

Health & Fitness

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The truth about food

In 1900, one out of thirty people had cancer, and one out of seven suffered from cardiovascular disease. Today, one third of the population develops cancer, with approximately 500,000 deaths per year. Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer, responsible for almost 1,000,000 deaths annually. Asthma is claiming lives at an unprecedented rate. Thirty years ago, chronic fatigue syndrome didn't even exist. Currently, one out of every three adults is classified as obese, along with one fourth of our children.

In 1996, an estimated 7 to 8 million people in the United States had osteoporosis, resulting in 1.5 million fractures. More specifically, this included over 300,000 hip fractures at an average cost of \$35,000 per patient. Arthritis has increased 37 percent in the past ten years, and the fall-out from diabetes includes renal dialysis, blindness, heart disease, impotence, and limb amputation.

How does a country boasting the world's finest medical centers and technology, have one of the poorest track records of health, among industrialized western nations? With all the scientific research and information available, what keeps perpetuating this upward spiral of chronic degenerative diseases? Here's a clue. In 1998, the Surgeon

General's Report on Nutrition and Health concluded that 15 out of 21 deaths in the United States involved nutrition.

How Did This Happen?

With the advent of industrialization and technology, we moved into an era of easy access; most noticeably the manufacturing boom, mass transportation, 24 hour-a-day media, and unlimited information on the Internet. But one venue remains in the background: supermarkets.

Whether in the form of large food emporiums or local delis, the availability of food is never more than a few blocks away. These conveniences influence our modern day health dilemma. How?

National and global distribution of food products required changes. First, food started to be grown for mass consumption. This dramatically decreased its nutritional value. Secondly, the foods had to be produced for an extended shelf life. Manufacturers and producers, without sacrificing convenience and profit, introduced three food products that match the above criteria. They are refined carbohydrates, sugar, and hydrogenated oils.

How Do These Three Products Affect Our Health?

Refined Carbohydrates:

The production of refined carbohydrates requires the removal of fiber. Research shows that fiber provides innumerable benefits. It decreases carcinogens and is necessary in the prevention of colon cancer. It binds up cholesterol for excretion and helps reduce cardiovascular disease. It is critical in promoting a proper insulin response, and the role of insulin in diabetes is well known. With the removal of fiber, not only are these functions compromised but most of the essential nutrients, vitamins, and minerals are lost.

When manufacturers were made aware of this, they added back a small percentage of what was removed. This is called "enriched" or "vitamin fortified," and is quite misleading. Most people surmise they are receiving extra vitamins and minerals in addition to what the food normally contains. The reality is processed foods have minimal value, create biochemical imbalances, and lead to health problems.

In Weston Price's landmark study, "Nutrition and Physical Degeneration," he noted the introduction of westernized foods into primitive cultures was responsible for marked changes in facial bone development, tooth defects, disturbances in brain organization, and increases in

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miscarriage, stillbirths, premature births, and birth defects. Other authors have noted Africans have a much lower occurrence of degenerative diseases than Europeans and Americans, except for those living in urban centers, where they are exposed to western diets.

Adding to the list of aforementioned health problems, refined carbohydrates are strongly implicated in diverticulosis, irritable bowel syndrome, chronic fatigue, diabetes, hypoglycemia, hemorrhoids, dermatitis, allergies, asthma, dental problems, and chronic joint and bone dysfunctions.

Refined carbohydrates include breads, pastas, pastries, cookies, most snack products like pretzels, corn chips etc., packaged cereals, commercial flour, and white rice.

Sugar:

What is true about refined carbohydrates is also true of sugar. Following are some additional important notes:

Sugar has absolutely no nutritional value. In order for the body to digest it, it must utilize its own resources of vitamins, minerals, and enzymes, leading to an actual negative balance of these nutrients.

It decreases the body's use of vitamin C, decreases calcium absorption, and increases the excretion of calcium, zinc, magnesium, chromium, and sodium. It diminishes the immune system's ability to fight infections and is converted to fat.

To avoid sugar and its harmful effects, one needs to be aware of its commercial forms. The more familiar ones are dextrose, sucrose, glucose, honey, corn syrup sweetener, brown sugar, turbinado sugar, high fructose corn syrup, lactose, modified corn starch, maltodextrin, maltose, malt, fruit juice concentrates, fructose, molasses, mannitol, maple syrup, sorghum, and sorbitol. Artificial sweeteners include Nutrasweet, aspartame, and saccharin.

Refined and Hydrogenated Oils:

Starting in the 1920's, the edible oils industry put technology to its advantage. Through the refinement process, inexpensive, low quality oils with an extended shelf life were produced. These oils were stripped of their own natural antioxidants and were left with chemical, metal, and pesticide residues involved in their production.

Later on, hydrogenation became available. This process changes the biochemical structure of fat from its natural state (cis) to an unnatural state (trans). These oils contain no essential fatty acids (omega 3 & 6), may

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contain trace elements of metals from the processing and may have altered forms of toxic, fat molecules.

What is the benefit of all this? The producers found cheap, cost efficient competitors to butter and healthy edible oils - most notably mar garine, shortening, and all forms of hydrogenated oils. Their profits skyrocketed while the customer gained nothing but a higher risk for health problems.

When these oils are consumed, the trans fats are absorbed into the cell membrane, impairing its numerous functions. Research have linked these partially hydrogenated oils to various neurological and autoimmune illnesses including attention deficit disorder, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, cancer, seizures, chronic fatigue, arthritis, allergies, and eye problems.

Apply all this to a broader perspective:

- Most Americans, on the average consume over 150 pounds of sugar per year; almost half a pound a day.

- Hard fats comprise 40 percent of our diet and refined carbohydrates make up another 40 percent.

- A USDA survey, released in 1990, studied the dietary intake of 21,500 people for a three-day period. Ten common nutrients involved with bone development were analyzed and not one person consumed the RDA for all ten nutrients.

Looking at how we eat and knowing the imbalances these

foods create, the ongoing increase of degenerative diseases starts to make sense. The irony is most people continue to believe their diet is fairly well balanced. Unfortunately, not until a serious illness befalls us, are we willing to make changes. Sadly, not even then, will the diet usually be the first thing to be changed. For those who wish to be in charge of their health, the following may be of benefit.

How Do I Evaluate My Diet?

Keep a food and drink journal for 3-5 days. Write down everything you eat, drink, and the quantity of each. Afterwards, circle or underline all the sugar items in blue, all the refined carbohydrates in red, and all products with hydrogenated (and partially hydrogenated) oils in green (you will have to read labels). An item may be circled by one or all three colors.

Take note how much of your diet is circled and write down an estimated percentage. Think how long you've been eating this way. Give yourself time to list all your health problems and symptoms no matter how minor. There may be a correlation between your diet and your health status.

How Should I Eat?

Look at your plate. Allocate 20-25 percent to protein. This includes eggs, fish, fowl, poultry, wild game, and meat. 60-75 percent of your plate should be vegetables. Salads are not included in this portion. Salads should be

eaten with meals, but for our purposes they are not included in the vegetable section. The remaining 0-15 percent is for complex carbohydrates. These include butter-nut and winter squashes, brown rice, corn, whole grains, and potatoes. Inclusion of complex carbohydrates is dependent upon each individual's sensitivity to these foods.

Snacks should consist of combining a wide variety of nuts, seeds, and fruits. Dried fruits should be included minimally, and only those labeled unsulphured.

The use of high quality oils is important. These include olive oil, sesame, high-oleic safflower, and sunflower oil. If you bake you may use coconut oil. A good resource is Omega Nutrition of Bellingham, Washington.

Due to the reduced quality of most foods, the high level of daily stress we encounter, and an environment containing pollutants and contaminants, basic supplementation with the dietary changes may be of benefit. This could include a multi-vitamin and multi-mineral, a balanced essential fatty acid supplement (Omega 3 & 6) and antioxidants/bioflavonoids.

Anything Else?

- Read Labels - Refrain from all products containing any form of sugar, hydrogenated, partially hydrogenated, and vegetable oil, refined foods, and chemical preservatives.

- Avoid the Following - Coffee, tea, alcohol, and juices. Juices are

all sugar and no fiber. No fried foods.

- Fluids - Drink 70-100 ounces of filtered water daily, depending on size and activity level.

- Substitutes - Use nut, soy, or rice milk instead of cow's milk (some people may do well with goat's milk). Use healthy oils instead of butter. (Small amounts of butter and ghee are non-problematic.) No mar garine, olestra, shortenings or synthetics.

- Foods - Vegetables and fruits should be organic. Proteins should be hormone, steroid, and antibiotic free, with eggs coming from free-range chickens. Dairy intake should be minimal with emphasis strictly on organic yogurt and kefir (buttermilk).

These guidelines are not for any specific ailments. They are oriented towards optimizing the body's general health. If you are on any medication, or have a specific condition, please inform your physician of any dietary and/or supplement changes you wish to make.

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