

6 ways to keep your heart healthy

Cardiologist who created South Beach diet shares tips on healthy living

By Arthur Agatston, MD

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I'm 62 and, thankfully, have never been hospitalized, nor can I remember calling in sick. I still work 12-hour days, walk the golf course, hit the heavy bag, and, not too long ago, even played ice hockey. Other than some minor colds, flus, and heartburn, I have been very healthy, and I take no regular medications. How I've managed this isn't a secret. My philosophy is in my books. But for the November issue of *Prevention*, I want to summarize it for you — what I eat, how I exercise and beat stress, even my own advice that I struggle with. Here's my personal Rx — feel free to make it your own:

Eat three squares and a snack

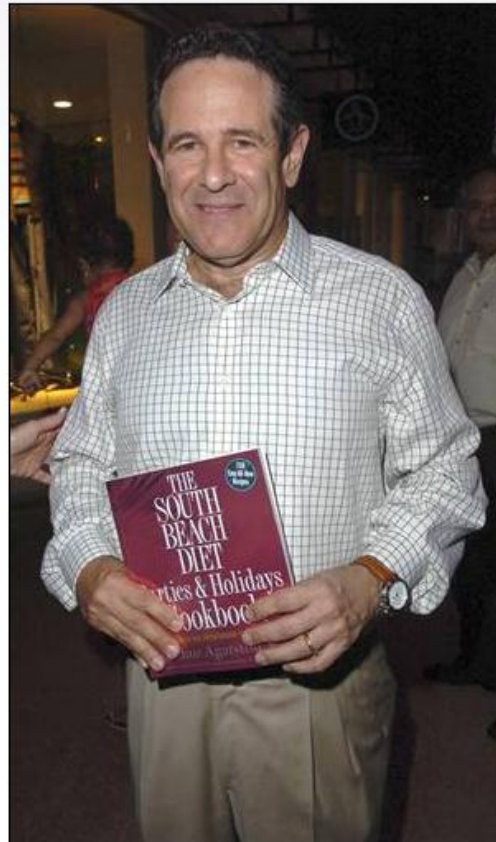
I start most days with a three-egg omelet (one yolk and whites) and some green tea with a scoop of Benefiber (a natural fiber supplement). For lunch, I usually order baked salmon and grilled veggies from a nearby restaurant. I never eat fast food. And for dinner, my wife, Sari, typically makes fish or chicken with veggies. We eat little starch at home. If I get hungry during the day or when I'm traveling, I'll have a mozzarella stick, fruit, wasabi-coated soy nuts, other nuts, or a high-fiber bar.

Indulge in moderation

I love dark chocolate. I keep a stash in the office and usually eat a piece after lunch. I try to limit myself to that single daily indulgence, although I also have a weakness for rugelach, a rich pastry my wife buys when our boys come home from college. If I'm lucky, they consume most of it before I have the opportunity to yield to temptation.

Exercise early and regularly

On weekdays, I'm up and in my home gym by 6:15 am. Three days a week, I use a machine called the Power Plate, which vibrates as I do various exercises. It helps warm up my old bones, while building balance and core strength. Then I'll do Pilates. This workout normally lasts an hour. The other two weekdays I'll do 20 to 30 minutes of interval training on an elliptical machine. This type of high/ low intensity is great for the heart. On weekends, I golf, play tennis, or occasionally do a boxing workout. ([Follow Dr. Agatston's 3-Point Plan to protect your heart's health.](#))



Gustavo Caballero / Getty Images file

Dr. Arthur Agatston offers his personal Rx for keeping your heart healthy.

Go easy on the supplements

I believe a good diet will provide most of the essential nutrients I need. So, besides Benefiber, the only supplements I take are fish oil, turmeric, and Cold-Eeze when I travel. The omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil protect the heart, while some doctors I respect believe the curcumin in turmeric helps prevent Alzheimer's disease. Cold-Eeze contains zinc, which may prevent colds or lessen their symptoms.

Prioritize sleep

I get at least 7 hours per night. I also believe in naps. If I have an evening social engagement, I'll nap for 30 minutes before going out.

Good news for your heart

Read Agatston's blog for the latest advice and ask him questions at prevention.com/dragatston.

Cultivate closeness

I've been married for 28 years, and my wife and I have not only a wide circle of friends but also two much-loved sons who come home often. We all try to spend a few weeks vacationing together in the summer. Studies show that a strong social and family network is not only helpful for your general health but also for preventing heart disease. ([Click here for Dr. Agatston's healthy heart video series.](#))

Arthur Agatston, MD, an associate professor of medicine at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, is the author of "The South Beach Diet Supercharged: Faster Weight Loss and Better Health for Life." He maintains a cardiology practice and research foundation in Miami Beach, FL.