- Periodic health examinations

Love your heart by getting a check-up

BusinessMirror · 22 Jan 2026 · B4 · By Maridol Ranoa-bismark Contributor

IS your blood pressure soaring? Take garlic, then add honey for good measure. Others reach out for an omega-3 tablet after a meal. But do you know that natural solutions don't work? That is according to Dr. Jose Paolo Prado, Director of The Medical City's Acute Myocardial Infarction (Heart Attack) Clinical Care Program.

"Taking garlic for lower blood pressure doesn't work," he says. He calls the belief an urban legend and warns against relying on anecdotes alone. Besides, garlic in the diet may lead to bad breath. So what do we do?

Prado wants everyone, especially heart patients, to see a doctor instead. There's a big difference between a natural remedy and a conventional one, he explains. The latter underwent clinical trials and is FDA (Food and Drug Administration) approved.

Blessing of science

YES, he admits, it's big pharma that creates the pills. But its edge lies in the fact that it bears the blessing of science and the surety of confirmed studies.

Take the case of apple cider vinegar, he adds. This popular natural remedy contains sugar. Its vinegar content makes apple cider highly acidic and harmful to the enamel that protects the teeth. Besides, he adds, one has yet to see a documented study on thousands of heart patients to show how apple cider lowers blood pressure.

Omega-3 is another case in point. Prado advises eating lots of fatty fish instead of Omega-3 supplements that promise to lower blood pressure.

The solution, he insists, lies not in health fads but in lifestyle changes. Do you want a healthy heart for you and your family? Prado goes for skipping fried food. This way, you need not worry about using heart-friendly cooking oil.

Fried food

CAN'T avoid frying? Choose the lesser evil. Opt for corn oil, olive oil (except for high temperature cooking, which can produce cancer-causing elements), soybean, vegetable, corn and sunflower oil. Limit use of coconut oil, palm oil and butter for cooking because they have high fat content. And of course, stay away from deep frying. Steam, broil, bake and grill instead. These good lifestyle practices spell a healthy diet that makes vitamin or mineral supplements unnecessary.

Thus, Prado asks, "Why take supplements if your diet is good?"

He adds that some supplements may do more harm than good. Take vitamins A, D, E and K. These fat-soluble vitamins lodge themselves in the liver, fatty tissues, and muscles. Worse, an overdose can cause toxicity or organ damage.

Prado also warns that there's such a thing as vitamin D overdose, which comes from taking too much of the "sunshine pill."

Get out and enjoy the sun, which the Philippines has plenty of. But don't expose yourself at midday (11 am to 3 pm), when the rays of the sun are at its strongest.

Eat calcium-rich vegetables like broccoli, okra, and others. Take supplements when your Vitamin D level drops, but don't do so forever. Stop when the doctor says your vitamin D level normalizes.

Vitamins C and the B complex are watersoluble and are passed out from the body when we pee. But these have a Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) which has to be followed.

Natural vs synthetic

HOW about combining natural solutions with the pill?

Prado says it depends on what you want to do. It's fine when you want to lower blood pressure. Natural and synthetic solutions can work hand in hand without causing harm.

But lifestyle changes are still the best for your heart, says Prado. He walks the talk and exercises out of habit. That's because he knows those living in so-called blue zones, or countries where people live long, make movement part of their routine.

Lowering stress levels also works wonders. This is where prayer, yoga and meditation, which reduces the stress hormone cortisol, and lowers blood pressure, come in.

Multitasking, chronic sleep deprivation, and lack of social connections, on the other hand, have the opposite effect.

"While the brain can handle multitasking, this can burden it and raise cortisol levels," warns Prado. A millennial who wakes up each morning thinking of the many things he has to do is always high in adrenaline. He's constantly in fight or flight mode. And that, says Prado, can shorten life span.

Access to better health care is also vital. People in the blue zones, observes Prado, enjoy this blessing, which, combined with the above-mentioned natural lifestyle choices, lowers the risk of old age diseases like Alzheimer's and dementia.

So how do you love your heart, this vital organ that can make you live or die? Give it tender loving care the natural way—good sleep, rest, exercise, a healthy diet, the joy of family and friends. At the first sign of trouble, see the doctor and obey his orders about taking pills on time.

Your heart will reward you with many healthy, happy years.