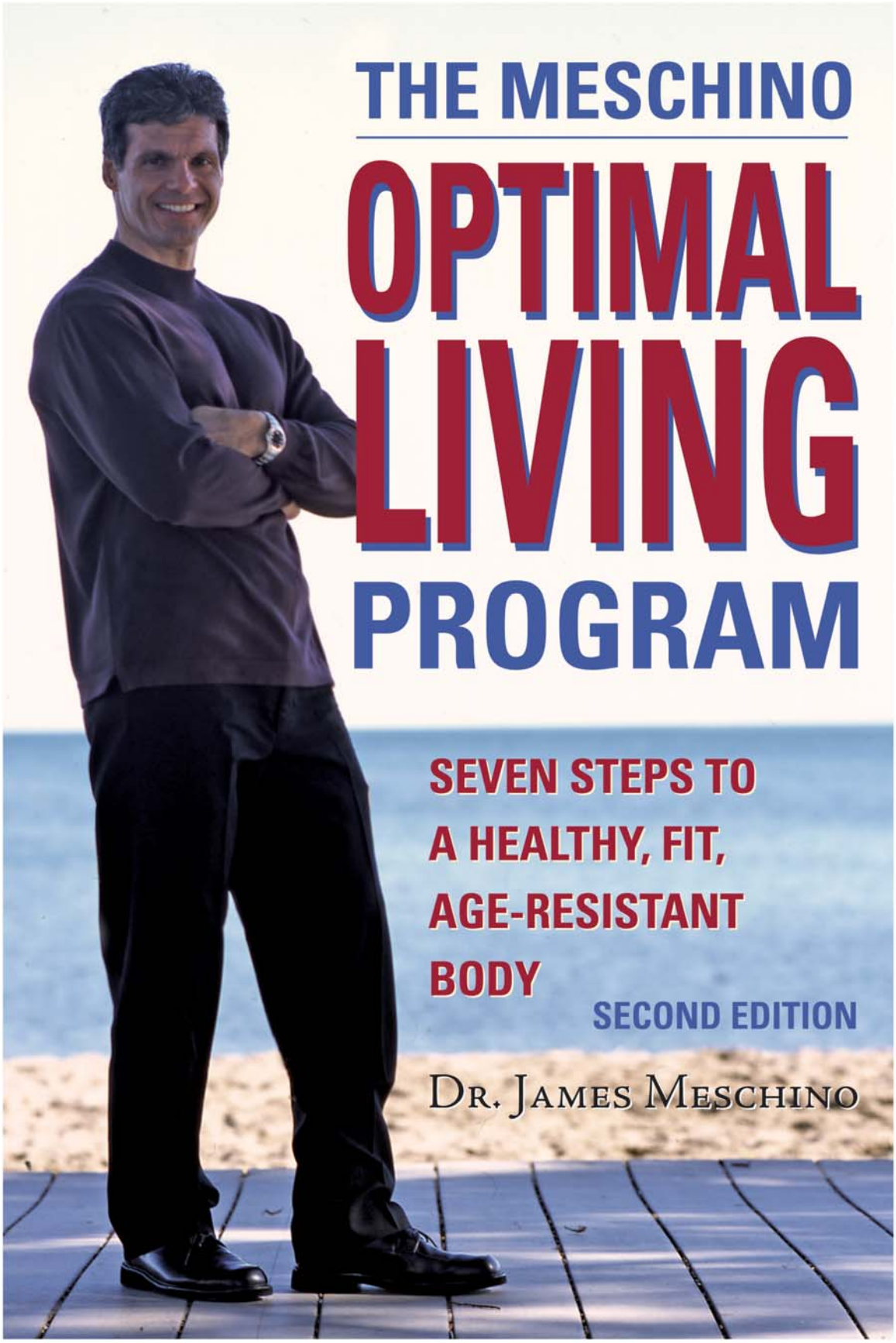
THE MESCHINO
OPTIMAL LIVING PROGRAM
SEVEN STEPS TO A HEALTHY, FIT, AGE-RESISTANT BODY
SECOND EDITION
Dr. James Meschino

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I am deeply indebted to all of the researchers whose studies I cite and reference throughout The Meschino Optimal Living Program. It is your work that has shown us that attention to specific dietary practices, targeted supplementation and exercise, can slow the aging process, reduce risk of many digenerative diseases and enhance our quality of life.

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Introduction

Welcome to *The Meschino Optimal Living Program*. The system described in these pages is the culmination of 25 years of personal research and clinical experience. Its purpose is to provide you with a proven, life-long strategy for maintaining your ideal weight, enhancing your fitness and energy levels, improving your cardiovascular health, and reducing your risk of degenerative and age-related diseases. Easy to follow and highly effective, this nutrition, exercise and supplementation program equips you with both the knowledge and the plan of action to achieve the healthy, well-functioning body that nature intended.

Modern research has long established that proper eating habits, regular exercise, and the right nutritional supplements can slow or reverse many aspects of the aging process. The benefits are legion: the maintenance of immune function, bone density, cognitive ability, and sexual virility; a radiant appearance, increased energy, and a sense of well-being; the prevention or postponement of the most common diseases that plague the western world; a longer, more productive and rewarding life.

I wrote this book with one truth in mind: the simple daily effort required to optimize the health of your body is well within your ability, your means, and your timetable. And isn't good health worth that effort? If you become sick or disabled, the goals you have set for yourself will almost certainly become more difficult to

achieve and the social, recreational and athletic activities you enjoy less pleasurable, perhaps even impossible.

For more than two decades, I have taught the principles of this program to healthcare professionals throughout Canada and the United States and have incorporated them into wellness initiatives for numerous corporations. I have seen excellent clinical results among the patients treated in my own nutritional consulting practice. Unfortunately, many North Americans either do not realize the benefits of this combined approach to nutrition, exercise and supplementation, or they are willing to live with the consequences of ignoring the basic laws of healthy living.

We are currently experiencing an epidemic of degenerative diseases, many of which are preventable or can be greatly reduced in severity, according to top experts from around the world. For example, data published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute in 1996 by Dr. Walter Willet of Harvard University indicated that between 70 and 90% of all cancers could be avoided through more prudent dietary and lifestyle behaviors. It is well accepted within the medical community that vascular disease leading to heart attack and stroke, the leading killers in our society, is primarily caused by poor eating and lifestyle habits. The same is true for the alarming increases in the incidence of Type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis. Furthermore, there is evidence that deficiencies of certain nutrients are behind many cases of cataracts and macular degeneration of the eye, as well the development of age-related dementia and cognitive decline.

These facts illustrate that in the majority of cases, the serious health afflictions we fear are not the fault of our genes but rather the way we choose to live our lives. And that means there is something you can do about it: choose the right foods, commit to the right exercise program and add the right supplements to your diet, and you will significantly reduce your risk of these afflictions and dramatically slow the effects of aging.

Introduction

In the pages that follow, I'll introduce you to the Two Staple Nutrition System, a plan that ensures that you'll eat the foods your body needs to be healthy, lean and disease-resistant. I'll show you how to incorporate an appropriate and personalized exercise program into your life. Plus, I'll explain precisely what nutritional supplement combinations you should take every day and at every stage of your life to counter aging and protect against disease. Scientists tell us that with proper attention to diet, exercise, specific supplements and other lifestyle measures, we have the potential to live at least 120 years and to enjoy a high quality of life throughout this lifespan. *The Meschino Optimal Living Program* explains the science on which these statements are based and shows you how to translate science and clinical knowledge into a practical, daily program that is accessible and available to everyone who truly cares about their health and wellness.

STEP 1

Build Your Nutrition Foundation

The first step in building a lifestyle program for a healthy, fit, age-resistant body is to understand how various nutrients work in your body. Nutrients can either promote your health and prevent disease, or detract from your health and encourage the development of degenerative diseases leading to premature death. Understand how various nutrients affect your health, and you can visualize what happens inside your body every time you consume carbohydrate foods, high-protein foods, saturated fat, cholesterol, omega-3 fats, monounsaturated fats, and other nutrients. *So* let's spend some time examining how your body processes the foods you eat.

Carbohydrates

Thanks to the recent high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet craze, there is a great deal of confusion about carbohydrate foods. Do they promote health, delay aging, and prevent disease? What is their role in weight loss?

The first thing to appreciate is that many carbohydrate foods are provided to us by the good earth: fruits and vegetables; grains (such as rice); cereal products (for example, wheat); and legumes, including beans and peas. Naturally-occurring carbohydrates can be manipulated by food processing to make the modified carbohydrates that are found in breads, breakfast cereals, pasta, crackers, jams and

jellies, and sugar. Although the different carbohydrates we consume vary in terms of their health-promoting features, all carbohydrate foods, including white sugar, have one thing in common: they all provide the building blocks from which your body makes glucose. Glucose is the simple sugar molecule that serves as an essential energy source for virtually every cell in the body. If your blood sugar level drops, meaning the level of glucose in the blood is abnormally low, then the cells can no longer function at their best. This is why you are likely to feel shaky, light-headed, irritable, and unable to concentrate, if you go past your usual mealtime without eating. These symptoms are a direct result of low blood glucose levels.

Your body digests carbohydrate foods and produces glucose for energy in a highly efficient way. After ingestion, your digestive enzymes go to work to release the individual sugars in these foods, allowing them to pass into the bloodstream. Once in the bloodstream, carbohydrate sugars travel to the liver where they are converted into glucose by the action of specific liver enzymes. The glucose is returned to the bloodstream, where it becomes a continuous source of energy for the body's cells. It doesn't matter if you eat a potato, a bowl of rice, a plate of pasta, a piece of fruit, or a salad—the carbohydrates in these foods will all be converted into glucose, which will help power most of the body's cells. Some of the glucose will be used immediately and some stored in the liver for future use. Between meals, the liver releases this stored glucose, called glycogen, to the bloodstream to meet the energy demands of your body.

If you fail to consume adequate amounts of carbohydrate foods and deprive your cells of energy, you may develop the condition known as hypoglycemia, which means "low blood sugar." Hypoglycemia affects the brain and nervous system quite dramatically, because brain cells and other nerves rely on glucose for up to 95 percent of their energy needs. As described earlier, the symptoms of hypoglycemia include fatigue, irritability, nervousness, a dull

headache, and so forth. Thus it is imperative to maintain blood glucose levels by consuming the right amount of carbohydrates each day.

Of course some carbohydrate foods are better for you than others. Not only do they provide carbohydrate energy, they may also contain protective nutrients that help defend us against cancer and heart disease. Remember that some carbohydrate foods release their sugars faster than others and are therefore absorbed more rapidly into the bloodstream. Carbohydrate foods that are absorbed too quickly are more likely to be converted into fat and triglycerides within the body and can also produce a sugar rush, from too sudden a rise in blood sugar. This can result in weight gain, a rebound drop in blood sugar (hypoglycemia) or an increase in the risk of developing diabetes. Athletes may want to consume carbohydrates that are absorbed quickly into the bloodstream, as doing so can enhance performance in many endurance events. But day to day, most of your carbohydrates should come from carbohydrate foods that are absorbed more slowly from the intestinal tract and that contain the protective nutrients that reduce the risk of cancer, heart disease, and other degenerative diseases.

The Right Amount and Right Type of Carbohydrate Foods

Your body requires sufficient carbohydrate energy each day to sustain its peak functional state, but that's not to say that you can eat unlimited carbohydrate calories without consequences. Overconsuming carbohydrate calories will increase your body fat and your blood triglyceride levels, those fats found in the blood that are associated with heart disease risk. However, avoiding carbohydrate foods is an equally critical mistake that many carbohydrate-phobic dieters are making these days. The key is to consume the right amount and right type of carbohydrate foods,

appropriate to your lifestyle and activity level. Used wisely, carbohydrate foods will elevate your energy level, boost your defenses against disease, help you attain and maintain your ideal body weight without feeling deprived, and improve your performance in most exercise and athletic endeavors. Depending on your level of physical activity, carbohydrate foods should make up 45 to 65 percent of your total calories. The more active you are, the greater the requirement for carbohydrate consumption. If you are more sedentary, then you cannot consume the same quantity or percentage of carbohydrate calories as a highly active person without experiencing weight gain and other health problems.

Over the years nutritionists and dieticians have told us that there are two types of carbohydrates to be aware of: complex carbohydrates and simple carbohydrates, sometimes referred to as low-glycemic and high-glycemic carbohydrate foods, respectively. Yet this approach to carbohydrate identification does not tell the whole story. If you are truly interested in living as long as possible in a healthy, fit, age-resistant body, then you have to understand carbohydrate foods on a more sophisticated level.

I have broken down carbohydrate foods into five categories in order for you to fully understand how carbohydrate choices impact your health. Some categories should be emphasized more than others, but all five have their place in human nutrition and optimal wellness. In order of their beneficial importance to a healthy diet, they are:

Category 1 – Low-Glycemic, Nutrient-Dense Carbohydrates

Category 2 – High-Glycemic, Nutrient-Dense Carbohydrates

Category 3 – High-Fiber Grains and Starchy Carbohydrates

Category 4 – Low-Fiber Grains and Starchy Carbohydrates

Category 5 – Refined Sugars

Category 1—Low-Glycemic, Nutrient-Dense Carbohydrates

These carbohydrate foods:

- slowly release their carbohydrates into the bloodstream from the intestinal tract;
- are low in total calories and do not readily encourage weight gain or blood sugar imbalances;
- are a rich source of vitamins, minerals and other protective nutrients, known as phytonutrients, which help reduce the risk of cancer, heart disease, and other degenerative diseases.

Category 1 carbohydrates are extremely beneficial to the body, and should be a main focus of your daily carbohydrate intake. The choices include asparagus, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, bok choy, rapini, collard greens, turnips, tomatoes, peppers, onions, cantaloupe, granny smith apples, radicchio, romaine lettuce, beans, peas, and lentils. Many of these contain powerful protective nutrients. Try to consume at least three servings of the following carbohydrate foods each day.

Cruciferous Vegetables (broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, bok choy, turnips)—individuals with high intakes of these vegetables throughout their lifetimes show a significant reduction in the incidence of colon cancer, breast cancer, and prostate cancer. These vegetables contain indole-3-carbinol, which enhances the ability of our detoxification enzymes to neutralize and remove carcinogens from the bloodstream and the cells. Indole-3-carbinol also promotes the conversion of estrone, one of the body's estrogen hormones, into 2-hydroxy-estrone—instead of the potentially harmful 16-hydroxy-estrone, which is associated with an increased risk of breast cancer. Indole-3-carbinol may block the

synthesis of estrone hormone in fat cells, which is associated with a reduction in risk of breast and prostate cancer. I suggest that you eat cruciferous vegetables every day.

Tomatoes—tomatoes are a rich source of the antioxidant lycopene. Higher intakes of lycopene have been linked to significant reductions in prostate cancer and cervical cancer. Lycopene is a sister compound to beta-carotene and is one of many carotenoids found in fruits and vegetables. It gives tomatoes their red color and red grapefruit its pink tinge. Two extensive U.S. studies, the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study and the Physicians' Health Study, suggest that higher intakes of lycopene, mostly from tomatoes and tomato products (such as pasta sauces) and higher blood levels of lycopene were linked to a lower risk of prostate cancer. Lycopene has been shown to concentrate in the male prostate gland, where it provides antioxidant protection against free radicals—aggressive compounds that randomly attack body tissues—and exhibits other anti-cancer effects. These effects of lycopene are similarily important in the prevention of cervical cancer in women. Lycopene is a fat-soluble nutrient and therefore must be consumed with a bit of fat in order to be absorbed into the bloodstream. Use olive oil in your pasta sauce. Or eat salads that are dressed with olive oil-based dressings. (Drinking tomato juice on an empty stomach or eating tomatoes with no concomitant fat consumption means no lycopene will be absorbed from the intestinal tract into the bloodstream.) A daily serving of tomatoes or tomato-based products is highly recommended.

Spinach, Asparagus and Other Dark Green Leafy Vegetables—these vegetables contain lutein and zeaxanthin, two carotenoids that help prevent macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness in individuals over the age of 55 in the United States and Canada. Lutein and zeaxanthin concentrate in the back of the eye, near the optic nerve, protecting it against damage by free radicals induced by sunlight. Studies show that a higher lifetime

intake of lutein and zeaxanthin lowers the risk of macular degeneration and cataracts, and that lutein and zeaxanthin supplements can help slow the progression of macular degeneration, especially when taken along with other antioxidant supplements like vitamin C, vitamin E, selenium, and zinc.

Mostly dark green vegetables also contain beta-carotene and folic acid. Beta-carotene is an important antioxidant that may help reduce cancer risk, and folic acid is required for normal DNA synthesis in every cell in the body. Many individuals in North America who do not take a daily multivitamin and mineral supplement suffer marginal deficiency in folic acid; that makes them more prone to certain colon and breast cancers. In women of childbearing age, there is increased risk of giving birth to children with spinal birth defects, such as spina bifida. Consuming dark green leafy vegetables—not iceberg lettuce—should also be part of your daily carbohydrate intake strategy.

Beans, Peas and Lentils—these legumes contain lignans and plant-based sterols, which provide many disease-prevention benefits to the body. Lignans help block the overproduction of estrone hormone in fat cells, which in turn is associated with a reduced incidence of breast and prostate cancer. Plant-based sterols, such as beta-sitosterol, are known to block the conversion of testosterone into dihydrotestosterone, an effect that has been linked to the prevention of prostate enlargement and prostate cancer. Plant sterols have also been demonstrated to block the replication of certain breast cancer cells, improve immune function, and help keep blood cholesterol in a safe range by preventing the absorption of cholesterol and bile acids from the intestinal tract into the bloodstream. Furthermore, beans, peas, and lentils contain the kind of fiber that improves bowel function (thereby reducing the risk of colon cancer) and that lowers blood cholesterol (thus helping prevent heart attack and stroke).

Soybeans and related soy products, like tofu, miso soup, and soy nuts, contain isoflavones, which are strongly associated with a reduced risk of breast and prostate cancer. Since many soy products are high enough in protein to be classified as protein foods, we will examine them at greater length in the protein section of this chapter.

Onions and Garlic—onions and garlic, allium-containing vegetables, have a specialized group of disulfide compounds that exhibit potent anti-cancer, anti-heart disease, and immune-stimulating properties.

Category 2—High-Glycemic, Nutrient-Dense Carbohydrates

These carbohydrates:

- contain a lot of simple sugars that are absorbed quickly into the bloodstream, which can produce a sugar rush or hasten their conversion into fat, if they are consumed in excess; (This is the only negative feature of Category 2 carbohydrates.)
- are a rich source of many protective nutrients—such as carotenes, flavonoids, vitamins, and minerals—which are important in the prevention of cancer, heart disease, and other degenerative diseases;
- are a good source of cholesterol-lowering fiber.

Category 2 carbohydrates are found in all sweet-tasting fruits (oranges, clementines, nectarines, peaches, plums, grapes, pineapple, honeydew melon, watermelon, strawberries, blueberries, cranberries, kiwi, papaya, mango, dates, figs, dried fruits); fruit juices (which should always be diluted at least 50 percent with water); all sweet vegetables (squash, yams, sweet potatoes, carrots, corn, beets); and jams and jellies.

Factor at least one or two servings of these foods into your daily carbohydrate intake:

Orange-yellow fruits and vegetables—are generally high in beta-carotene and other carotenoids, such as lutein, which provide antioxidant protection to many parts of the body. Studies indicate that people with high intakes of orange-yellow fruits and vegetables and dark green leafy vegetables have a significantly lower incidence of various cancers, heart disease, cataracts, or macular degeneration of the eye. In addition, one-sixth of all the beta-carotene consumed can be converted into vitamin A by your body, if your body requires more. Vitamin A serves many important functions and has also been shown to exhibit anti-cancer properties.

Dark Blue Fruits and Vegetables—the dark blue colour of blueberries, bilberries, and blue-purple grapes is due to the presence of specific flavonoids. These flavonoid compounds provide antioxidant effects; protect the eye from ultraviolet light damage; and can strengthen the blood vessels, helping to prevent ruptures, hemorrhage, and the formation of varicose veins.

Jams, Jellies, Apples, Peaches, Pears, and Plums—these carbohydrate foods are an excellent source of cholesterol-lowering fiber, which helps prevent heart disease and stroke.

Category 3—High-Fiber Grains and Starchy Carbohydrates

These carbohydrates:

- contain a lot of carbohydrate calories per serving. Unless you are exercising regularly at a high level of intensity, over consumption of Category 3 carbohydrates will hasten their conversion to fat and lead to a rise in body fat and triglyceride levels. People who work out regularly and are