Healthy for Life Newsletter
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What's in the News

The Danger of Sugar Sweetened Beverages

Schulze, et al. "Sugar-Sweetened Beverages, Weight Gain, and Incidence of Type 2 Diabetes in Young and Middle-Aged Women." Journal of the American Medical Association, August 25, 2004 — Vol 292, No. 8

Sugar-sweetened beverages contribute over 7% of total energy intake for both children and adults in the US today. The average man, woman, and child in the US consumes an average of 600 12-ounce cans of sugar-sweetened soda pop each and every year. This does not include all the sweetened fruit punches and sports drinks that are also being consumed. One 12-oz can of sugar-sweetened soda contains 150 calories and 40 to 50 grams of sugar. When you think of the 48-ounce Big Slurp drinks that children and adults are consuming on a regular basis, you can see why these sugar-sweetened drinks are drawing so much attention.

MB Schulze, et al. released a major study in the August 25, 2004 edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association. The number of individuals who are becoming obese and who are becoming diabetic has increased dramatically over the past 30 to 40 years. This correlates very closely to the increase in the consumption of soft drinks. Sugar-sweetened soft drink consumption has doubled in both children and adults over the past 20 years. Obesity and diabetes has also doubled during this same time in both children and adults. Could there be a correlation? This is the question these investigators wanted to answer. In this 8-year follow-up study, these investigators were able to show that higher consumption of these sugar-sweetened beverages was definitely associated with an increased risk of both obesity and type 2 diabetes mellitus.

The high-fructose corn syrup and sucrose that is used to sweeten sodas, fruit drinks, and sports drinks was shown to provide what these investigators called liquid candy. They found that the calories from these drinks did not satisfy your natural hunger. Therefore, the amount of calories from solid foods was not decreased and you essentially ate the same amount of calories whether or not you were drinking these sugar-sweetened drinks. What was even more concerning was the fact that they found that women who increased their consumption of these drinks actually increased the amount of calories they were eating from other sources. This obviously led to a significantly increasing amount of weight gain.

Sugar-sweetened drinks also contain a high amount of rapidly absorbed carbohydrates that will easily spike your blood sugar. This in turn leads to the over-stimulation of the release of insulin, which drives the blood sugar into a low blood sugar range. Stress hormones are released to bring these blood sugars back into the normal range again; however, you are left with this overwhelming hunger and you need to eat again. This vicious cycle is repeated several times a day in individuals who drink these sugar-sweetened beverages. This leads to insulin resistance and eventually to type 2 diabetes. In fact, the cola-type soft drinks contain caramel coloring, which is rich in advanced glycation (glucose attached to other molecules) end products, which may increase insulin resistance and inflammation.

This study shows what most of us already realized. Sugar-sweetened drinks are not very good for our health. It actually leads to what I refer to as "Carbohydrate Addiction." This repeated spiking of your blood sugar causes inflammation in the capillaries or smallest vessels of your muscles. This leads to constriction of these small arteries, which is what I believe is the initial event leading to insulin resistance, obesity, and diabetes. If you are concerned about your health, you need to eliminate these drinks from your diet. Now, 100% fruit juices do not fall in this category. It is sugar-sweetened fruit punch, sports drinks, and sodas.

Now I am really not a fan of diet sodas and drinks either. I have concerns about the negative effects of aspartame or Nutrasweet that have been reported. Most of the diet cola drinks still contain the caramel coloring, which can possibly also lead to insulin resistance. However, the main concern is that we keep feeding this very sweet taste to the body, which continues to add to your sweet tooth and to carbohydrate addiction.

Vitamin E Supplementation Improves Immune Response

Meydani, et al. "Vitamin E and Respiratory Tract Infections in Elderly Nursing Home Residents." Journal of the American Medical Association, August 18, 2004—Vol 292, No. 7

Several studies have been shown to enhance the immune response in the older person. In these previous studies, nursing home participants receiving vitamin E supplements for greater than 6 months had a 30% lower incidence of infectious illnesses. In this most recent study reported in the August 18th issue of the JAMA, participants that took 200 IU of vitamin E in supplementation for over 1 year had a 20% decreased risk of an upper respiratory infection (viral cold or sinus infection). Again, the authors concluded that vitamin E in supplementation can enhance the immune system in the elderly patient.

Everyone must realize that when you provide the body with cellular nutrition (optimal levels of nutritional supplementation); you not only improve the body's natural antioxidant defense system but also the body's immune system. The key is the fact that it takes 6 to 12 months of supplementation before you reap all the benefits of taking high-quality nutritional supplements.

Eating Fish is a Healthy Choice

Erkkila, et al. "Fish intake is associated with a reduced progression of coronary artery atherosclerosis." Am J Clin Nutr 2004; 80:626—32

It has been well established in the medical literature that the consumption of fish, especially cold-water fish that contains a high amount of the omega-3 fatty acids, is associated with a significantly lower risk of cardiovascular disease. Cold-water fish contains a large amount of both DHA and EPA fats that are known to decrease inflammation of our arteries, arrhythmias, and the development of heart disease. However, this study wanted to look at women who already had coronary artery disease and see if the intake of fish would decrease the progression of their disease.

This study showed that women who consumed more fish, especially cold-water fish, significantly decreased the progression of their coronary artery disease. In fact, women who had diabetes and were at the greatest risk of developing another heart attack had the greatest benefit. The researchers point out that although the intake of fish has been shown to decrease the development of coronary artery disease, it has been controversial whether or not it would slow the progression of this disease. This study goes a long ways in showing that the intake of cold-water fish does slow down the progression of coronary heart disease even in those individuals who already have the disease.

There is a principle in developing a healthy diet that is going to become more and more talked about in the lay and medical literature. That is the fact that we need to be reducing the intake of bad fats like saturated and trans fats while at the same time increasing our intake of the good fats like the omega-3 and monosaturated fats. The next issue of the Healthy for Life Newsletter will look at the significant health benefits that occur when individuals begin applying these truths to their lives. Obviously, it is better to eat fish that is caught in the wild rather than raised in fish farms. This is much the same way as it is better to eat organic, range-fed foul and beef, rather than eating those animals that have been caged or penned.

Antioxidant Supplementation Prevents Vascular Inflammation

Wang, et al. "Cosupplementation with vitamin E and Coenzyme Q10 reduces circulating markers of inflammation in baboons." Am J Clin Nutr 2004; 80:649—55

You are going to be hearing more and more about the danger of uncontrolled, low-grade inflammation as the underlying cause of several different diseases like heart disease, cancer, and Alzheimer's dementia. Well, the actual source of this inflammation is oxidative stress that causes damage to the cell and to the vessel lining. This damage leads to a natural inflammatory response, which is trying to heal this damage. Now when this injury and inflammatory cycle is allowed to go unchecked, the result is the development of these chronic degenerative diseases.

In this study baboons were given a high-fat, high-cholesterol diet which is known to create significant inflammation of their arteries. When vitamin E was supplemented along with this poor diet, oxidative damage and resultant inflammation was reduced by 50%. However, when you combine both vitamin E and Coenzyme Q10, the inflammation was reduced by 70%.

The significant reduction in the oxidative damage and inflammation due to this poor diet with just the use of 2 different antioxidants is certainly encouraging. This is just another example of synergy at work. As you combine more and more antioxidants, the health benefit just gets better and better. This is why I strongly urge the use of cellular nutrition. Cellular nutrition is defined as providing all of these nutrients at their optimal levels (those levels that have been shown to provide a health benefit in our medical literature) to the cell. Now just imagine how protective these supplements can be if you are supplementing a good diet that is high in the good fats and low in these bad fats.

Drug Problems—Here we go Again

Vioxx Withdrawn from the Market

Merck has voluntarily withdrawn Vioxx from the marketplace because it has been shown to increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes. The sale of Vioxx, a Cox-2 arthritis drug, has topped annual sales of $2.5 billion worldwide for the past several years. Previous articles reported a couple of years ago in the JAMA shared the concern that these Cox-2 inhibitor arthritis drugs like Vioxx, Celebrex, Bextra, etc. actually caused increased heart attacks when compared to the old drugs like Advil and Naproxen. However, the drug companies defended this concern by stating that it wasn't their drugs that were the problem. Instead they said it was the positive effect of the Advil and Naproxen improving the risk of developing heart disease. Well, I feel that we will be learning more and more about the risk patients assumed when they took Vioxx. This is concerning when you realize that Vioxx does nothing to slow down the progression of this disease. Why not take some Glucosamine sulfate that not only improves the symptoms of arthritis but actually slows down the progression of this disease and by the way, has no known side effects.

Erythromycin has an unusual side effect—Sudden Death

Ray, WA et al. "Oral Erythromycin and the Risk of Sudden Death from Cardiac Causes." N Engl J Med, Sept 9, 2004 351; 11

After being on the market for over 50 years, researchers are now realizing the inherent risk of taking erythromycin. They have found that it can cause a heart irregularity that leads to sudden death. This current study showed that the rate of sudden death was twice as high among patients who were current users of erythromycin as compared to those that were not taking any antibiotics. If this drug was used with other drugs that used what is referred to as the cytochrome P450 system to be eliminated from the body, the risk of sudden death was greatly increased. This is interesting because Seldane, a popular non-sedating anti-histamine, was removed from the market after 12 years because it caused sudden death when used with erythromycin. It doesn't surprise me to see this kind of study being released at this time. We all just need to be aware of the fact that there is inherent risk to all medication.

Increased Suicide Rate among Children who use Antidepressants

Jick, et al. "Antidepressants and the Risk of Suicidal Behaviors." JAMA July 21, 2004—Vol 292, No. 3

This study showed that there is an increased risk of suicide in children from the age of 10 to 19 when they take antidepressants. It appears that all antidepressants have an increased risk; however, the more seriously depressed youth are at greater risk of this side effect. This seems to occur more frequently within the first 10 days of being placed on an antidepressant.

I would encourage everyone to use medication as a last resort instead of a first choice. There is an inherent risk to all medication and you just don't want to have blind faith in the medical establishment. I would encourage people to get my book, *Death by Prescription*, to learn how they can best protect themselves and their loved ones against suffering and dying from the 4th leading cause of death in this country—properly prescribed and properly administered medication.