CAN NARROWED ARTERIES ACTUALLY IMPROVE?

YES. RESEARCHERS HAVE MEASURED IT.

82% of patients in the intensive lifestyle group showed movement toward reversal of coronary narrowing after 1 year in a small randomized trial, with no cholesterol-lowering drugs. The usual-care group got worse.

Ornish et al. · The Lancet · 1990 [1]

WHAT DID THEY CHANGE?

- **A low-fat vegetarian diet**
- **Moderate exercise**
- **Stress management**
- **Quitting smoking**

It was a comprehensive program, not diet alone.

WHAT SHOULD YOU ASK YOUR CARDIOLOGIST?

1. **Could an intensive lifestyle program help improve my coronary artery disease?** [1,2]

2. **Am I eligible for intensive cardiac rehabilitation?** [3]

3. **How will we measure whether my disease is improving?**

4. **What dietary changes have the strongest scientific support?** [4,5]

5. **If my health improves, could we reassess my medications?**

2.5× the cardiac events per person in the usual-care group after 5 years. Artery narrowing improved 7.9% with lifestyle and got 27.7% worse with usual care (same randomized trial).

Ornish et al. · JAMA · 1998 [2]

! **Work with your doctor, not around them. Never stop a medication on your own.**

BOTTOM LINE Heart disease can go in reverse. A plant-based lifestyle program was the first proven in a randomized trial to do it, without cholesterol drugs. Most patients, not all.

MORE OF THE EVIDENCE

- Ornish, 5 years later (randomized): artery narrowing improved 7.9% with the lifestyle program and worsened 27.7% with usual care. The usual-care group had about 2.5 times the cardiac events per person. [2]
- Esselstyn (nonrandomized): of 177 heart patients who stuck with whole-food, plant-based eating with no added oil, 1 (0.6%) had a major event in about 3.7 years. Of 21 who did not stick with it, 13 (62%) had events. [5]
- Cholesterol: in one month, a plant-based "portfolio" diet cut LDL 28.6%. A statin plus a low-fat diet cut it 30.9%, not significantly different. [6]
- Across 10 long-term studies, vegetarians had a 25% lower risk of getting or dying of heart disease. [7]

- Stents: for stable heart disease, a stent did not lower death or heart attack vs. good medical care (19.0% vs. 18.5%). During a heart attack, opening the artery saves lives. [8,9]

> **Keep in mind:** Small trials, only some randomized, with strict programs. Chest pain right now? Call 911.

> **"Heart disease nearly killed me. I was told it could not be reversed. The research says otherwise.**
> Lex Frasure, HealthyAgingWithLex.com (not a medical professional)

WE TAKE ZERO PRESCRIPTIONS.

That's our choice, not a rule for you. Some prescriptions save lives, like antibiotics for an infection. If you are not changing your diet, stay on the medications your doctor prescribes. If you go plant-based, keep up with your blood work. That way your doctor can safely reduce your medications or take you off them altogether.

I'm not anti-medicine. I'm pro-health.

Don't take my word for any of this. Check it with your favorite AI, read the original studies, then bring them to your doctor.

NOTES FROM MY APPOINTMENT

DATE AND DOCTOR

WHAT WE AGREED TO TRY

WHEN WE WILL RECHECK

SOURCES

[1] Ornish D, et al. The Lancet, 1990. Can lifestyle changes reverse coronary heart disease? The Lifestyle Heart Trial.

Scan for all free guides

https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/1973470/

[2] Ornish D, et al. JAMA, 1998. Intensive lifestyle changes for reversal of coronary heart disease. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9863851/

[3] Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Intensive Cardiac Rehabilitation (ICR) Programs. https://www.cms.gov/medicare/coverage/approved-facilities-trials-registries/cardiac-rehab-programs

[4] Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. Heart Disease: Boost Heart Health With a Plant-Based Diet. https://www.pcrm.org/health-topics/heart-disease

[5] Esselstyn CB Jr, et al. Journal of Family Practice, 2014. A way to reverse CAD? https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25198208/

[6] Jenkins DJA, et al. JAMA, 2003. Effects of a dietary portfolio of cholesterol-lowering foods vs lovastatin on serum lipids and C-reactive protein. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12876093/

[7] Dinu M, et al. Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition, 2017. Vegetarian, vegan diets and multiple health outcomes: a systematic review with meta-analysis of observational studies. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26853923/

[8] Boden WE, et al. New England Journal of Medicine, 2007. Optimal medical therapy with or without PCI for stable coronary disease (COURAGE). https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17387127/

[9] Keeley EC, et al. The Lancet, 2003. Primary angioplasty versus intravenous thrombolytic therapy for acute myocardial infarction: a quantitative review of 23 randomised trials. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12517460/

Lex Frasure is not a medical professional. This guide is not medical advice. More free guides: HealthyAgingWithLex.com/questions-for-your-doctor