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A Cesspool of Pollutants Now Is the Time to Clean-up Your Body

Manufactured chemicals permeate every tissue of every person on this planet. The threat from these synthesized chemicals is real – even though you can't see, taste, smell, or touch them, they can rob you of your happiness, family relationships, intelligence, and years of productive life. Two reasons we sometimes fail to make the connection between these manufactured pollutants and disease are: their effects are insidious, taking years to reveal their damage; and not everyone is equally susceptible to injury – genetic strengths and weaknesses determine to a large part whether you will be harmed. Inefficient metabolism and incomplete removal of these toxins from your body place you at great risk of damage. Your greatest defenses are to avoid these pollutants in the first place; and secondarily, to take effective actions to rid your body of these poisonous substances.

Persistent Organic Pollutants

Physical properties of POPs are:

- POPs are toxic and have been linked with serious health effects in humans and other living organisms, even with very low exposure levels. Their sub-lethal effects include reproductive, developmental, and immunological disturbances, and cancer.
- POPs do not break down easily, persisting in the environment and your body for years. Some have half lives (the time for half of the substance to disappear) measured in decades – thus, they remain in water and soil where they are taken up by plants. These plants, and the animals that eat these contaminated plants, provide our food.
- POPs are attracted to and concentrated in the fatty tissues of animals; in other words, they bio-accumulate as they move up the food chain. Estimates are 89% to 99% of the chemical intake into our body is from our food, and most of this is from foods high on the food chain; specifically, meat, poultry, fish, and dairy products.
- POPs travel long distances by way of air and water currents, and affect every part of our planet. All living organisms on Earth now carry measurable levels of POPs in their tissues. They have been found in sea mammals at levels high enough to qualify their bodies as "hazardous waste" under US law.

Well-known sources of these synthetic chemicals are pesticides, herbicides, building materials, and industrial wastes – these substances are collectively referred to as *persistent organic pollutants* (POPs). Before the early decades of the 20th century, POPs were virtually non-existent in our environment.

The absence of these pollutants may be one reason for the robust health exhibited by many grandparents, even when most ate a diet high in meat and dairy products.

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Polluted Foods

Production and distribution of POPs expanded dramatically following World War II to where today nearly 900 active ingredients are found in our food, water, homes, schools, and workplaces. Some are more toxic than others are, but their additive effects make a strong case for banning the use of the entire class of these chemicals, not just a few of the worst offenders.

No one should be surprised that POPs are harmful; after all, the intended use for many is to kill living organisms – pesticides kill bugs and herbicides kill weeds. How could you expect that they would be harmless to you and your loved ones?

POPs Damage the Unborn

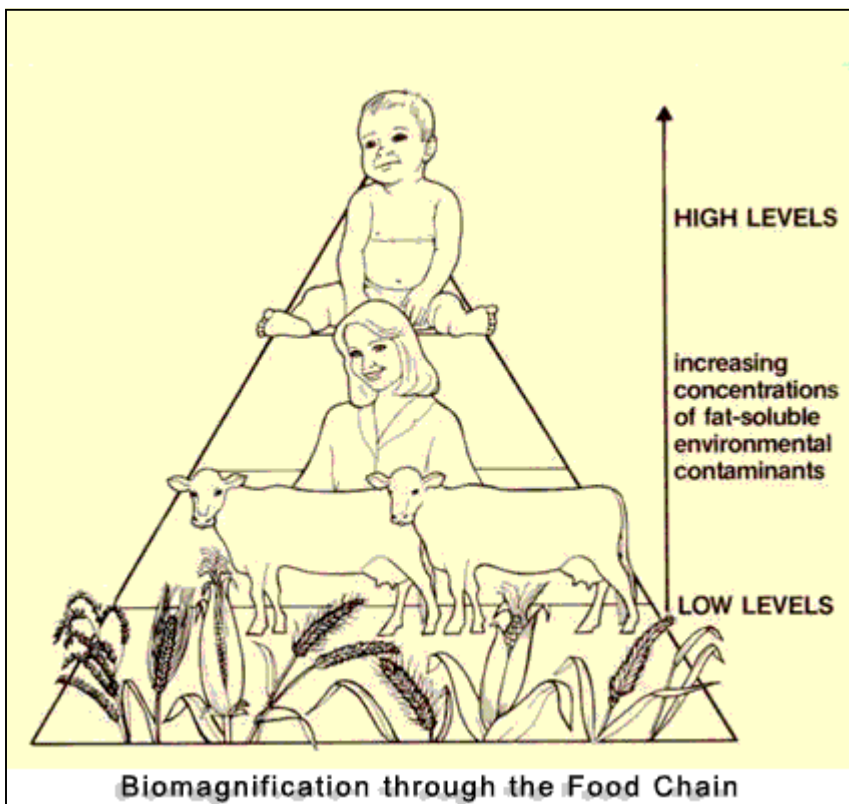
The threat to the unborn begins years before children are conceived, by accumulating for entire lifetimes in the bodies of future mothers and fathers. Po-

tential mothers with heavy loads of POPs have a higher risk of spontaneous abortions. In one study, more than 50% of the population of women attending a fertility program had had exposure to environmental chemicals sufficient to produce detectable concentrations in their blood and the fluids found in their ovaries.¹

The human fetus is exposed to environmental pollutants through the placental connection to the mother. These POPs disrupt activities of hormones – like estrogen, androgen, and thyroid hormones – during critical periods of development in the uterus, producing adverse effects, such as altered social skills, decreased intelligence, and reproductive difficulties.² At school-age, these same children are found to have lower IQ scores.²

To reduce the risk of pollutant-damage to your unborn it is imperative that women planning to have children at any time in life begin a healthy low-pollutant diet when they themselves are young children. Men are not exempt from this directive – a man’s sexual abilities and, ultimately, potency can be seriously impaired by the pollutants in his diet.

- Effects of POPs on the Unborn^{2,3,4}**
- Retarded growth (lower birth weight)
 - Delayed mental (cognitive) development
 - Behavioral problems after birth
 - Limb deformities
 - Heart defects
 - Smaller penis and testicles
 - Deformity of the penis (hypospadias)
 - Undescended testicle (cryptorchism)
 - Increased otitis media (ear infections)
 - Hyperpigmentation (excess skin pigment)
 - Conjunctivitis (eye inflammation)
 - Nail changes



Biomagnification through the Food Chain

POPs Devastate Children

Children are not simply small adults. They take in more food, and thus more chemicals, relative to their body weight than adults do; and their developing tissues are more sensitive to the effects of the pollutants. As a result, estimates are that 50% of lifetime exposure to pesticides occurs during the first 5 years of life.²

Once born, the ideal food for an infant is breast milk. Unfortunately, mother’s milk has been declared a health hazard because of POPs – infants suckling from mother’s breast receive huge quantities of pollutants she has been accumulating all of her life. Mother’s milk is inherently high in fat; therefore, chemicals are attracted to and concentrated by her milk-fat (bio-accumulation). Levels of pesticides may be 6 to 7 times higher in her breast milk than in her blood.²

These POPs are so efficiently delivered to the baby that approximately 20% of the mother's lifelong burden of pesticide is transferred to her infant over the first 3 months of breast feeding.⁵ Countries which have taken steps to ban POPs show a decline in levels of these chemicals in the breast milk of their citizens. The message to all families is to teach your children that they must take steps now to keep their bodies clean – the life and health of their future families depends on prudent planning.

(Note: Even though the milk is polluted, breast milk is still essential for your baby and formula should almost never be substituted – despite the contamination. See the McDougall Program for Women book).

Common POPs

Dioxins – industrial waste
 Furans – industrial waste
 Polychlorinated biphenyl's (PCBs) – transformers and capacitors
 Polybrominated biphenyls (PBBs) – a flame-retardant material
 Pentachlorophenol (PCP or penta) – wood preservative
 Trichloroethylene (TCE) -- solvent
 DDT (and metabolite DDE) – pesticide
 Chlordane – pesticide
 Heptachlor – pesticide
 Hexachlorocyclohexane (Lindane) – pesticide for human lice
 Toxaphene – pesticide
 Hexachlorobenzene – pesticide
 Aldrin – pesticide
 Dieldrin – pesticide
 Endrin – pesticide
 Mirex – pesticide
 Methylmercury – dental fillings, industry, preservatives

Residues of five or more persistent toxic chemicals in a single food are not unusual –most commonly found are the pesticides DDT (and its metabolites, such as DDE) and dieldrin.³⁵

Brain Damage from POPs

Most pesticides work by interfering with the nervous system of the insect, so findings of decreased mental (cognitive) function in people exposed to pesticides and other environmental chemicals (like PCBs) should be no surprise.^{6,7,8} Convincing examples of this toxicity to the brain are seen in people who work with these chemicals; for example, sheep farmers who were exposed to organophosphate pesticides in the course of dipping sheep to rid them of infestations performed significantly worse than non-exposed farmers in tests to assess sustained attention and speed of information processing.⁹

Parkinson's disease is a common brain disorder affecting approximately 1% of the population of the USA over 65 years of age. Studies show that exposure to pesticides causes Parkinson's disease in humans.^{10,11} The mechanism behind this damage has also been largely revealed. The enzyme systems that metabolize these brain-damaging chemicals, like the her-

bicide Paraquat, have been identified. Estimates are 5 to 10% of people from white populations are poor metabolizers of these chemicals, because they have undetectable enzyme activity – this is a genetic trait. In these unfortunate people, the chemical remains in their system causing insidious brain damage over many years of exposure.

Decontaminating Your Body

The key to removing the pollution from your body is to remove these POPs from your surroundings. First, you need to understand that 89% to 99% of these chemicals gain access to your body through your food. More importantly, the foods with the highest levels of contamination are those foods high on the food chain – meat, poultry, fish, and dairy products.^{5,7,21-23}

The reason these animal foods are the primary source of pollution is because their fatty tissues attract and concentrate chemicals – a process known as *bioaccumulation*. The poisons are concentrated as they move up the food chain resulting in *biomagnification* of the chemical threat.

Plant foods are of low risk to you. Contamination of plants with pollutants is largely a surface phenomenon resulting from spraying herbicides and pesticides on the plant or particles carried by air or water to the surface of the plant.²⁴ Therefore, most of the contaminants can be removed by thoroughly washing and peeling these plant foods before cooking and eating.

You also need to avoid sources of pollution found in your home and workplace. Get rid of the chemicals around your house and look for nontoxic ways to control pests. Further information is easily found by searching the Internet for "nontoxic pest control."

Body-wide Damage

Heart Disease: Methylmercury mercury, found concentrated in fish, counteracts the purported beneficial cardiovascular effects of fish fats by producing free radicals that damage the arteries directly.¹²

Male Sexual Function: Estrogen-like pollutants interfere with the actions of testosterone and rob men of their virility and potency. Decreased ejaculate volume, low sperm count, shortened sperm life, poor sperm motility, genetic damage, and infertility result.¹³

Breast Cancer: Chemicals are found in cystic fluids of a woman's breast tissues.¹⁴ Not surprisingly, there is a clear association between breast cancer risk and the levels of some POPs measured in her breast fatty (adipose) tissue.¹⁵ Many research findings support the role of POPs in causing breast cancer.¹⁶

Immune Suppression: In addition to the direct toxic effects on the tissues, the function of the immune system is suppressed by these chemicals. The results are decreased defenses against microorganisms (viruses, parasites, and bacteria) and most forms of cancer.¹⁷⁻¹⁹

Promotion of Autoimmune Diseases: A damaged immune system may play a role in autoimmune diseases, like rheumatoid arthritis and Lupus.²⁰

Benefits of Organic Foods

Organic farming practices are intended to protect farm workers, ensure food safety, and minimize the environmental effects of pesticides. In general, organic agriculture produces foods without the use of synthetic chemicals. Although improved nutritional quality of organic produce is often argued,²⁵ providing the cleanest foods for your family is the primary reason to spend the extra time shopping for and money you invest in buying organic produce.

Meat and poultry can carry the label "certified organic." Organic meat, poultry, egg, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones, and are processed without the use of bioengineering or ionizing radiation. However, the POP content of the "certified organic" animal foods will depend upon the level of pollution in the animals' feed. Meat and poultry certified organic are supposed to be raised on "organic feed," and therefore should have less POP contamination. Among the worst examples of polluted animal food comes from "farmed" salmon.³⁵

The high levels of POPs in the feed given to the farmed salmon makes them "toxic" compared to ocean-caught salmon. Because of biomagnification of POPs from the environment, animal foods, regardless of the efforts to grow and/or harvest them "clean," will provide a greater source of contamination than plant foods raised with similar efforts.



Much Cleaner Foods

Detoxification by a Healthy Diet

The human body has detoxification systems that have evolved over 300 million years to protect animals from the natural toxins found in plants. These same systems will also rid your body of synthetic pollutants. These natural detoxifying compounds are found in plants, and they are also potent inhibitors of chemically-induced cancer.²⁹⁻³² In addition, the energy required for the detoxifying processes is most effectively provided by clean burning carbohydrates – carbohydrates are found in plants (meat, fish, poultry and vegetable oils have no carbohydrate and cheese has only miniscule amounts). Not surprisingly, malnutrition from under- and over-nutrition (such as when people eat the American diet), almost invariably leads to a reduced capacity to deactivate these pollutants and therefore increases their toxicity.³²

Losing weight on any "diet" releases stored pollutants as the body fat is dissolved.^{33,34} This is good, especially when the diet you are using to cause the weight loss is free of pollutants and full of detoxifying substances – meaning a diet of starches, fruits and vegetables – and even better, a diet focusing on organic vegetable produce.

Unfortunately, the most popular diets these days – Atkins, South Beach, Zone, etc. – are centered around the most contaminated of all foods – meats and dairy products. Can you see the futility of trying to "clean your body" by loading it up with "dirty foods?" At the same time that you may be losing weight and releasing toxins into your bloodstream, you are filling it up with POPs from every mouthful of polluted food.

Three False Statements about Organic Foods:

1) Organic foods are as contaminated with pesticide residues as conventionally grown foods.

The Truth: Studies consistently find that the risk of pesticide exposure is substantially lower from organic produce than from conventionally grown foods.²⁵ However, organic foods are not necessarily "pesticide free" and may have low levels with pesticides blown in from adjacent farms or left in the soil from past use.

2) The use of "natural" pesticides by organic farmers is as hazardous as synthetic pesticides used in conventional farming methods.

The Truth: "Natural" pesticides are rarely present as residues on foods and pose minimal health concerns.²⁶ These relatively non-toxic "natural" pesticides include sulfur, copper-based fungicides, oil sprays, insecticidal soaps, and insect pheromones.²⁶

3) Organic foods are risky because they contain dangerous bacteria from the manure used by farmers.

The Truth: Both conventional and organic farming practices use animal refuse, which contains bacteria. However, an analysis of "ready-to eat" organic vegetables from retail stores found 99.5% of uncooked vegetables were of acceptable quality concerning contamination with microbes.^{27,28}

Special Cleansing Programs?

Most "cleansing programs" warn against eating animal foods and recommend organically grown plant foods. I support that foundation. However, many of these programs also recommend colon cleansing, coffee enemas, vitamin supplements, and special "super" foods (like barley green) as an integral part of their therapies. I have not found scientific support for adding any of these approaches to the benefits of simply eating a healthy diet. Saunas and skin-cleaning are also recommended to eliminate the poisons through the skin. Although this approach may be of some benefit, scientific support is again lacking. Water "fasting" could be a speedy way to eliminate body fats holding on to pollutants. However, this form of extreme undernutrition lacks the energy from carbohydrates which is necessary for removing synthetic chemicals, as well as lacking the "natural" detoxifying compounds which are plentiful in plants. Therefore, at the risk of appearing redundant I recommend – as I do with so many other troubles affecting people – that you eat a simple and clean diet of starches, vegetables and fruits –

and add some exercise to increase safe fat loss.

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High Carb Diet Linked to Breast Cancer – More Deceit

Friday's (August 6, 2004) newspapers worldwide scared some people into believing there is further reason to follow the low-carb diet craze, with headlines like, "High carb diet linked to breast cancer – Study finds Mexican women who ate lots of carbohydrates twice as likely to get disease" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). According to this newspaper article, these women from Mexico City were getting their main carbohydrates from tortillas, soft drinks, and bread. You might think it is time to change your diet – as far away from what McDougall recommends as possible. Now is not the time for people to make the switch to Atkins or South Beach to save their breasts, but rather now is the time to sort out the undeniable truth.

Confusion has been created – and I believe willfully so by reporters and researchers – by lumping highly processed foods, like sugars and refined flours, and natural carbohydrates, like starches (corn tortillas), vegetables and fruits, together. The only excuse for such obviously irresponsible reporting is that sensational headlines justifying people's bad habits sell newspapers and flatter the egos of researchers by providing them a moment in the spotlight.

The truth, as mentioned much later in the article, is that the cancer-producing diet is one high in sodas and desserts, and lacking in insoluble fiber from whole grains, fruits and vegetables.

What the Study Actually Says

The study published in the August 2004 issue of the journal *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention* clearly reported more breast cancer in women who ate more calories, protein, total carbohydrates, sucrose, and fructose.¹

Sucrose is table sugar and fructose is the primary sugar found in soft drinks (sodas); usually reported as *high fructose corn syrup*. Eating more fiber and starch (often referred to as complex carbohydrates), both only found in plant foods, meant less breast cancer according to the study.

The explanation for carbohydrates increasing breast cancer rates was that an increase in dietary carbohydrate raises blood sugar and insulin levels. This results in an elevation of *Insulin-like Growth Factor-1 (IGF-1)*, which raises the risk of cancer. IGF-1 does play an important role in cancer, however, research shows this growth-stimulating hormone is increased in our diets primarily by animal proteins,² and especially those derived from dairy products.³ My guess is these important facts were overlooked because this information did not fit into the authors' pet theory.

Regardless, what is clear is that the diet of Hispanics in Mexico and the USA has progressively deteriorated over the past 50 years, and as a result, their rates of obesity, type-2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer of the breast, colon, and prostate have increased as expected.^{4,5} If you have been to a major city anywhere in Mexico, or Central or South America, like Mexico City, then you know what I am talking about. There is a fast-food restaurant on every corner; the supermarket shelves are lined with greasy corn and potato chips, and other "junk" carbohydrates; and meat and dairy products are coveted by people wanting to share in the American dream.

Women Following the Traditional Mexican Diet Have Much Less Breast Cancer

The truth about the diet of women of Mexican ancestry and breast cancer is summed up in an article from the *New York Academy of Science*⁶, "...the age-adjusted rate of breast cancer in countries such as Mexico is among the lowest in the world. In addition, although one of the fastest-growing minority groups in the United States, Hispanic women living in this country have been shown to have the lowest incidence of the mortality rates from this disease across most geographic regions of the United States. Therefore, one might speculate that dietary factors, which have been shown to play a role in breast cancer prevention, may account for this difference. It is well recognized that the traditional Hispanic diet is rich in protective nutrients such as dietary fiber. It is known that through complex mechanisms, dietary fiber works to reduce the amount of estrogens in the body."

The traditional Mexican diet has been one of corn (tortillas), beans, fruits and vegetables. This kind of eating is associated with very low rates of breast cancer and all other diseases common to people living in Western societies.⁷ There are many qualities of traditional plant-based foods that prevent diseases, qualities that include their dietary starch, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and other phyto-nutrients. On the other hand, animal-based, and highly-processed, foods encourage cancer growth because they lack these plant-food ingredients and are high in cholesterol, fat, protein, and environmental chemicals.⁸

Breast cancer in Mexico is on the rise, affecting younger women with more frequency for one obvious reason. The younger generations are targeted by, and most easily fall prey to, the marketing efforts of the food industries. Articles like this one that appear in our press serve to confuse people and further compound our worldwide health problems.

Newspaper reporters who write this nonsense, and researchers that allow this dishonesty to go on uncorrected, should be ashamed of themselves, and may someday be held accountable for the human suffering caused by twisting the truth.

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Favorite Five

My Favorite Five Articles Found in Recent Medical Journals

Soy Supplements Fail to Benefit Bones, Brain or Heart

Effect of soy protein containing isoflavones on cognitive function, bone mineral density, and plasma lipids in postmenopausal women: a randomized controlled trial by Sanne Kreijkamp-Kaspers in the July 2004 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, found no significant difference in cognitive (mental) function, bone mineral density, or plasma lipids after a year of treatment with a concentrated soy supplement. A group of 202 healthy postmenopausal women aged 60 to 75 years were randomly assigned to receive 25.6 g of soy protein containing 99 mg of isoflavones (52 mg genistein, 41 mg daidzein, and 6 mg glycitein) or total milk protein as a powder on a daily basis for 12 months.

Comment: The support for the use of soy for improving health is primarily based on the observation that Asians (Japanese and Chinese, for example) who eat more soy, also have less heart disease and stronger bones. However, soy is unlikely to be the critical issue that makes these people healthier. The real reason they are healthier is because Asians eat a starch-based diet (rice) with lots of fruits and vegetables and are much more active than most Westerners. However, this simple answer may not be as appealing as one that allows people to eat their bacon and eggs and take a soy pill to counteract the ill effects – nor is it as profitable.

We use small amounts of soy at the McDougall Program in Santa Rosa, California and in our cookbooks to improve the interest and familiarity of recipes for our basic diet – to appease people used to Western foods – because soy products can look and taste like meat, cheese and milk. However, because of the high-fat nature of soy foods, and possible adverse consequences of the hormone-like effects from their proteins, we encourage people to use these foods in small amounts. As condiments; like a little soy milk on cereal – not glassfuls drunk daily; or slivers of tofu in a rice dish, rather than a soy burger. I never recommend soy supplements, as used in this study. (For more information on the health issues surrounding soy, please read my August 2002 Newsletter article: Phytochemicals and Phytoestrogens.)

Kreijkamp-Kaspers S, Kok L, Grobbee DE, de Haan EH, Aleman A, Lampe JW, van der Schouw YT. Effect of soy protein containing isoflavones on cognitive function, bone mineral density, and plasma lipids in postmenopausal women: a randomized controlled trial. *JAMA*. 2004 Jul 7;292(1):65-74.

Western Diet As the Cause of Schizophrenia and Depression

International variations in the outcome of schizophrenia and the prevalence of depression in relation to national dietary practices: an ecological analysis by Malcolm Peet in the May 2004 issue of the *British Journal of Psychiatry* found the same kind of dietary intake known to predict the development of coronary heart disease and diabetes – the Western diet – also predicts the development of schizophrenia and depression. The authors recommend a dietary approach be tried to treat both of these mental health problems.

A higher national dietary intake of refined sugar and dairy products predicted a worse 2-year outcome of schizophrenia. Dairy products and sugar were also associated with an increased prevalence of depression; whereas starchy vegetables (potatoes, pasta, etc.) were associated with a reduced prevalence.

Comment: The mechanisms that would explain these findings are far from explained. This is only one of many studies that implicate the foods consumed on the Western diet in depression, schizophrenia, and other mental illnesses. (See my March 2004 newsletter article: A Natural Cure for Depression.) This is just one more reason for following a healthy plant-based diet – especially since there are no side effects and the results could change your whole mental outlook. Peet M. International variations in the outcome of schizophrenia and the prevalence of depression in relation to national dietary practices: an ecological analysis. *Br J Psychiatry*. 2004 May;184:404-8.

Cinnamon Spice Benefits Blood Sugar and Cholesterol

Cinnamon improves glucose and lipids of people with type 2 diabetes by Alam Khan in the December 2003 issue of *Diabetes Care*, found “intake of 1, 3, or 6 g of cinnamon per day reduces serum glucose, triglycerides, LDL cholesterol, and total cholesterol in people with type 2 diabetes and suggests that the inclusion of cinnamon in the diet of people with type 2 diabetes will reduce risk factors associated with diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.” The improvement in blood sugar (glucose) levels was in the range of 20 to 50 mg/dl after 20 to 60 days. Cholesterol decreased 20 to 30 mg/dl and triglycerides about 20 mg/dl in the same period. The effects seem to last for some days

even after stopping the cinnamon.

Comment: Here is a safe addition to your diet to help improve your blood sugar, triglycerides, and cholesterol. Of course, this action should be after a no-cholesterol, low fat diet, and exercise, with associated weight loss – this approach will usually cure type 2 diabetes. (See my February 2004 newsletter article: Type-2 Diabetes – the Expected Adaptation to Overnutrition.)

Several “natural” vitamins, minerals and herbs have been reported to improve blood sugars and/or cholesterol – but do not expect these to alleviate your need for a serious change in diet and lifestyle – and they include:

Food and spices: bitter melon, Gymnema, Korean ginseng, onions, garlic, flaxseed meal, cinnamon, cloves, bay leaves, and turmeric.

Supplements: -lipoic acid, biotin, carnitine, vanadium, chromium, magnesium, zinc, and vitamins B₃, E, and K.

Khan A, Safdar M, Ali Khan MM, Khattak KN, Anderson RA. Cinnamon improves glucose and lipids of people with type 2 diabetes. *Diabetes Care*. 2003 Dec;26(12):3215-8.

Folic Acid Supplements Cause More Heart Disease

Folate therapy and in-stent restenosis after coronary stenting by Helmut Lange in the June 24, 2004 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* found, with the administration of folic acid supplements, an increase in risk of restenosis (artery closure) and the need for more heart surgery after an initial angioplasty with coronary stenting. After successful surgery, 636 patients were randomly assigned to receive 1 mg of folic acid, 5 mg of vitamin B₆, and 1 mg of vitamin B₁₂ intravenously, followed by daily oral doses of 1.2 mg of folic acid, 48 mg of vitamin B₆, and 60 µg of vitamin B₁₂ for six months, or to receive a placebo drug. In the folic acid group, 34.5 percent had complete closure of their treated artery, compared to 26.5 percent in the placebo group. Repeat heart surgeries were required in 15.8 percent of those taking folic acid, compared to 10.6 percent in the placebo group.

Comment: The authors do not know why this vitamin combination, intended to lower a risk factor for heart disease, homocysteine, backfired, and increased the troubles for heart patients. But they did recognize the adverse consequences, and cautioned doctors about recommending folic acid for patients with artery disease.

My guess is this vitamin supplement caused imbalances in the body that resulted in more disease. Vitamins are organic nutrients necessary for life and they are originally packaged in plant foods in proper amounts and proportions with other nutrients necessary for synchronized actions. Isolation and concentration of a vitamin (or vitamins) into a pill is unnatural and can be considered as medicine at best – with a potential for positive and negative effects – and toxic at worst (as seen from this study).

High homocysteine levels are associated with heart disease because “high meat, low vegetable” diets raise homocysteine in the blood. Homocysteine is a marker indicating someone eats a poor diet, and therefore the best approach is to correct the original problem (the bad diet), rather than a sign of the problem (elevated homocysteine). My recommendation is to get your vitamins (and other nutrients) from their original packages: plants. (For more information read my August 2003 Newsletter article: Plants, not Pills, for Vitamins and Minerals.)

Lange H, Suryapranata H, De Luca G, Borner C, Dille J, Kallmayer K, Pasalary MN, Scherer E, Dambrink JH. Folate therapy and in-stent restenosis after coronary stenting. *N Engl J Med*. 2004 Jun 24;350(26):2673-81.

Don't Take Plavix and Aspirin Together

Aspirin and clopidogrel compared with clopidogrel alone after recent ischaemic stroke or transient ischaemic attack in high-risk patients (MATCH): randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial¹ by Hans-Christoph Diener in the July 24, 2004 issue of the *Lancet* found the risk of life-threatening or major bleeding is increased by the addition of aspirin to Plavix (clopidogrel). The use of this combination is popular because studies show Plavix is slightly superior to aspirin in patients with previous heart disease, and especially in high-risk groups of patients – so many doctors have simply added Plavix to their usual prescription of aspirin for heart attack and stroke patients.

Comment: Most patients after a heart attack, angioplasty, or bypass surgery are prescribed aspirin and/or Plavix

(usually both in my experience). Serious bleeding, which offsets the benefits, is now found from this combination and patients need to be warned.² Aspirin has been used for decades in high risk patients for prevention of future heart attacks and strokes because of a record of relative safety and effectiveness. Aspirin is cheap and without profit for major drug companies – so it is not surprising that large amounts of money have been invested to show benefits of Plavix over aspirin and doctors have been easily convinced. Regardless, both aspirin and Plavix should not be prescribed together because of the high risk of bleeding.

My preference is still for aspirin because of effectiveness, safety and cost. I do prescribe one baby aspirin (81 mg) daily for people with a history of heart disease (post- heart attack, angioplasty, or bypass surgery).³ I also often prescribe “statin,” cholesterol-lowering, medications in these cases. Let’s not forget the foundation for becoming well and avoiding future troubles is a no-cholesterol, low fat diet (the McDougall diet), exercise and clean habits. Talk to your doctor if you are taking Plavix and aspirin together.

1) Diener HC, Bogousslavsky J, Brass LM, Cimminiello C, Csiba L, Kaste M, Leys D, Matias-Guiu J, Rupprecht HJ; MATCH investigators. Aspirin and clopidogrel compared with clopidogrel alone after recent ischaemic stroke or transient ischaemic attack in high-risk patients (MATCH): randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial. *Lancet*. 2004 Jul 24;364(9431):331-7.

2) Rothwell PM. Lessons from MATCH for future randomised trials in secondary prevention of stroke. *Lancet*. 2004 Jul 24;364(9431):305-7.

3) Klein L, Gheorghide M. Management of the patient with diabetes mellitus and myocardial infarction: clinical trials update. *Am J Med*. 2004 Mar 8;116 Suppl 5A:47S-63S.

Costa Rica Highlights

Over the week of July 24 to July 31 we had the opportunity to entertain 72 people in the adventurous ecological setting of the northwest coast of Costa Rica (Guanacaste Region). No one complained of weight gain, even with unlimited foods at each meal made from unique native Costa Rican fruits and vegetables. The “tortilla lady” prepared handmade corn tortillas for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The desserts were memorable and decadent.

The SCUBA diving expedition was rewarded by a visit from the bull sharks (no arms lost). The weather was ideal (almost no rain) for the hiking, horseback riding, kayaking, surfing, rafting, tree-top cable, and boating adventures. As expected, Mary McDougall made sure everyone showed up for their adventure each morning and our four Costa Rican naturalist guides entertained and educated these adventurers all day long. The pre-dinner evening lectures by Dr. John McDougall were thought provoking and inspired everyone to remain healthy so they could enjoy future McDougall Adventure trips and similar pleasures. However, the center of attention during the entire trip was Jaysen – Mary and John’s 6 month old grandson – he stole the show.

Hope you can join us on our next adventure. Announcements for upcoming destinations will be made soon.

Follow this link to see photos from Costa Rica Adventure 2004:
http://www.drmcdougall.com/adventures/costa_rica04/index.html

Recipes

COFFEE SUBSTITUTES

During our 10 day live-in McDougall Program in Santa Rosa, California we serve a variety of coffee substitutes that many of you who are trying to reduce or eliminate your dependence on coffee will find helpful. The July McDougall Newsletter has an article "Coffee - Pleasure or Pain" which will explain why you may want to make this change. On every table at every meal during the program are jars of instant Roma – mixed with hot water, Roma instantly turns into a satisfying coffee-like beverage. Of all the varieties of coffee substitutes, mostly made from roasted barley and chicory, our favorite is called Teeccino. This is a ground product, prepared in a regular coffee maker and delivers a hearty, rich flavor. You can still enjoy "the brewing ritual" with a familiar pot of hot dark beverage each morning. Teeccino is made from roasted barley and chicory with almonds and other added ingredients. It is available in several different flavors and may be purchased at most natural food stores; or visit www.teeccino.com for more information or to order. I offer soy or rice milk for people to add to their beverage if they wish.

TORTILLAS

We use tortillas in many of our meals because they are very versatile. They can be used in place of bread to turn a sandwich into a wrap. They may be filled, rolled and baked with a sauce, or layered with various ingredients and served warm or cold. There are two basic kinds of tortillas; those made from corn and those made from flour, including wheat flour and spelt flour. This also includes the flour tortillas with added spinach or artichoke (green color), or those with added tomatoes or peppers (orange color). Tortillas, ideally, should be made with as few ingredients as possible. Realistically, you will find many tortillas made with refined flours, additives, preservatives and added oils. Look for the healthiest ones you can find, usually in your natural food store. I am able to find healthy corn tortillas much easier than the flour tortillas. There are several brands of corn tortillas made with only corn, water, and lime. Store tortillas in the refrigerator after purchase, or freeze for up to 3 months. To thaw, just put the bag on the counter for a couple of hours, or separate while still frozen and heat on a dry griddle or in the microwave until soft.

Two of my favorite uses for corn tortillas are the Bean Enchilada recipe in the May 2003 newsletter or the Tex-Mex Lasagna in the Quick & Easy Cookbook. I also love the soft corn tortillas filled with Smashed Pinto Beans, toppings, and covered with Enchilada Sauce from the June 2003 newsletter. Try them filled with chili, sloppy joes, or even mashed or roasted potatoes.

If you like crispy corn tortillas, you can easily make your own and avoid all the fat found in the packaged products. Cut the soft tortillas into wedges, place on a baking sheet, spray very lightly with water, sprinkle with seasonings if desired and bake at 350 degrees until crispy – about 10 minutes. Do the same thing with whole tortillas for a flat crisp tostada shell. I have found a couple of products to make crispy taco shells or tortilla boats. They are made by [Chicago Metallic](http://ChicagoMetallic.com) and have a non-stick finish. One is called a [Baked Taco Rack](#) and the other is called a [Tortilla/Taco Shell Pan](#). Both of them use soft corn tortillas which are placed on the product and baked in the oven to form a crisp shell. To check out these products go to www.cooking.com and search for either taco rack or tortilla pan. We like to use the tortilla boats with black bean chili, or other Mexican style meals.

SCRAMBLED TOFU

I have made many variations of scrambled tofu over the past 28 years. Almost all of them contain some onion and a few vegetables, as well as a variety of herbs and seasonings. There are also prepared "box mixes" of scrambled tofu mix found in natural food stores that you can add to your crumbled, firm tofu if you don't have time to make this recipe from scratch.

Scrambled Tofu makes a delicious transition "treat" for those people missing their scrambled eggs. (See note below about egg substitutes.)

Preparation Time: 10 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

Servings: 4-5

1/3 cup vegetable broth

½ cup chopped onion
½ cup chopped bell pepper
½ cup chopped fresh mushrooms
1 pound lite firm tofu, crumbled
2 tablespoons prepared brown mustard
½ teaspoon chili powder
¼ teaspoon dill weed
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
¼ teaspoon turmeric
dash salt
several twists freshly ground pepper
1 cup cooked fresh spinach leaves, squeezed dry

Place the broth in a large non-stick frying pan. Add the onion, bell pepper and mushrooms. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 4 minutes. Add the crumbled tofu, the mustard and the seasonings. Cook, stirring occasionally, for another 5 minutes. Add the spinach, mix well, heat for another minute, and serve hot.

Hints: This may be made with water-packed or silken tofu. Be sure to use the lower fat variety. The water-packed tofu will yield a firmer scramble, while the silken tofu will be softer. Some of the seasonings may be omitted, but be sure to use the turmeric because it gives the scramble a familiar yellow color. You may also omit or change the vegetables as desired.

Note: Many people ask me about using egg substitutes, such as Egg Beaters, assuming that these are acceptable because they have had the fat and cholesterol removed. These products are made from egg whites (animal protein), plus additives, colorings and preservatives. We do not recommend them, and instead suggest a scrambled tofu recipe. To replace eggs in baking, use a product by Ener-G Foods, called Egg Replacer.

SALAD DRESSINGS

Many of you have been unhappy with the “fat-free” salad dressings that you purchased in the supermarket or natural food store, either because of the flavor or the sodium content. During the 10-day McDougall Program in Santa Rosa, California our chefs make many delicious salad dressings – loved by everyone. Any of these may be prepared ahead of time and kept in the refrigerator for about a week.

CREAMY GARLIC DRESSING

Preparation Time: 10 minutes
Servings: makes 2 cups

1 box (12.3 ounces) firm lite silken tofu
4-6 cloves garlic, minced
½ cup lemon juice
2 tablespoons soy sauce
3 tablespoons tahini
3 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
3 teaspoons honey
freshly ground pepper to taste

Place all ingredients in a food processor or blender. Process until smooth and creamy.

Hints: The garlic and dill do not have to be finely chopped. They will be processed along with the other ingredients. The amount of garlic may be increased or decreased according to your tastes. Add a bit more soy sauce to taste, if necessary. Flavors will intensify during refrigeration.

BERRY VINAIGRETTE

Preparation Time: 5 minutes
Servings: makes 1½ cups

2 cups fresh or frozen strawberries or raspberries
4 tablespoons red wine vinegar
2 teaspoons honey
freshly ground pepper to taste

Place all ingredients in a food processor or blender. Process until smooth.

HONEY MUSTARD DRESSING

Preparation Time: 5 minutes

Servings: makes 1¼ cups

½ cup rice vinegar
½ cup balsamic vinegar
1/3 cup honey
3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
freshly ground pepper to taste

Place all ingredients in a blender and process until smooth.

FROZEN DESSERTS

“Frozen desserts” make a special treat during the warm summer months when there are a delicious and wide variety of fresh fruits available. Many frozen desserts can be made with only a food processor or blender and a freezer. However, to get the desirable creamy consistency that most people prefer, an automatic frozen ice cream and sorbet maker is necessary. There are many of these available with 1 ½ quart freezer bowls. I purchased one made by Cuisinart this summer to make some of these desserts. Frozen desserts always contain some kind of a sweetener, which can usually be adjusted depending on your preferences. Maple syrup and honey work very well, if you use organic cane sugar, it will need to be dissolved in water to make “sugar syrup” before using in the recipe.

BERRY SORBET

Preparation Time: 10 minutes

Chilling Time: 6-8 hours

Servings: 8

4 cups frozen raspberries or strawberries
1 ½ cups water
½ cup honey
2 tablespoons lemon juice

Place the frozen berries in a bowl on the counter and allow to partially thaw. Do not drain.

Place berries in a blender or food processor and process until smooth. Add remaining ingredients and process again. Pour into a bowl. Cover and freeze until slushy, about 3 hours. Beat with an electric mixer until smooth. Cover and return to freezer. Freeze until firm, several more hours or overnight.

Remove from freezer about 10 minutes before serving.

Hints: To make this with sugar instead of honey, use about 1 cup of sugar and dissolve in 1 ½ cups of boiling water in a saucepan. Remove from heat and cool completely.

Try this with fresh melon of any kind instead of berries. Use about ½ cup of orange juice instead of the lemon juice. Soy or rice milk may be substituted for most of the water for a creamy dessert, or try the cashew cream idea below.

CASHEW ICE CREAM

This dessert is made with RAW cashews blended with water, similar to the French Toast or Veggie Benedicts in previous newsletters (see recipe index). This needs to be made in an ice cream freezer.

Preparation Time: 15 minutes

Chilling Time: 6-8 hours

Servings: 4

2 cups RAW cashews
2 cups water

½ cup honey
2 teaspoons vanilla

Place the cashews, water and honey in a food processor or blender and process until very smooth. This may take a couple of minutes. Add vanilla and mix. Pour into a bowl, cover and freeze for about 1 hour. Pour into an ice cream maker and follow the manufacturer's instructions for freezing.

Variations: To make a chocolate version, use ½ cup of Wonderslim fat-free cocoa powder. Add with the vanilla and process until well blended. To make this with other sweeteners, try 1 cup of maple syrup in place of the honey, or make a sugar syrup by dissolving 1 cup of sugar in 2 ½ cups of water. Allow to cool completely and use in place of the 2 cups of water and honey in the recipe above.

BANANA ICE CREAM

This frozen dessert requires previously frozen bananas. When you have extra ripe bananas, peel them, break into pieces, place in a bowl or freezer bag and freeze for at least 1 day. They make a delicious addition to a smoothie or use them in the recipe below.

Preparation Time: 10 minutes (using previously frozen bananas)

Servings: variable

Place frozen bananas and a small amount of soy milk in a food processor and process until smooth. Serve at once. Variation: The best way to make banana ice cream is in a Champion Juicer. The frozen bananas are pushed through the feed tube and come out as soft frozen banana ice cream. Champion Juicers are sold in many natural food stores. For more information on this product and where to buy go to www.championjuicer.com.

Hints: Other frozen fruits may be added along with the frozen bananas for additional flavor whenever you make banana ice cream.