

Dr. Michael Janson's

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Dear Friends,

While watching some recent television shows (yes, there are occasional good ones if you are extremely selective), I have been impressed with the advertising, which I normally simply block out with the mute button. What impresses me is the juxtaposition of the different ads. First we see ads for fast junk (no, I don't call it junk food because it is not really food) from McDonald's, Dunkin' Donuts, Pizza Hut, Burger King, Krispy Kreme, KFC, and others.

Next are the ads for Maalox and Pepcid, Acid and headache pills. So we see the ads for the cause of indigestion and headaches followed by the ads for the supposed remedies for these maladies. The next collection of ads are for the later results of these dietary habits, namely laxatives for the constipation and antidiarrheal drugs for the loose bowels.

Of course, there are also plenty of ads touting the remedies for the most serious result of poor dietary choices—obesity. It is impossible to choose your excessive calories from the above sources without eventually suffering the consequences in many ways. We know that all the gimmick diets and exotic supplements for weight loss are ineffective—and they do not promote health.

What works is regular exercise (as opposed to sitting around watching ads for high calorie and high-fat junk, while using the remote to change the channels) and the constant selection of healthy diets from real foods that grow. These foods are satisfying, filling, and relatively low in calories. They can also be relatively fast (what is faster than a banana?) and they provide a wide variety of nutrients and phytochemicals that protect and enhance your health, rather than anti-nutrients that initiate and promote diseases.

The most dangerous result of these ads is the indoctrination of children and teenagers into destructive dietary habits. They learn the poorest habits at an early age and carry them into adulthood. They never learn how to eat properly, but they do learn how to sit around watching TV. I was recently cleaning out some areas of my basement, and I came across my high school yearbook. One of the most striking features for me was to see how incredibly few students were overweight. No, we did not all eat perfectly, but we did eat somewhat fresher, more wholesome foods, and we did not watch nearly so much television. After school we played, rode bicycles, took hikes and spent a lot of time outdoors.

Damage at an Early Age

The results of this onslaught are seen every day. One recent book, *Fast Food Nation*, shows the parallel between the rise of fast junk restaurants with the rise of obesity in America. A recent scientific study shows an ominous trend—in teens 15 to 19 years old, 100 percent had arteriosclerotic damage to their aortas, and 50 percent to their right coronary arteries. We have a lot of work to do.

Allergic Sinusitis versus Colds

In this season, with Spring allergies approaching and winter sinus infections still with us, some people want to know the difference between the two conditions and how to deal with them.

Sinus problems, colds, and allergies often overlap, and the symptoms may be difficult to distinguish. The sinus cavities in the bones surrounding the eyes and nose are lined with mucus-producing cells. Air circulation in these cavities helps to warm the air as you breathe in. The sinus secretions normally drain into the nose through small openings. A sinus problem (sinusitis) is simply inflammation of the sinuses from whatever cause—usually a cold or allergies.

A viral infection, such as a cold or flu, can cause swelling that blocks the sinuses, leading to accumulation of secretions. Symptoms are congestion, runny nose, and difficulty breathing. This sometimes develops into a bacterial infection, but not always. A postnasal drip from the sinuses may lead to a chronic cough. Symptoms that accompany a cold or flu are runny nose, fever, chills, fatigue, sore throat, and coughing.

Allergies can also lead to swelling of the sinus openings. Exposure to allergens such as dust, molds, pollens, and sometimes foods can trigger the same symptoms as sinusitis from other causes. As with viral infections, there's congestion, a runny nose, and difficulty breathing, but not the accompanying flu-like symptoms or fever. Chronic allergies can lead to sinus polyps, which are non-malignant growths.

Whatever the cause, sinusitis can lead to headaches or facial pain, a sense of fullness around the nose and eyes, and sinus discharge. If the sinusitis is chronic, the pain may come and go.

Treating Allergic Sinusitis

With allergies, it is possible to reduce exposure to allergens with environmental controls such as air conditioning, an air filter (I use an AustinAir), or simply wearing a dust mask while gardening or doing dusty chores or crafts. For some people, avoiding milk helps reduce mucus production.

It is important to stimulate sinus drainage by inhaling steam and drinking plenty of fluids. Extra vitamin C (3,000 to 6,000 mg) helps control allergic symptoms. Quercetin (800 to 1,200 mg) is

a bioflavonoid that reduces histamine release. Quercetin does not block the action of histamine, but it stabilizes the cell membranes so they do not release the histamine as readily. Antihistamine drugs often have side effects, so it is better to try the natural remedies first.

Nettle extract (250 to 500 mg of standardized extract up to several times a day) has antiinflammatory properties, and it helps relieve allergic sinusitis and hay fever. Supplements of proanthocyanidins (also called oligomeric procyanidins—PAC and OPC are the common acronyms), derived from grape seed and pine bark, also help support normal immune function, and can help relieve allergic symptoms.

Treating Viruses

For viral infections, also try the steam inhalation and high fluid intake. While the same 3,000 to 6,000 mg dose of vitamin C is usually helpful (and it maintains valuable high levels of vitamin C in the white blood cells), it may be necessary to have intravenous treatments for the most benefit. (The recent warnings about vitamin C causing arterial thickening are based on unreliable data, and the best information we have now is that high dose vitamin C can prevent strokes and heart disease as well as cancer.)

Supplements of echinacea (250 to 300 mg of standardized extract, twice a day) help to enhance immunity by stimulating white blood cell activity. Garlic (1,000 to 2,000 mg of deodorized garlic is most convenient) has antibiotic and antiviral effects. Standardized elderberry extract (1,000 to 2,000 mg daily) has antiviral properties and may help shorten colds.

I also recommend “transfer factor”—immune support substances derived from colostrum that help control bacterial and viral infections (usually 200 to 400 mg three times a day). Ginger extract (200 to 400 mg) is an antiinflammatory, that may relieve symptoms.

For bacterial infections, with fever and sinus discharge, most of the above supplements are helpful, but it's also important to take the appropriate antibiotic to keep the infection from spreading to the surrounding tissues, including the bone and brain. Take Lactobacilli for their antibacterial activity and to replace the friendly intestinal bacteria killed by antibiotic drugs.

More on Environmental Detoxification

In last month's issue, due to space considerations, I left out the importance of exercise as an aid to elimination of environmental toxins.

Exercise helps by increasing metabolic rate and body temperature. It promotes sweating, which helps to remove toxins, including those stored in fatty tissues, as you burn off the excess fat or replace normal levels of body fat. Exercise also eliminates toxins by stimulating passage of waste through the colon and promoting regular bowel movements. As a result, toxins spend less time in contact with the vulnerable bowel mucosa, and the likelihood of reabsorption is diminished.

No one doubts the value of exercise for health and promotion of longevity, and the sense of vigor and vibrancy it provides. The additional value of detoxification may well be a part of the reason that it produces a sense of well being and the long-term health benefits.

Diet and Brain Function

A new report based on an animal study suggests that a high fat diet can impair brain function. Although the known results of a high fat diet (especially meat fat) are bad enough (increased cancer of the breast, prostate, and colon, and obesity, diabetes, and heart disease), this new study suggests further problems.

It is possible, according to the researchers, that the decreased brain function is due to insulin resistance that results from obesity. When cells lose their sensitivity to insulin, the risk of diabetes and heart disease goes up. Also, for a variety of reasons, diabetics lose long-term memory and other cognitive functions.

Their research also showed that carbohydrates can enhance brain function. In a human study, adult subjects given a mashed potato and barley breakfast performed better on brain tests.

The same researchers reported in 1990 that a decline in brain function was related to saturated fat intake, compared to polyunsaturated oils. Animals on regular lab chow (4.5% fat) had higher cognitive function than those who ate extra animal fat, while those who ate additional soybean oil consistently performed better in memory and learning than the animal fat group (but the low-fat chow was the best for performance).

Strategy for The Brain

It is clear that a high complex carbohydrate diet has many advantages. In 1999, researchers gave four different breakfasts to 14 subjects. After a high fat meal, the participants craved more food and ate more calories than those on a high-fiber carbohydrate meal. The latter meal led to the highest rating of alertness and resulted in the least craving for calories, thus potentially assisting in weight loss efforts.

In addition to diets of whole grains, vegetables, fruits and beans, many supplements help brain function. Take brain antioxidants—alpha lipoic acid (300 to 1000 mg daily), vitamins C and E, ginkgo biloba (120 mg), melatonin (3 to 6 mg), and proanthocyanidins (100 to 200 mg).

I also recommend supplements of phosphatidyl serine (200 mg), a component of neuronal membranes that enhances memory.

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Dietary Fat and Brain Function

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In The Health News

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In the Health News

- A new report in the New England Journal of Medicine shows that coronary bypass surgery has more long term effects on brain function than previously thought. While it was known that loss of cognitive ability was an immediate effect (and one to five percent of patients have strokes), it seems that loss of function is apparent even years later. The real disgrace is that a majority of angiograms and bypass operations are probably unnecessary. (Newman MF, et al., *N Engl J Med* 2001 Feb 8;344(6):395-402. Graboys TB, et al., Results of a second-opinion trial...angiography. *JAMA* 1992 Nov 11;268(18):2537-40.)
- Although low dose aspirin has been touted for prevention of heart attacks, a new study shows that it is only valuable for those in a higher risk category. Lower risk patients had no benefit, and the lowest risk patients actually had more risk from bleeding complications than any potential benefit. You are better off taking vitamin E, coenzyme Q10, vitamin C, magnesium, essential fatty acids, and ginkgo biloba.

Diet and Disease

- Fiber is not only protective against colon cancer (in spite of one report to the contrary), but new research suggests that it also protects against cancers of the mouth, throat, and esophagus. Those in the highest level of intake of all fibers had about half as many such cancers as the case-matched controls. Certain fibers did even better—lignins and soluble fibers, found in grains, beans, and seeds (including flaxseeds), were the best, at just over one third as many cancers, but all fibers appeared worthwhile in this study. Of course, fiber could just be a marker for eating a diet high in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and seeds, with many other protective properties. (Soler M, et al., Fiber intake and the risk of... cancer. *Int J Cancer* 2001 Feb 1;91(3):283-287.)

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Steamed Veggie Simplicity

One of my favorite easy meals is just a mix of steamed vegetables—with a few enhancements. I put several potatoes and butternut squash (cut into 1-2 inch pieces), quartered onions, and peeled garlic in a large steamer. When that is just about cooked, I add cut broccoli for the last 12 minutes. Test it with a fork before taking it off the heat. I then drizzle some flaxseed oil and a bit of balsamic vinegar over the mix, some fresh crushed black and white peppercorns, and a few drops of toasted sesame oil. For variety, I sometimes try thyme, cayenne, or chili powder, or for a lower calorie dressing I replace the oil and vinegar with mustard. Of course, you can do this with cauliflower, or brussels sprouts, or any mix. Experiment with your own selection of veggies or dressings.

If you have specific health questions that might be of general interest, write to me or submit them through the **Ask Dr J** page on my website: www.drjanson.com. Come visit for more health updates.

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