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## TO THE MANOR REBORN

ENGLAND'S GRAND  
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HOTEL AND SPA

Four Destination Medical Spas were reviewed WellMax starts on page 107

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2004  
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THE MANDARIN ORIENTAL, NEW YORK

**PLUS...THE FALL 2004  
WORLDWIDE DIRECTORY OF SPAS**

tion: You don't wear a pouch around your neck, and you don't get a schedule. It's up to you to show up at Cardio Boxing or Power Plunge in the lovely heated 75-foot indoor pool, and nobody will stop you from ordering a double portion of chocolate biscotti cheesecake for dessert. Nobody's going to take you to a restaurant and show you how to handicap the menu, either.

#### WELLMAX AT LA QUINTA

When director Daniel Cosgrove, M.D., talks about "chemical soup," he does not mean something edible. Cosgrove believes that our most serious health risk is excess oxidative stress, a condition that occurs when the body can't handle the amount of free radicals, the

highly unstable molecules that cells generate while making energy.

"Oxygen is really potent stuff," he says. "Free-radical damage is what rusts cars, what makes avocado dip turn brown, what smoking and barbecuing do to meat." Human "rust" is similarly destructive, leading to cellular mutation, tissue breakdown, and compromised immunity. "I've been obsessed with this concept because I was an ER doc for 15 years," says Cosgrove. "I got tired of seeing someone come in with a heart attack, or a funny pain in the shoulder that turned out to be a metastasis from colon cancer. By the time you're symptomatic for most cancers, you're going to die. Why can't we do better, identify these things early and

keep them from happening? Instead of using the Jaws of Life at the bottom of a cliff, why don't we build a guardrail?"

Like Hercule Poirot, Cosgrove hunts for clues to oxidative stress, beginning with the "soup," the risk markers in the blood, including high concentrations of glutathione, the tiny protein (just three amino acids hooked together) that's the body's antioxidant. He believes in "going that extra mile," which means using methods that are still considered "research," such as a blood test for myeloperoxidase, an enzyme that may be an indicator of plaque since it kills bacteria that's been found in the artery-clogging substance. "I don't know if the jury is in yet about reversing damage," he says. "It's like a car: Whatever rusted away in the metal is gone, but you can stop the process and preserve the rest."

La Quinta is big: 800 guest rooms in Spanish-style casitas at the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains. It has a long history as a Hollywood playground. Legend has it that Frank Capra wrote *It Happened One Night* and Irving Berlin wrote "White Christmas" while visiting. Spa treatments reference the area's Native American ancestors and surrounding citrus groves. (A "body facial" called the Orange Blossom Special is an homage to the "orange juice" served in the lobby during Prohibition.) One of the four restaurants, an offshoot of New York's Le Bernardin, serves lemon brown butter on the skate wing. But Cosgrove worked with the chefs at the three other restaurants, where each menu has a color chart explaining how to choose red, orange, yellow, and green foods for their antioxidant benefits.

None of this is meant to be a day at the beach. The WellMax "platinum program" is an exhaustive two-to-three-day diagnostic marathon that

#### CANYON RANCH SEVEN-DAY ULTRAPREVENTION PROGRAM

**Rate:** \$4,500. Includes workshops; classes; medical, lifestyle, and nutrition consultations; body-composition test; and cardiac-stress or bone-density test. \$2,500 allowance toward lab testing, \$330 toward additional medical services.

**Accommodations:** \$5,580 for the minimum six-night stay.

Canyon Ranch in the Berkshires, 165 Kemble St., Lenox, MA 01240; 800-742-9000; [www.canyonranch.com](http://www.canyonranch.com)

#### COOPER AEROBICS CENTER WELLNESS PROGRAM

**Rates:** 4 days, \$2,295; 6 days, \$2,895; 13 days, \$4,295. Includes meals, workshops, classes, and training sessions.

**Accommodations:** \$135–\$335. Tests: Cardiovascular, from \$556; EBT scan, \$660; coronary risk profile, \$860; comprehensive exam, \$2,400.

Cooper Aerobics Center, 12200 Preston Rd., Dallas, TX 75230; 800-444-5192; [www.cooperaerobics.com](http://www.cooperaerobics.com)

#### PRITIKIN SEVEN-DAY LONGEVITY PROGRAM

**Accommodations:** \$3,000–\$7,600, single occupancy; \$5,000–\$9,200, double occupancy. Includes meals, workshops, medical exam and follow-up, stress test, blood panels, and a spa allowance. Optional tests: Body composition, \$195; bone-density scan, \$195; carotid artery ultrasound, \$299; musculoskeletal and biomechanical evaluation, \$285.

Pritikin Longevity Center, 19735 Turnberry Way, Aventura, FL 33180; 800-327-4914 or 800-842-4434; [www.pritikin.com](http://www.pritikin.com)

#### WELLMAX AT LAQUINTA PLATINUM PROGRAM

**Rates:** 2–3 days, \$9,000; 1 day, \$3,100.

**Accommodations:** \$395–\$3,800, high season; \$175–\$1,900, low, double occupancy. Meals extra.

WellMax at LaQuinta, 49-499 Eisenhower Dr., La Quinta, CA 92253; 760-564-5757; [www.wellmax.com](http://www.wellmax.com) or [www.laquintaresort.com](http://www.laquintaresort.com)

includes cardiac-stress, resting-metabolism, and VO<sub>2</sub> Max tests; vision and hearing screenings; a bone-density test, a whole-body MRI, and CT scans of the lungs and coronary arteries; a pelvic or prostate exam; and either virtual or conventional colonoscopy.

Such detective work is meant to catch disease at the very earliest stages. "We put it at a resort and throw in some spa treatments to make it easier," says Cosgrove, "but it's not supposed to be cushy. Somebody has to confront people about their health, and I think you're not being a good doctor if you're too chicken to make them uncomfortable. We say it's the rejuvenation that's going to last. People can make changes that literally save their lives."

And that, all the high-tech diagnostics notwithstanding, may be the most valuable thing ultraprevention spas impart. It's not just pep talk, either. According to a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* earlier this year, the three main causes of mortality in America are tobacco use, inappropriate diet combined with lack of exercise, and intemperate use of alcohol. All involve voluntary behavior. "A lot of our premature morbidity and mortality we're either doing to ourselves or not for ourselves," says Dr. Mitchell, the Cooper medical director. "You better believe genetics and environment have a lot to do with what's going to happen to you, but to a large extent your behaviors are going to determine your health over the long term. Every patient I have is going to die. My hopes are to keep them as healthy as they can be for as long as they can be."

AIMEE LEE BALL is the co-author, with Liz Tilberis, of *No Time to Die* (Little, Brown), a memoir of the former Harper's Bazaar editor's life in fashion and battle with ovarian cancer.

## The Heart of the Matter

**M**ORE MEN AND WOMEN IN THE United States will die of heart disease than any other cause.

Women may clutch their breasts, and men may be preoccupied with their prostates, but statistically neither is nearly as vulnerable as the heart. But it takes some very high technology to catch heart disease early.

"Treadmill testing is a wonderful tool for finding what is called hemodynamically significant heart disease, obstructive heart disease," says Tedd Mitchell, M.D., the medical director of the Cooper Wellness Program. "We use it knowing full well the shortcomings, which have to do with simple flow mechanics from physics. A water pipe has to be blocked off by about 50 percent before you notice any difference in pressure at the spigot. The same thing holds with coronary disease. You can have fairly significant disease and have a normal stress test."

That's why the Cooper Clinic employs electron beam tomography to identify calcified plaque in the coronary arteries. (Plaque formation is an inflammatory immune process that occurs as cholesterol in the arteries leaches calcium from the blood.)

"Imagine a 50-year-old man who's gotten out of the habit of exercising," says Mitchell, "someone who's smoking, overweight, blood pressure's up a little, cholesterol's out of whack. We put him on the treadmill and it's normal. That happens a lot. And I know he's walking out thinking he's bulletproof."

"That's where the EBT scanner has become helpful. A standard CT scan yields two images per second—you can actually hear the machine going clunk-clunk. When Siemens Corporation developed this ultra-fast technology, it was trying to take images faster for folks who had claustrophobia. They went from 2 images per second to 20, and what they found

serendipitously is that the heart, which is just a blur on a CT, shows up at a standstill because of the speed of the film. So then they put in a software program to catch the heart at the same standstill every time. So we have this beautiful noninvasive way of imaging the coronary vessels."

Noninvasive, yes, but EBT is controversial—neither the American Heart Association nor the American College of Cardiology recommends it for people without symptoms or multiple risk factors. The main concern is the radiation administered, the equivalent of 35 chest X-rays—about the dosage a Denver resident receives in a year and twice what the rest of us get. "That's why we use the EBT scanner in age groups where the prevalence of certain diseases is on the rise," says Mitchell, adding that Cooper does not recommend the scan for those under 40.

Almost as important is the high percentage of false positives the test generates, which in turn leads to more tests. "EBT tests are generally not covered by insurance because they're still considered under investigation," says Nieca Goldberg, a cardiologist in New York City and spokesperson for the American Heart Association.

Pritikin holds EBT scanners in contempt, instead using ultrasound because it reveals early thickening of the arteries and soft plaque formation (prior to calcification), which EBT doesn't. The scan, also available at WellMax, takes 30 images per second of the two carotid arteries, the main pipelines of blood to the brain, and the resulting images are sent for automated computer analysis. The benefits can be debated, but the test doesn't involve radiation, and it sure is interesting: When the technician turns up the audio, you hear the blood coursing through your veins, and you get a little sonogram to take home, just like expectant parents.