

# The Natural Pharmacy Newsletter

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## *In The News*

### **Diet and Cancer Risk: Is There A link?**

By: Kurt Korbas, PharmD. Candidate

Years ago, many doctors did not know the role of diet in human health. Nor were they really taught much about it in medical school. But as 2010 approached, this began to change. Many doctors gradually started evolving to take more of a holistic approach to diet, looking for links between it and several disease states.

It has been shown that a healthy diet can greatly reduce a person's risk for heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, the three biggest health concerns for Americans today. The

following will explore options that you can take as a consumer to help boost your health and decrease your risk of developing diseases.

The first step involves changing the types of food on your plate. Most people have a large portion of meats and a very small portion of plant-based foods like fruits and vegetables, if any. A way to change this is to divide your plate into thirds. Two-thirds should be dedicated to whole grains, red/yellow/green vegetables, and fruits with high water content like apples, oranges and melons. The other one-third of the plate should



contain meats, but no larger than a deck of cards. If possible, avoid processed meats like hot dogs and sausage because they may contain a preservative that has been linked to cancer. One other tip is to avoid burning these meats because they can produce compounds that are associated with causing cancer.

The next step is to avoid as many chemicals as possible. This could mean buying organic foods, buying local foods, and lastly washing your foods before eating them. Many commercially produced foods contain pesticides in which some of them are known carcinogens (cancer-causing agents). Organic foods are grown without pesticides. However, they can become very pricey, but a good option if you are able to afford them. Buying local foods is also a great option because since they are grown so close to home, they are usually free of chemicals and preservatives because they do not have to travel far. If you are on a tight budget, the most feasible option for this step is to wash your foods before eating. Soak produce items in a deep pot for 15-20 minutes then lightly scrub them with a soft scrubber.

Most Americans do not consume enough fiber per day. This fact, along with a person consuming too much saturated fats, can put them at increased risk for cancer. Fiber helps to remove carcinogens as well as saturated fats from the bowel. The recommended goal for fiber consumption per day is 25 grams. It can be

difficult to get this amount, so it is important to read ingredient labels and shoot for a very high amount of fiber during the day. Again, adding more whole grains, fruits and vegetables can really help you achieve this goal.

Water consumption is crucial. This cannot be stressed enough. Our bodies are made up of 70% water! Consuming enough water each day, will help to flush carcinogens and other toxins from the body. Vomiting and/or having diarrhea can cause dehydration and lead to numerous other problems, so water consumption during these times is even more important.

Lastly, adding supplements that act as antioxidants can help to reduce your risk for cancer. These include vitamin E, vitamin C, vitamin D, selenium, and beta carotene. These supplements help to capture and get rid of harmful substances in the body. If you have any questions about which supplements you should be on, please feel free to give us a call or stop in for information.

## **The Key Roles of Probiotics**

**By: Kurt Korbas, PharmD. Candidate**

Probiotics have been used for many decades to help restore the good bacteria in the gut after severe diarrhea or infections. But does it play a key role in other biological processes? According to recent studies, the answer to that question is yes. Research shows that they may also help in obesity, anxiety, depression, allergies, and possibly even diabetes and high cholesterol.

Certain strains of probiotics have been shown to decrease stress-induced gut discomfort. This finding led to more studies to specifically look at probiotics for mood. Results showed that humans who were given probiotics supplementation for 30 days had a decrease in stress and anxiety, as well as a decrease in depression and anger symptoms. Along with this, probiotics may be helpful for memory function, but only in stressful situations.

These probiotics also may help to regulate inflammation in conditions such as obesity and diabetes. Researchers have also found that the good bacteria found in a lean individual is different than that of an obese individual. This is also true for diabetic and non-diabetic persons. The specific link between the exact types of bacteria and obesity has still not been fully established. Additionally, it has been found that children of normal weight had more good bacteria in their gut as an infant than those children who would go on to become overweight. In women that have an LDL cholesterol level over 190, probiotics have been beneficial in reducing LDL levels.

Probiotics may also be beneficial in helping the immune system of people with allergic diseases like atopic dermatitis (skin) and allergic rhinitis (nose). They may reduce allergy symptoms by up to 33%, and may also decrease the need for steroids which are commonly prescribed for children and adults suffering from these conditions.

These probiotics are playing an increasing role in people's health. They have shown promising results in not only gut disorders, but also inflammation processes, immune function and even metabolic syndromes like diabetes. Probiotics could be an important factor to help you get healthy and stay healthy this year.

## **Lower Homocysteine Levels May be Associated With Higher Serum Levels of Vitamin C**

Higher levels of homocysteine have been associated with higher risk of cardiovascular disease. Previous research has indicated that B6, B12, and folic acid are associated with lower homocysteine levels. A recent study evaluated the effects of folic acid, vitamin C, vitamin E, betacarotene, and glomerular filtration rate (a measure of kidney function). It was found that increased blood levels of vitamin C, folic acid, and glomerular filtration rate were associated with lower levels of homocysteine. Increased vitamin C intake might be considered with elevated homocysteine and/or increased risk of cardiovascular disease. (Ann Nutr Metab. 2010 Nov 17:57(3-4): 177-182)

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