



**5-POINT PLAN > PICK UP CARDIAC PROBLEMS IN A HEARTBEAT OR FIVE**

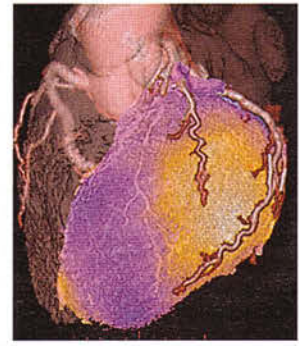
When it comes to heart disease, prevention is decidedly preferable to cure. And now Sydney radiologist Dr Leonard Bank has plugged in his new-generation ultra-low dose GE computerised tomography (CT) scanner — the first of its kind in Australia, and indeed outside the US — it's now also easier, cheaper and comfier.

Older CT scanners have the feel of a pizza oven. You lie down and slide through a hole into a sort of cave, where you're subjected to up to 25 millisieverts of radiation for a coronary angiogram. That's not healthy. This one uses a tenth of that or less, and you just go under a slim bridge — there's no oven.

Blood vessels are tricky little devils, automatically dilating to compensate for the early-stage build-up of cholesterol and fats. That leaves such problems invisible to normal machines, which draw information from changes in interior diameter. This one shows actual build-ups on the interior surface, helping pick up problems early. That's important because it's this soft cholesterol plaque that a) is dangerous, and b) responds well to early dissolution treatment.

So what's it like? First they take your blood pressure and pulse — the lower the heartbeat, the lower the radiation dosage required. The actual read time is five heartbeats. Then, like a McCain Hawaiian, you're out the other end in 5-10 minutes — but barely thawed, let alone crispy round the edges. And your referring GP gets almost instant results, via a website.

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**What does it take to join the fast-growing centenarian club? David Smiedt has a few suggestions.**

**A HUNDRED GAMES**, 100 runs, 100 years... in life as in sport, the century occupies a special place. To this day, citizens of the old British Empire receive a congratulatory message from Her Majesty on their 100th birthday. But reaching three figures may not be so special for much longer if current trends continue. Centenarians are now the fastest-growing demographic group across much of the developed world. And there's a few simple things you can do to stake your claim on a sheet of Buck House letterhead.

**> A little stress is a good thing** Nothing like it to build resilience. According to biologist Joan Smith-Sonneborn of the University of Wyoming, small doses of so-called stressors like poison or radiation or excessive heat help amp up natural repair mechanisms to fix not just initial stressor damage, but other areas too. Calorie restriction is a great low-level stressor. So, if studies of the lifespans of radiologists and nuclear shipyard workers are anything to go by, is exposure to nuclear activity.

**> Bachelor boys take note** Maybe your mother is right: perhaps it's time you found that special someone and settled down. Marriage actually helps you live longer. Some studies suggest a married man could outlive his single mates by seven years. What's more, Linda Waite, University of Chicago professor of sociology and director of the Center on Ageing, says a married man who smokes

more than a pack a day is likely to live longer than a divorced one who doesn't smoke. Apparently, it's all about continued interaction with someone who cares for you.

**> Come to where the action is** Although the jury is still out on the causes — location, lifestyle or genetics — it's clear there are certain spots across the globe where locals can fairly expect to exceed their nation's average life expectancy by a sizeable margin. Most developed countries average 10-12 centenarians per 100,000 people. Yet in Okinawa, Japan, you'll find 34. The county of Bama in China has 24, while the Canadian province of Nova Scotia and Hawaii have 21 and 20 respectively.

**> You don't have to be a saint** But it is important to choose your indulgence wisely. Smoking's out, but wine can be greatly beneficial, the antioxidants from the fruit, reducing the risk of heart disease.

Chocolate's another winner. It contains compounds called flavonoids which have been proven to lower blood pressure and cut the risk of a stroke. The darker the chocolate the better.

**> Life: be in it** You've got to hand it to those nuns — they know how to stick around. At the convent of School Sisters on Notre Dame in Mankato, Minnesota, one in ten makes it to triple figures. Why? They never retire. No matter how old they get, they fill their days with a combination of mental and

physical stimuli — things like gardening, crosswords, reading, walking, handicrafts and paintball. Okay, maybe not the paintball.

**> You gotta laugh** Boston University geriatrician Tom Perls told *New Scientist* that one of the most common traits among those who live to 100 is gregariousness — they're fun to be with. Laughter is a great way to keep levels of the stress hormone cortisol down. Meditation is too. But it's not as much fun as *Shaun of the Dead* or *Spinal Tap*.

**> Less rubbish, more life** Diet matters — in quantity as much as quality. In 2006, researchers from Louisiana State University found people who ate 25 per cent less than usual for three months reported drops in blood insulin levels, body temperature and DNA damage.

Upping the fruit and vegetable intake helps, too. Anything green — of the edible variety, not the smokable — has been shown to keep the brain sharp.

**> Novelty value** New skills and experiences in life don't just keep the mind dextrous — they boost the body's faculties in fighting off disease. A University of California study discovered that rats given mazes to solve and toys to play with lived 50 per cent longer than those without such stimulation.

So get off your backsides and stay there. Because in life as in sport, making the ton is a matter of giving yourself the best chance to do so. **GQ**

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