is no data proving that older people benefit from stricter blood pressure control.

Dr. Crandall, author of the No. 1 Amazon best-selling book *The Simple Heart Cure: The 90-Day Program to Stop and Reverse Heart Disease*, says he is not convinced.

"Hypertension is one of the greatest risk factors for heart disease," says Dr. Crandall, who has faced heart disease himself. "My high blood pressure had gone untreated and was a little higher than the traditional guidelines stipulate, and I feel that this contributed to my heart problem."

High blood pressure drugs can have problematic side effects in people over 75, he says. But blood pressure medication in this group should be customized, taking into account a patient's general health, specific conditions, and life expectancy, he says.

"People in this age group can have more lethargy and a clouded

mental capacity when their blood pressure is lower, so I relax it and try to drive it a little higher, while making sure their other risk factors are in order,” he adds.

“I wonder if these new recommendations were made with an eye to saving money on medication costs,” he says.

The new blood pressure guidelines come on the heels of other health recommendations advising less diagnostic testing and fewer medical procedures. They are being released as the federal government works to cut medical costs as the Obamacare healthcare system goes into effect, says Dr. Crandall.

“I think the new blood pressure numbers are confusing,” he says. “I think we should stick with what we know, and evaluate the people who are older individually.”

For the original article, visit [.](#)

10 Ways to Lower Your Cholesterol Without Taking Drugs

Some 36 million Americans now take statin drugs—and thanks to the newly released national cholesterol guidelines, this number could skyrocket.

Top cardiologist Chauncey Crandall says this is not welcome news.

“These new guidelines broaden the groups of people who will be urged to take statins, so this will probably result in millions of people being put on a drug they don’t need,” says

Crandall, director of preventative medicine and clinical cardiology at the Palm Beach Cardiovascular Clinic.

While he credits statins with helping to drive down the incidence of heart disease, Crandall worries that people who have only mild cholesterol problems will be put on statins for the rest of their lives. He believes that these problems should be addressed with lifestyle change for better and more lasting results.

“High cholesterol runs in a family of other problems which travel together. If you take a statin, you’re attacking only cholesterol, but it does nothing to remedy other problems, like obesity, high blood pressure and metabolic syndrome,” says Crandall, author of the No. 1 Amazon best-selling book *The Simple Heart Cure: The 90-Day Program to Stop and Reverse Heart Disease*.

Dr. Crandall recommends the following steps to lower cholesterol without drugs:

1. Change your diet. A plant-based diet, which includes large amounts of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, along with meat substitutes like beans, lowers cholesterol naturally.

2. Take a plant sterols supplement. Plant sterols, also known as plant stanols, are the plant version of cholesterol, and when consumed in sufficient amounts they block the absorption of human cholesterol in the small intestine. There are products that have plant sterols, like special margarines, but they also contain chemicals, so you’re better off with a two-gram daily supplement.

3. Start your day with oatmeal. Oatmeal is the best food defense against cholesterol. The reason is that oatmeal contains soluble fiber, which turns into a gel in the body, which helps you feel full and also interferes with the digestion of cholesterol, whisking it out of your body. Oat bran and cold oat cereals, like Cheerios, do this as well.

4. Get 8-10 hours of sleep a night. Sleep deprivation hikes low-density LDL cholesterol (known as the “bad” cholesterol), contributes to high blood pressure and leads to overeating. If you snore or find yourself excessively sleepy during the day, get checked for the common and dangerous sleep disorder known as sleep apnea.

5. Check your vitamin D level. Vitamin D deficiency is linked to high cholesterol. The body’s ability to synthesize vitamin D from the sun diminishes as you age. Get your vitamin D levels checked with a blood test. If your level is low, take a daily vitamin D supplement.

6. Get your blood sugar level checked. You should be looking for a fasting blood sugar level of 100 or less. A too-high blood glucose level leads to elevated **LDL cholesterol** and high triglycerides, which is a dangerous blood fat that is a cholesterol remnant.

7. Eat less gluten. Our American high-gluten, wheat-based diet leads to obesity and also to inflammation, which research shows may be an even a more dangerous heart disease driver than cholesterol. If you do eat wheat products, make sure they are whole grain, and stay away from multigrain products, which are no healthier than baked goods made with refined flour.

8. Exercise one hour daily. A brisk one-hour walk will help lower **cholesterol** and **high blood pressure**, and build up your heart’s collateral blood flow.

9. Take a red rice yeast supplement. Red rice yeast is traditionally used in Chinese medicine. It contains a substance that is chemically identical to the active ingredient in a statin drug. Take it with your doctor’s guidance.

10. Dust your food with cinnamon. In one study researchers found that about $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of cinnamon daily cut total cholesterol by 26 percent. Cinnamon is also an excellent way

to make heart-healthy foods, like low-fat cottage cheese or Greek yogurt, taste great, and if you sprinkle it on your oatmeal or other foods, you'll be boasting your breakfast's cholesterol-fighting power.

For the original article, visit .

James Gandolfini's Heart Attack: Could It Happen to You?

The sudden death of TV star James Gandolfini came as a shock to many of his fans, but this type of tragedy is surprisingly common, a top cardiologist tells Newsmax Health.

Some 300,000 Americans die each year from sudden cardiac arrest, which often strikes without symptoms or any other warning.

"Unfortunately, I see this all the time. People die before they can even reach the hospital, and there is nothing that I can do to save them," says Chauncey Crandall, M.D., head of cardiac transplantation at the world-renowned Palm Beach Cardiovascular Clinic.

The acclaimed actor, star of HBO's *The Sopranos*, died last month at age 51 while vacationing in Rome with his family. His 13-year-old son found him collapsed on the floor of his hotel room. He was still alive but was pronounced dead by the time he reached the hospital, only a few minutes away.

Many people don't take action to reduce their heart attack risk until after they start feeling symptoms, says Crandall.

This can be a deadly mistake.

“James Gandolfini’s death should serve as a warning that if you have risk factors for heart disease, you may never get a warning sign of a heart attack in time to save you,” says Crandall, author of the Heart Health Report newsletter. “Any cardiologist could see he was a walking time bomb.”

First, there was the actor’s weight. He was reportedly 275 pounds at 6-foot-1. “He carried his extra weight in his belly, which greatly increases the risk for heart disease, diabetes and metabolic syndrome, all of which are significant risk factors,” Crandall says.

Also, there were reports Gandolfini downed a huge meal of fried prawns and foie gras, along with copious amounts of alcohol, just hours before he died. “Digesting so much rich food creates a massive overload on the heart, plus the fat in the meal causes the heart’s arteries to narrow and the blood itself to thicken, which can cause a heart-attack-causing blood clot to form,” Crandall says.

In addition, the actor had just toured the Vatican with his son. It may have been too much exercise for the out-of-shape actor, Crandall says.

In addition, Gandolfini was a smoker, known for his love of cigars, “which do just as much harm as cigarettes.”

Another tip-off to Gandolfini’s fate was that he was a snorer, likely suffering from sleep apnea. Production of *The Sopranos* was reportedly shut down briefly one day because technicians couldn’t find the source of a mysterious rumbling sound on the video. Eventually, set workers traced it back to a napping Gandolfini, who was snoring loudly.

“Snoring is a key symptom of sleep apnea, which is a very common sleep disorder that greatly increases heart attack risk,” Crandall says. “Also, even the fact that he napped was

a tip-off to the type of excessive daytime sleepiness this disorder causes.

“James Gandolfini teaches us that you may have success in life, but if you don’t have your health, you have nothing.”

Here are Crandall’s top steps to prevent sudden cardiac death:

- Get as close to your ideal weight as possible.
- Control high blood pressure.
- Control cholesterol.
- Get tested for diabetes.
- Quit smoking.
- Exercise regularly, starting off in moderation.
- If you snore or suffer from excessive daytime sleepiness, see your primary care physician for a referral to a reputable sleep clinic to test for sleep apnea.
- If you are a man over 40 or a woman in your mid-50s or older, see your primary care physician for a workup that includes cardiac testing.

For the original article, visit .