

DIET & CANCER: STAYING HEALTHY – GETTING WELL

Rebecca L. Montrone, B.S., Wondrous Roots, Inc.

One of the wonderful things about the way we are created is that our bodies are always seeking to maintain homeostasis. Think about what happens when you injure yourself – a cut, a burn, whatever – you immediately begin to heal. Say you suffered a deep cut in the evening and realized when you woke up the next morning that you probably should have been stitched; too late – granulation tissue has already begun forming, and the healing process is in full swing.

Similarly, when exposed to a cold or flu, if you're not strong enough to throw it off completely, your body's immune defenses will come to the rescue. Swollen glands, fever, coughing, sneezing – while miserable, perhaps – are all indicators that you are mounting a defense against the unwelcome intruder. Unfortunately, few are willing to put up with the uncomfortable symptoms that betray such heroic efforts. The release of histamine is very important, as it signals other immune forces to take action, but we take antihistamines to feel better! The sadly misunderstood and under-rated fever is a very important part of our immune response; fever first stimulates the immune system, and then it makes the environment inhospitable to foreign invaders. Silly us, the first thing we do when we or our children have a fever is race to the medicine cabinet for something to bring it down!

Think of the idea of homeostasis as an old-fashioned scale. You were designed to maintain perfect balance. When, however, you happen to get too little sleep too many nights in a row, fail to nourish yourself properly for a period of time, etc., you become weakened, and predators are better able to take advantage of you. Still – unless in a state of severe immune system compromise, as seen in AIDS, for example – you will eventually return to a state of general good health.

ISN'T THIS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT CANCER?

By now you may be asking what all of this talk of homeostasis has to do with the subject of cancer. Maintaining homeostasis is our ally when it comes to both preventing and to curing cancer (and yes, I did mean to use the word *cure*). I want to encourage you by pointing out that even when we are talking about a diagnosis as scary as the C-word, your body is still your friend. The principle of ever-seeking and striving and trending towards homeostasis still holds. Making the most of this principle through nutritional and holistic therapies can make a world of difference in the likelihood of your ever developing cancer in the first place and in ridding yourself of it if, indeed, you should find yourself in such a place.

Well, by *now* you may be wondering why, if what I say is so, there seem to be so very many people who are so very, very sick! Ah... this is a very good and reasonable question. Interesting, during the days of Louis Pasteur and the discovery of the “germ,” there was another gentleman – Pasteur's contemporary – by the name of Antoine Bechamp. Bechamp countered Pasteur's focus on the *germ* with as ardent a focus of his own on the *host*. I guess if you wanted to kind of generalize the difference between

mainstream, AMA-style medicine and health and wellness as understood by those more holistically based, this would be a good place to start. The emphasis in my practice and those like mine is on optimizing the strength of the *host* – the host is you, by the way – so we need to be much less concerned about the threat of the *germ*, whatever it may be.

So when it comes to preventing cancer, we are going to do the very same things we do to prevent a virus or bacterial infection; we are going to do everything we can to keep ourselves strong. Who would you rather be, the person cowering and ducking every time someone sneezes or coughs or the person who isn't washing their hands every time you turn around, confident they have an immune system that protects them like a suit of armor?

HOW DO WE DO IT?

The first step is to understand that the appetite was given as a means of keeping us well. Every time we're hungry, it's a great opportunity to nourish ourselves. Truly good food is great-tasting food, so this shouldn't be unpleasant. However, if we eat foods that offer very little nutritionally but fill us up, we've sabotaged the entire mission of appetite. I cringe when I see babies and toddlers given pieces of bread, cereal, pasta, crackers, and cookies when they're hungry. These foods will satisfy their appetite but will do absolutely nothing to enhance growth and development or even a general level of good health. And... they will crowd out room for foods that truly nourish. Not only are foods like these devoid of nutritional potency, they are anti-nutrients, robbing existing stores in order to process them. Further, as all carbohydrates translate into "sugar" once ingested, they cause further immune system compromise.

AH, C'MON...IS SUGAR REALLY *THAT* BAD?

I hear you. It can be so annoying to listen to the prim 'n proper anti-sugar people. But what most of us don't realize is that sugar really is a big, big problem when it comes to our health, and sugar is a really, *really* big problem when it comes to cancer. Listen to this: White blood cells scavenge viruses and bacteria. White blood cells require 50 times more Vitamin C inside the cell than out, so they have to accumulate vitamin C. Glucose (sugar) and Vitamin C have similar chemical structures, so when blood sugar levels go up, they compete with one another to enter the cells. What mediates the entry of glucose into the cells is the same as what mediates the entry of Vitamin C into the cells, so... if there is more glucose around there is going to be less Vitamin C allowed into the cell. And it doesn't take much! A blood sugar value of 120 reduces the "phagocytic index" by 75%. So when you eat sugar, think of your immune system slowing down to a crawl! (www.healingdaily.com)

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE MINI-TRAMPOLINE??

I know. I told you I would explain about bouncing and the immune system in this issue of *The Windham Independent*. Unfortunately I was carried away with all of the above and simply ran out of space. Ah... in the words of Scarlet O'Hara, "I won't think about that right now...I'll think about that tomorrow!" Or... how about next week?

