

Commentary

Food Matters

Betsy Hicks

Pathways Medical Advocates
Email: betsy@pathwaysmed.com

Abstract

The rapid decline in food quality in the United States has strongly contributed to the increase of diabetes, celiac disease, immune disorders, and developmental disabilities. The presence of chemical preservatives, food coloring, high fructose corn syrup, aluminum, and arsenic in chicken feed are some examples of insidious and dangerous food ingredients. Americans' excessive ingestion of carbohydrates, nutrient depleted soil, misinformation about the benefits of dairy and soy, and a lack of trustworthy information from the FDA further jeopardizes the quality of Americans' diets. Children with developmental disabilities, especially, are suffering due to an ignorance of nutrition. Yet traditional medicine continues to look to the pharmaceutical direction when treating illness without any consideration of diet. Medical doctors receive little dietary training, and it usually does not include education with regard to the consequences of newly "advanced" preservatives, excitotoxins and pesticides. We cannot control all external environmental exposures, however we can make educated choices in our food that will improve our health, behavior, and brain functioning. We must turn to food for healing and suspect food in illness.

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The rapid decline in food quality in the United States has strongly contributed to the increase of diabetes, celiac disease, immune disorders, and developmental disabilities. Our wealthy country is an embarrassment to the nutritional standards of Third World countries. Our food is chemically preserved in order to last decades on the shelf. Our vegetables grow in nutrient depleted soil, and our chickens are treated with arsenic. Walk the aisles of a standard grocery store, drive the streets to see the abundance of fast food restaurants, and witness our children's school cafeterias. Addicted to carbohydrates, millions of Americans no longer eat "whole foods."

In a recent lecture at a high school health class, a student volunteered his lunch for me to review. In it, was what others told me he brought everyday: a can of Mountain Dew, Starburst Gummies, and a pudding cup. His reply to my concern and slight hysteria was that you could eat whatever you want as long as you exercise. Another student added that as long as he wasn't fat, what's the problem? Attitudes like these are created from a lack of trustworthy information from the Food and Drug Administration. Archaic food pyramids make French fries and popcorn look like vegetables and nachos look like a complete meal.

North Americans are too educated and have too many resources to be accepting the rapid decline of our food and water. It is becoming our daily poison; yet traditional medicine continues to look to the pharmaceutical direction when treating illness without any consideration of diet. Medical doctors receive little dietary training, and it usually does not include education with regard to the consequences of newly "advanced" preservatives, excitotoxins and pesticides.

Celiac disease in North America is now believed to be affecting one in every 133 adults. (Washington Post, Feb 2003 University of Maryland) Gastrointestinal specialists are not quick to diagnose, and tend to wait for the case to advance be-

fore it is mentioned. The temporary solution is an Irritable Bowel Syndrome diagnosis and drugs that further complicate the declining immune system.

It is no surprise that children with developmental disabilities are suffering from an ignorance of nutrition. Studies by Reichelt and Cade pioneered the need for the gluten and casein free diet in ASD, and revealed that the lack of the enzyme Dipeptidylpeptidase IV (responsible for the breakdown of the casein and gluten large chain amino acids) sequentially creates an opioid effect in the brain when these foods are ingested.

What followed was a series of success stories confirming their findings. To hundreds of thousands of children and adults with ASD, the GF/CF diet brought clarity, focus, and frequently speech to those throughout the spectrum. Still, there are many parents who feel the GF/CF is the end of their dietary concerns. There are still children living on highly sugared cereals, French fries, corn chips and soy ice cream.

The benefits of dairy have been exaggerated by an industry that continues to lobby the government that it is a necessary staple in our diet. The state of Wisconsin alone makes around \$31,000 per minute from dairy revenue. People believe the "Got Milk" commercials are public service messages and that their bones will crumble and degenerate if they do not consume 3 servings each day. The truth is that cow's milk is a very non-absorbable version of calcium, meant to be digested by a calf with four stomachs. As Homo Sapiens, we have little genetic similarities to bovines. In its raw version, the natural digestive enzymes help to break down proteins and sugars, but with the destructions of enzymes through pasteurization, the body cannot properly metabolize milk. This commonly leads to digestive disorders and mucous build up, causing countless ear, sinus and respiratory tract infections.

In 2005, Kaayla Daniels, PhD, CCN, published *The Whole Soy Story* (New Trends Publishing, Inc.) In this well researched

and brilliantly organized book, Dr. Daniels presents some fascinating points about this food we've been brainwashed into believing was our dietary savior:

- 1) The soy industry has falsified and manipulated studies reporting on soy's health benefits.
- 2) Soy is a leading contributor of estrogen dominance. Its goitrogens damage thyroid function and isoflavones affect hormones and reproduction.
- 3) Soy is one of the top 8 allergens.
- 4) Soy oxalates block absorption of calcium.
- 5) Soy's phytates prevent absorption of minerals such as zinc, iron and calcium.
- 6) Soy is a protease and trypsin inhibitor contributing to digestive abnormalities, poor protein digestion, and is a pancreatic stressor.

In the past 40 years, the use of high fructose corn syrup has grown at enormous rates. An inexpensive sweetener, HF Corn syrup creates numerous problems in the body and is known for its addictive properties. Fructose does not stimulate insulin production and also fails to increase leptin production. These both act by turning off the appetite and controlling body weight. Fructose also drains the body of magnesium, thus depleting calcium absorption.

There are other reasons for eliminating corn:

- 1) Most forms are genetically modified and are difficult to digest.
- 2) The large amounts of mold on corn cause intestinal bugs to increase.
- 3) Corn contains high amounts of sugar.
- 4) Corn is an inadequate source of protein.
- 5) Corn contains a large amount of phytate which inhibits iron absorption.

Other foods are frequently not considered when cleaning up the diet of children with ASD. In my 8 years as a diet counselor under the supervision of my husband, John H. Hicks, M.D., F.A.A.P., I have read hundreds of lab reports of IgE food allergies and IgG food hypersensitivities. I have noted that approximately 87% of the children with ASD are also allergic or intolerant to eggs. The systems range from disrupted behavior to eczema. This wonderful food, even in the organic version, needs to be eliminated temporarily until the immune system is repaired.

Excitotoxins are chemicals or amino acids that disrupt neurotransmitters. The substance actually tricks the brain to make

the food seem, "flavor enhanced." In small amounts the body can detoxify these, but the American diet grows yearly in its use of excitotoxins, such as; MSG, Aspartame, and other "Natural Flavorings".

Food Coloring, in most artificial cases is a petrochemical. These chemicals damage liver and kidney function. The increasing ingestion of brightly colored drinks, candy, and the strange "Blue Ketchup" is a reminder to our society that children's food choices have to be entertaining. Mealtime is lost to "pleasing everyone." Children aren't given a chance to try new foods, since their desires are met in order to make peace.

Aluminum inhibits cellular and metabolic processes in the nervous system and other tissue. Many vaccines, where thimerosal has been eliminated, have been replaced with aluminum as one of the preservatives. Aluminum surfaces in many foods including soy, table salt, and tap water. Additionally, it will enter your food or beverages through canned products with the addition of tin. Even more dangerous is the use of aluminum cookware and foil. Found in nearly every kitchen, Americans add aluminum to hot dishes and baked goods daily.

One of the saddest declines in our food sources is the "nutritionally dead" soil we are growing the majority of our fruits and vegetables in. I consider this the most tragic factor, because even the well-meaning parent who feeds their child a diet rich in meats, vegetables, fruits, and whole grains is getting cheated by conventional farming techniques that rob our produce of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and probiotics. With many not having access to organic produce, there are no other options. Pesticides are genetically modified into the seeds, and are additionally sprayed on the flower, so that these toxic chemicals actually grow into the produce. Crops are no longer being required to rotate because chemical fertilizers are helping them grow and be cosmetically appealing. One cannot see a lack of vitamins, although the taste is obvious. Produce picked while green ripens without flavor. It's no surprise than Americans no longer enjoy their vegetables.

The good news is that organic produce and meats are on the rise. The demand is up making the nutritionally rich foods readily available. We can eat healthfully, and it does not need to cost a fortune. If you compare the price of pizza delivery, packaged foods, soda, and fast food to rice, beans, vegetables that are not prepackaged, and fresh meats, you will budget in closely the same. In addition, an individual who eats well misses fewer days of work/school and relies less on costly medication.

We cannot control all external environmental exposures, however we can make educated choices in our food that will improve our health, behavior, and brain functioning. We must turn to food for healing and suspect food in illness.