

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF DIET?

John Appleton – March 2005

Have you ever thought about the importance of lifestyle and diet when it comes to avoiding chronic degenerative diseases? There has been so much written about diets and dieting that most of us could be forgiven for being somewhat confused.

You will note that I have mentioned diets and dieting but we must understand the difference between the two. Most people associate dieting with a regimen specifically designed for weight loss and think of a diet as a short term fix for a specific problem usually excess weight. Diet is all about what we eat every day of our lives and it is diet that we must look into carefully if we are to have any chance of avoiding, alleviating, or controlling the degenerative conditions that so many people live with and ultimately die of. In the world today we tend to **live 'short' and die 'long'**.

The saying 'we are what we eat' is as appropriate today as it was ten years ago or a hundred years ago. I read a wonderful article recently entitled "*You are what your mother ate*". Researchers at the Duke Comprehensive Cancer Centre have discovered that nutrition very early in pregnancy permanently affects gene expression in the offspring without actually changing the genes themselves. What's more, these effects appear to be heritable. Nutrition affects gene expression in both beneficial and detrimental ways. Please think about this and you might begin to understand how relevant diet is when it comes to your health.

So why do so many people end up spending their last years of their lives on earth in pain and misery, often in rest homes where they have to be cared for until they die? Why don't we simply die of old age? Research has shown that humans have the genetic potential to live to 120 years. How many of us achieve that or even have our health when in our 80's? Degenerative diseases are now so widely accepted as the norm that most people just accept them as the price of growing old. I am however convinced that it needn't be this way.

In a superb book by William Wollcott "*The Metabolic Typing Diet*", the author says "*Most people don't understand good health simply because they have never experienced it. They assume they are in good health as long as they have an absence of disease or an absence of symptoms. They don't know what really good health feels like and they don't see other people experiencing it. True good health is not a condition that is merely free of adverse symptoms. It's a state of dynamic wellbeing. When your body is functioning as it's designed to function, you should be experiencing boundless energy all the time, have a keen awareness of your surroundings, a strong and positive emotional state, and a natural love and zest for life. This is very different from most people's experience, which is one of moving through life in a kind of mechanical, often sluggish way feeling 'okay' in between intermittent bouts of colds, headaches, the flu, ennui, and various kinds of aches and pains that everyone in modern society has come to think of as normal*"

Whenever I mention dietary measures as a means of improving health the common response is often quite defensive. "I eat a balanced diet" is what I hear most often. What is a balanced diet though? Someone told me that a balanced diet could be having a cake in each hand. When we talk about balance unless we speak in terms of homeostasis – a state that our body strives for – a state when our body chemistry is in balance, we are deluding ourselves. Homeostasis is our ultimate goal when it comes to how we are now and how we will be in the future.

All the reading that I have done suggests that from the day we are born we slowly poison ourselves through poor food choices that set in place the processes which lead to the degenerative conditions that plague western civilization. In her wonderful book *"Lick The Sugar Habit"* Nancy Appleton PhD says *"All of my ailments were caused by the substances I put into my body"*.

If we look at our children now, we see eczema, arthritis, cardiovascular diseases, digestive disorders such as ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome appearing in ever younger people. Degenerative diseases are for the most part processes that are triggered by diet and lifestyle choices (remember that the way your genes express themselves can be a result of what your mother ate and what you are eating now).

The problem is that the process is so slow that we are not aware that it is going on until the symptoms arrive to alert us. Have you ever considered that Osteoporosis may not be caused by a calcium deficiency in the diet but by massive depletion of calcium from our bones as our body struggles to offset a potentially fatal change in the pH (acidity or alkalinity) of our blood caused by consumption of acid producing foods such as animal protein and dairy products? The pH scale goes from 0 to 14 with 0 being the most acidic and 14 the most alkaline. Your blood must maintain an alkaline range of 7.35 to 7.45 pH.

Unless you are willing to address the cause of the problem, you will never resolve it. Treating symptoms with is NOT addressing the cause. Imagine if you were driving along in your car and the oil light came on and you heard an unusual noise from the engine. You would naturally be concerned so you take it in to the service centre where a friendly mechanic puts a sticker over the oil light so you don't see it and gives you some earplugs so you don't hear the engine noise. This is treating the symptoms of the problem. Would you be happy with this approach? I don't think so. Why then are so many people willing to accept this form of therapy when it comes to their health?

When it comes to diet, our objective is to facilitate health inducing biochemical processes within the body and avoid health reducing biochemical processes. Good nutrition is the highway to health. This concept will at some time in the not too distant future be embraced by mainstream medicine. Presently we are stuck in a medical paradigm that is based on making money from sickness.

I like this: *“An important scientific innovation rarely makes its way by gradually winning over and converting its opponents: it rarely happens that Saul becomes Paul. What does happen is that its opponents gradually die out and the growing generation is familiarized with the idea from the beginning”* Max Planck 1858-1947 Nobel Laureate (physics) 1918.

My question is why wait for the inevitable - do it now?

A health inducing diet involves eliminating all the foods that we are literally ‘dying’ for and replacing them with real foods that provide essential macronutrients (good fats, good proteins, good carbohydrates) and micronutrients (minerals and vitamins).

Let’s review the following table of food consumption in the U.S between 1900 and 1980. I would like you to consider whether diet over the past 100 years has anything to do with the pandemic of chronic degenerative disease that is all but bankrupting our health system.

In the 25 years from 1980 to 2005, many of the health inducing foods we used to consume have been progressively replaced by processed garbage and thus we see in the New Zealand Herald that for the first time in 1,000 years children are expected to have a shorter life span than their parents. Medical science can have all the double blind placebo controlled crossover studies in the world to determine the safety and efficacy of their so called medicines, but unless we put diet at the top of our list, we are heading nowhere at an ever faster pace.

FOOD CONSUMPTION IN THE U.S.A.

Between 1900 and 1980

Fresh fruit and vegetable consumption decreased from 40% to less than 5%

Butter consumption decreased 75%

Lard consumption decreased 66%

Unprocessed potato and sweet potato consumption decreased 40%

Processed potatoes comprise 33% of all white potatoes consumed

The majority of these are in the form of French fries

The fast food industry sells 75% of all French fries eaten

Whole grain consumption decreased 50%

Beef consumption increased 75%

Dairy product consumption (other than butter) increased 25%

Cheese consumption increased 400%

Fat and oil consumption increased 150%

Margarine consumption increased 800%

Corn syrup consumption increased 400%

Sugar consumption increased 50% (the average person consumes 70 kilograms of REFINED WHITE SUGAR per year)

Between 1910 and 1980

Poultry consumption increased 350%
Fresh apple consumption decreased 70%
Fresh fruit consumption decreased 33%

Between 1930 and 1980

Processed citrus fruit consumption increased 2500%
Fresh citrus fruit consumption decreased 50%

Between 1940 and 1980

Egg consumption decreased 25%
Food colouring consumption increased 90%

Between 1960 and 1980

Soft drink consumption increased 300%
Each person consumes 38 gallons of soft drinks annually (one fifth of our sugar intake is in soft drinks)

*Statistics compiled by the United States Department of Agriculture

I hope that by now we are all beginning to understand that what we ingest every day can have a very significant impact on how we feel today and how we will feel in the future and most importantly how long we might continue living on planet earth.

So what are the foods that we need to be aware of when it comes to our health?

Sugar in all its forms is the ultimate enemy of health, the number one bad guy. Did you know that sugar consumption in the western world has jumped from approx 2.5 kgs per person per annum prior to the turn of last century to approx 70 kgs per person per annum today? Even more frightening is that since 1983 in the U.S., consumption has increased by 28 percent. Has this got anything to do with the health problems that plague the western world? Having read hundreds of articles about sugar I share the view of many that sugar could one day be thought of as the most deleterious substance ever inflicted on mankind.

If you value your health you will cut sugar in all of its forms out of your diet. It's not just the sugar that you put in your tea – sugar is sugar whether its sucrose, fructose, glucose, maltose or lactose. Don't use artificial sweeteners – they can be worse. Beware of any product claiming to be sugar free. Chances are that it contains something even more harmful e.g. aspartame (E951). If you can't live without a sweetener go for Stevia from a South American plant (hundreds of times sweeter than sugar and totally user friendly). Fructose which is found in fruit is still sugar but in the whole fruit form it comes with its own digestive enzymes. Try to eat fruit on an empty stomach at midday.

Fat is the macronutrient that is most maligned and vilified. In the western world over the past 50 or so years we have been conditioned to think that fat is bad, fat equals heart disease, fat equals obesity. Think of how many products you see in the supermarket claiming to be 99% fat free and thus healthy. It seems nowadays that everything is 99% fat free apart from the people.

In reality we need fat. It's essential for life. It becomes very clear when researching this subject that there are good fats and bad fats. What also becomes clear is that the good guys get the bad rap and the bad guys are somehow positioned as essential to a healthy diet (the power of advertising).

Does fat cause heart disease? Consider this which comes from a paper by world renowned authority on fats Mary Enig PhD. Before 1920 coronary heart disease in America was rare. When a young internist introduced an electrocardiograph at Harvard University there was little use for such a machine. During the next forty years though the incidence of heart disease rose dramatically; so much so that by the mid fifties heart disease was the leading cause of death in America. If though as we have been told, heart disease results from consumption of saturated fats one would expect to find a corresponding increase of animal fat in the American diet. During the 60 year period from 1910 to 1970 the proportion of traditional animal fat declined from 83% to 62% and butter consumption plummeted from 8.1 kgs to 1.8 kgs. Dietary cholesterol increased only 1%. During the same period the percentage of dietary vegetable oils in the form of margarine, shortening and other refined oils increased about 400%.

Could this be a reason why heart disease took off? I firmly believe it has everything to do with it. So called healthy polyunsaturated oils, soy, canola, safflower, corn (high in omega 6 fatty acids) that are promoted as healthy are extracted under high heat, are very unstable and when sold in clear plastic bottles can be rancid and oxidized before you even use them. When you cook with them you are adding to the problem. I have seen a lot of research suggesting that polyunsaturated oils suppress thyroid function.

The most dangerous form of fat in our diet today is the hydrogenated oil we find in the so called healthy spreads (margarines etc). These are deadly. Oils that are liquid at room temperature are treated with hydrogen to make them solidify. Do not buy any product that contains hydrogenated oils. These dangerous fats are found in biscuits, pies and baked goods in general. Don't buy into the cholesterol lowering claims that are made for 'wonder' spreads that are heavily promoted. Plant sterols are best obtained from plants in their natural state. If in doubt when buying a vegetable oil product as a spread ring the manufacturer and ask them if their process includes hydrogenation.

Olive Oil is a monounsaturated fat and yes it is very good for you. Never buy it in a clear bottle and go for extra virgin preferably organic. It is more stable than vegetable oils so you can use it for cooking (gentle heat only though) but it is best consumed in a cold form on salads.

It might be difficult for you after so much conditioning about fat to believe that saturated fats (which are very stable) can actually be good for you. What's wrong with butter? The answer is nothing. When used sparingly and preferably in the unsalted form, butter is a good source of healthy fat.

You may be surprised to know that Coconut Oil is now one of the most sought after functional foods around the world. It's a saturated fat containing significant quantities of Lauric acid (found in breast milk and important for building the immune system) and Capric and Caprylic acids which have strong antibacterial antimicrobial and antifungal properties. Coconut oil contains medium chain triglycerides which are burned as energy and thus not stored as fat. This wonderful oil tastes great, is fantastic for cooking everything (I take 2 tablespoons a day). Like Olive oil all Coconut Oils are not the same. You must buy a quality oil that is not refined bleached or deodorised (RBD).

White flour and all processed grains and every product that is baked with them (breads, biscuits, cakes, pies, pizzas etc) This is deadly stuff (even weevils avoid it) and it has a very deleterious effect on your health. White flour is stripped of all nutrients and provides empty calories thus forcing your pancreas to produce insulin to keep the blood sugar in check.

Grains are acid forming and have inflammatory and allergenic properties. Gluten containing grains are high on the list when it comes to allergies and all manner of digestive conditions. I have read some research that suggests that gluten in wheat and other grains may be a major driver of senile dementia (inflammatory effect on the brain). I firmly believe that you don't have to be a Coeliac to be intolerant to gluten. My research suggests that most people are sensitive in varying degrees to this protein. Try reducing your consumption of grains and note the way you feel. I have some really good articles on grains if anyone is interested.

A wonderful alternative is Quinoa (Keenwa). This is a South American seed that cooks like rice and can be made to taste like anything. It's very high in protein (10%), low glycemic and contains lots of B Vitamins and eight important amino acids.

White rice has been stripped of all its nutrients and it gives you empty calories that will spike your blood sugar faster than sugar. Go for organic brown rice – it takes longer to cook and is not as soft but it's a lot better for you.

Avoid salt as you buy it in the supermarket. Being only Sodium and Chloride it may have been stripped of all its minerals and thus is not good. Forget the fact that it contains iodine. There are other ways of obtaining an appropriate form of iodine (Dulse, a form of seaweed is the best way and it tastes great too). Sodium is found in almost all processed foods. Avoid it at all costs. The only salt that is truly health inducing is Himalayan Crystal Salt (which contains all 83 minerals).

Homogenised milk and milk in a powdered form. Homogenised milk was developed to extend its shelf life. Scientific research indicates that homogenised milk may be one of the contributing factors to heart disease. Nicholas Sapsidis in his book *'Homogenised'* explains that homogenised milk fat contains an enzyme called Xanthine Oxidase which is not broken down by digestion but passes directly into circulation where it damages artery walls and the heart muscle.

According to renowned American researcher Dr Kilmer McCully, powdered milk and products made with it (many baked goods and some yoghurts) contain a dangerous form of oxidized cholesterol. When milk is pasteurized the process kills the enzyme phosphatase and thus calcium absorption is hindered. If you must have milk buy A2 milk which is not homogenised or Goat Milk which is also not homogenised. Please remember that dairy products are acid forming. Acid residue in your tissues is not what you need.

I have cut back on consumption of dairy products overall. Cow's milk contains 3.5 times the protein of breast milk. Look at the countries where there is the most osteoporosis, breast cancer and prostate cancer. You won't see China on the list where breast cancer affects one in 100,000 people (1 in 9 in the U.K) and prostate cancer is almost unheard of. The Chinese consume a tiny fraction of the dairy products that we do.

Soy is not a health food. There has been so much said for and against Soy, many people are confused. Soy milk is most often pumped full of sugar and has numerous flavour enhancers (to overcome the unpleasant taste). For anyone who wants a definitive answer about Soy, Kaayla Daniel PhD CCN, has just published a superb book *"The Whole Soy Story"* which will certainly change your mind if you ever thought that Soy is a health food. Never ever give a baby Soy 'Formula'.

I am not a vegetarian but when it comes to red meat I am extremely cautious. Red meat is very difficult to digest and it requires a lot of stomach acid (very difficult for those who consume antacids in the belief that excess stomach acid causes indigestion and heartburn). It is very acid forming and guess where excess acidity ends up? – in the tissues surrounding the joints. Much research shows that there is a powerful linkage between consumption of meats (particularly processed meats) and colon cancer which is in the top three cancers in New Zealand.

Processed meats are pumped with toxic chemicals, nitrates and nitrites - avoid them. Go for organic or free range chicken and choose skinless breast meat. Yes it is more expensive than ordinary highly processed chicken but it's a lot better for you and you can use it as an ingredient in a meal rather than as a main course.

We have now looked into some of the 'foods' that are deleterious to our health and while there is a lot more one could say about this, I am sure you will now be aware that what goes in the 'horizontal trapdoor' can have a very significant impact on short term and long term health.

Someone told me some years ago that *'the Stone Age didn't end because we ran out of stone, we simply found a better way'*. It would take a lot to convince me that nutritional medicine is not a better way. It's not as though this is a new concept. Hippocrates the 'father' of medicine, was saying in 400 BC *"Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food."*

Having embraced this thinking in all aspects of my diet and I am often asked 'does it work'? To this I can only say, I don't have heart disease, high cholesterol, arthritis or diabetes; I feel fitter and stronger than I did 30 years ago, I sleep well, my eyesight is good, and overall I feel alive and very well. I guess there must be something I am doing right.

When it comes to specifics of what I incorporate into my dietary regimen:

Fats and Oils – Coconut Oil (for all cooking) – organic extra virgin Olive Oil (for dressings and salads I seldom cook with it) – unsalted Butter (sparingly)

Carbohydrates – Mainly vegetables and whole fruits but I use organic brown rice with lunch and dinner and organic unprocessed Quinoa (Keenwa) for breakfast.

Bread - Very limited amounts but if I am having bread Gluten free Venerdi – which is by far the best Gluten Free Bread.

Protein – A small amount of red meat (almost entirely Lamb), organic Chicken, fresh fish (I eat a lot as sashimi) – Quinoa (Keenwa is good source of plant protein) A small amount of cheese unprocessed.

Spreads – organic Almond Butter (an alkalizing nut)

Condiments – Himalayan Crystal Salt (a healthy salt) – Turmeric (a natural Cox2 inhibitor) Dulse (wonderful iodine rich seaweed extract) fresh Garlic (for blood pressure) and Ginger (for digestion, an anti-inflammatory and to prevent platelet aggregation in the same way aspirin does).

Beverages: Filtered water (plenty of it during the day) which has the fluoride removed – organic Ginger Tea and organic Camomile Tea (a wonderful digestive relaxant) Also I have an occasional glass of red wine (antioxidant rich)

Cravings - I find hard to overlook Sushi (white rice which is empty calories) but I feel if I am doing most of it right, there are worse things to be 'addicted' to than Sushi.

A friend and I talk often about various aspects of our nutritional regimen and we both agree that if we could do only one thing in terms of nutrition it would be vegetable juicing. There has been much written on the benefits of juicing and it is reported that the man who first popularized juicing Dr Norman Walker, lived to 109.

For healing your body, you need to supply it with an enormous amount of nutrients above and beyond basic daily living requirements. The body normally does vital (cellular) activity only for daily basic living requirements. Healing is a luxury the body will not undertake unless it has excess energy. Excess energy can be provided to the body rapidly through juicing.

Juicing will serve to motivate you to continue on with the proper diet because your results will be seen faster than if you are eating (not drinking) only raw vegetables. A glass of raw juice is the best "multivitamin/mineral supplement" money can buy. A 250 ml glass of raw vegetable juice once or more daily is like 24 carat gold for your body. It provides not only all of the healing nutrients that have been isolated by scientists, but also all of those that man has yet to discover. It provides them in their living, organic, alkaline, whole, complete and balanced form(s). In addition raw vegetable juice comes with its own package of enzymes thus you are not forcing your pancreas to produce enzymes for digestion.

I have never had a blood transfusion, but I liken the feeling of vitality that comes from vegetable juicing to be similar to having 'fresh' blood pumping through the body.

Your liver will almost certainly reward you for your efforts by recovering lost function, by removing stored toxins and doing the job it is charged with doing. The word 'liver' comes from the olde English word for 'life'. In Russia a common greeting is "*how's your liver today*".

I make vegetable juice twice daily using mostly organic vegetables

My mix is, Cauliflower, Kale, Coloured Silverbeet, Celery, Broccoli, Parsley and Carrots with Beetroot three times a week (Beetroot is very strong so go lightly on this). I don't mix fruits and vegetables so that the vegetables don't have to compete with lots of sugar.

I have my juice 30 minutes prior to breakfast and 30 minutes prior to dinner. Yes it is a hassle cutting washing the vegetables and washing the juicer afterwards, but I can assure you its worth it. I have done this twice a day now for nearly 6 years and I plan to keep going. An investment in one's health has to be a good investment.

When it comes to healing, I can't think of anything better one could do than juicing. An important clue as to how the body reacts to a juicing programme is being able to survive the entire day without feeling the need to eat

Breakfast is a meal I really look forward to. I usually have this after a very brisk walk on the beach. I make up a bowl of Quinoa (Keenwa - not the instant product) by washing half a cup of Quinoa seeds and then adding one cup and a bit of boiling water. I bring it to the boil, reduce it to a simmer and then wait until all the water is absorbed (similar to cooking rice). Incidentally a reader rang me about my comments on rice and blood sugar. She was very surprised when her husband checked his blood sugar after a meal of white rice. It was almost 'off the clock'.

In a large bowl I mash a banana, with a sprinkle of organic Cinnamon (as well as adding to the taste, Cinnamon has been shown to be very effective for controlling blood sugar). I add in a tablespoon of Coconut Oil, then mix in the cooked Quinoa stir it all with a little water and I'm ready to go. Quinoa is not a grain, it's a seed that is high in protein, eight key amino acids, B Vitamins, magnesium and it's low on the glycemic index. It's a very nutritious and filling breakfast.

Lunchtime is when I take on board some fruit juice in the form of a smoothie made in a blender with chilled filtered (non chlorinated or fluoridated) water with Bananas, Blueberries, LSA, Spirulina powder and a tablespoon of Coconut Oil. Blueberries are simply brimming with antioxidants and they are very low in sugar.

I have this half an hour before lunch proper. Sometimes as an alternative I have a smoothie made with Rock Melon (Cantaloupe) and some water. This is refreshment personified and Cantaloupe is one of the most alkalising of all fruits.

The great news for those wanting to avoid snacking between meals is that all you need to do to ward off feelings of hunger is to sip water (preferably warm) throughout the day. Remember protein will keep you awake and carbohydrates will put you to sleep.

Lunch proper is a most often a mix of salad ingredients – organic Baked Beans and a can of Salmon (with no added salt) and salad greens. For dressings I make my own with Olive Oil (organic extra virgin in a dark bottle), crushed garlic, fresh lemon juice, and balsamic vinegar (quality is important).

When it comes to dinner, while I am cautious about red meat, I don't exclude it completely (once a week) choosing lamb over beef (usually in the form of lamb steaks). Boneless organic Chicken breasts are very easy to prepare. The reddish colour of organic Chicken suggests to me that it is a very different product from regular mass produced Chicken.

With animal protein the key is to limit the portion size. We have grown up in New Zealand making the meat the feature of the meal. For me now the meat is just a part of the meal. I love fish and freshness is important because I love sashimi. The golden rule about fish is that if it smells fishy it isn't fresh.

I always cook in Coconut Oil. The Coconut Oil story is fascinating and deserves its own article (Virgin Coconut Oil smells and tastes divine – there's nothing like it). Coconut Oil is totally safe for heating (unlike many vegetable oils - even Olive Oil breaks down under high heat).

Dinner includes some quality protein with vegetables; often a combination of Carrots, Pumpkin and Kumara mashed and seasoned with herbs and including a sprinkle of Dulse. I always include a green vegetable or two Broccoli and Spinach. Potatoes are best cooked in their jackets (most of the nutrients are in the skin and just beneath) but remember they are high in starch and thus can spike the blood sugar. For the most part I use Kumara. Remember it is the sugars and starches that make us fat. Insulin is 'the' storage hormone so when we trigger the production of insulin, the body is saying 'store fat' and it won't release it until you stop 'pumping' insulin around the body.

The most significant change I have embraced is **NO** dessert (although if I am invited out I enjoy a treat). Sugar undoes all the good one has done with all of the above. I think that cutting out dessert has to be one of the most important changes one can make when implementing a health inducing diet.

Everywhere we read 5+ a day when it comes to vegetables but even if we achieve this, I doubt that we can obtain optimum levels of the nutrients we need. Imagine a cabbage grown in the same soil that has been used for years and the only nutrients added back are NPK (nitrogen phosphorous and potassium).

While the cabbage might look healthy, if we haven't added back the 80+ other minerals and trace elements that were once in the soil where does this leave us? From the time our nutrient depleted cabbage is picked and put into cool store it starts losing valuable nutrients and then if we cook it what do think we are left with? Enzymes are very sensitive to heat so if we use high heat and lots of water, the chances are that we will be seriously short changed. This is why vegetable juicing has so much to offer.

If you want to retain or regain your health, I strongly recommend that read, read and read. Don't dig your grave with your knife and fork. Remember your health is your responsibility. *"Never put your trust in anything but your own intellect – always think for yourself"* (Linus Pauling).

"To eat is a necessity, but to eat intelligently is an art."
- La Rochefoucauld (1613-1680)