

# Heart Disease



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出版者:

出版时间:2006-10

装帧:

isbn:9780660196190

Heart disease was the biggest pandemic of the twentieth century and remains the number one killer in developed countries. Yet there is still no consensus about its cause. Lifestyle changes like quitting smoking and getting more exercise may not be easy, but there's strong evidence they'll reduce your risk of heart disease. When it comes to diet, things aren't quite so clear. For the past fifty years, the big idea about heart disease has been something called the "diet-heart hypothesis." In a nutshell, it says that diets high in fat, raise cholesterol levels. High cholesterol leads to atherosclerosis, the buildup of fatty plaques in your arteries, which in turn increases your risk of heart disease. So, how do you reduce your risk? Cut down on fats, especially saturated fats; right? Well, maybe not. Our understanding of heart disease is still a work in progress. Cholesterol is just one small part of a complex puzzle. In this enthralling three-part series, Jill Eisen explores the history and politics surrounding our ideas about heart disease.

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