“FOOD FOR THOUGHT”

A NUTRITION REPORT FROM MR. CARTOCCI

Dear Families,

I am condensing some vital information, and to risk a pun, some “food for thought” into a fairly brief nutrition report.

First, allow me to inform you of my credentials. As well as a teacher of Health Education and Physical Education, I am also a holistic nutrition specialist with a diploma in comprehensive nutrition. I have studied and researched for over ten years, and continue daily, to explore the latest findings in the area of nutrition and overall health and lifestyle choices. Everything I say in this newsletter is documented, and, at the end, I have included a list of references along with two lists you may find useful. I write this not because I have anything to sell or any “axe to grind”, but for no reason other than a deep concern for the health of our children.

We hear daily of the obesity epidemic plaguing our nation’s population. This phenomenon carries with it far-reaching implications for poor health, notably in the area of chronic diseases and their symptoms, including hypertension (high blood pressure), heart disease, diabetes, stroke and cancer. Obesity and its related issues are not so much the consequences of too much fat in the diet, but mostly, they are the result of the voluminous amount of sugar the body has to deal with. [1] This flood of sugar not only comes from the usual “suspects” like sodas, candy and baked goods, but also from the starches present in white potatoes, non-whole grain products like white-flour derived extruded cereals, white rice, pastas, breads and other refined and lifeless processed foods.

When these foods enter the digestive tract they soon after cause a “sugar rush” in the blood that the body attempts to normalize by secreting insulin into the bloodstream. The energy rush is then followed by an energy crash. This “spiking” up and down is very wearing upon the whole body, and the insulin floods are also damaging to blood vessel

linings. [2] The extra energy (calories) from the unused sugar load are stored as fat, contributing to the strain that the body systems undergo.

Prior to 1900, average, yearly consumption of sugar in the U.S. was about twelve pounds. Today the average is 160 pounds, 80 percent of which is hidden in the processed foods consumed. The human body has never evolved to handle anywhere near this amount in a healthy way. [16] Recent research has shown that lack of daily exercise and consuming carbohydrates from grains, most notably the refined, non-whole grain-derived, processed type along with high fructose corn syrup are driving these floods of sugar and unbalancing the body's systems. High fructose corn syrup found in so many processed products is not the healthy, harmless ingredient that its marketers would have us believe. Its effects on the body are more harmful than pure glucose due to the manner in which it is assimilated. [3]

Grains, even the "whole" type, contain nowhere near the carbohydrate nutrient density of vegetables or fruit. However, less than fifteen percent of elementary school age children eat the daily recommended servings of vegetables and fruit, but we surely pack away the grain. [4] Indiscriminate production, marketing and consumption of processed grain foods and other simple carbohydrates has contributed significantly to the rise in cases of Type II diabetes. Once called Adult-Onset diabetes this disease is now affecting children in more and more alarming numbers. [5,6] Replacing processed grain with whole grains will surely help, but combining that with replacing servings of grain in daily diets with more servings of fresh, raw vegetables and fruit would accomplish significantly more, and would ensure a healthier carbohydrate supply.[15]

Coupled with the undue reliance on grain foods and their derivation is the traditional and well-intended advice to utilize dairy products as a mainstay of daily nutrition supply. Dairy foods are one of the top four allergy-causing foods. Most humans, after weaning, begin to experience the loss of the enzyme responsible for milk digestion. The pasteurization process, as it eliminates alleged disease-causing bacteria, also kills any natural enzymes in the milk which aid in its assimilation. Pasteurization also denatures the protein portion of milk. Humans are the only beings who willfully drink the milk of another species of animal, and who purposely use dairy products after weaning. Milk products are mucus-forming for many, especially asthma sufferers and others with

compromised respiratory systems. [7] Concerns about adequate calcium or other nutrients in the absence of dairy food are unfounded. Adequate calcium is readily available in dark green and leafy vegetables, almonds, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, sardines, wild-caught salmon, brussel sprouts, fermented tofu, peas, rhubarb, bok choy and collard greens. [14] Yogurt can be a viable dairy choice due to the beneficial bacteria it contains which aid in the health of the digestive tract. Yogurt should be the organic type to avoid the antibiotics and bovine growth hormones (rBGH and rBST) routinely given to factory-farmed cows to fatten them up [8,9,12]. Japan, Canada, Australia and all of the countries of the European Union have banned the use of hormones and antibiotics in their cattle. The U.S. continues to use them.

Proteins are the "building-blocks" of our bodies. The amino acids in proteins form our very DNA. They act as neurotransmitters and receptors for cell and brain signaling, and help to repair damage throughout our bodies. In order to carry out their natural functions and help to provide optimal health, protein foods need to be of high quality such as grass-fed and free-range meats, wild-caught, fresh or flash-frozen fish, organic, cage-free eggs, nuts and some varieties of beans.

Factory-farmed beef cattle are fed grain which is contrary to their natural design. Cows are herbivores, and when they are fed grain it causes them much digestive distress and disease which is treated with antibiotics, the residue of which is present in their meat and milk. Organically-raised, grass-fed animals eat what nature evolved them to eat. They are not fed grain, nor are they allowed to be given hormones or antibiotics. They are raised and treated humanely, and their meat and milk (if you choose) is nutritious. Poultry is a healthy protein choice if, again, the animals are allowed to be cage-free and free-range. [10]

Farm-raised fish like the Atlantic Salmon variety are kept in underwater "corrals" so closely packed together that they can barely swim. They are fed unnatural fish feed which needs to be laced with antibiotics due to their unsanitary close quarters. Their flesh is a dingy, gray color unlike their wild counterparts, and, before selling, is treated with artificial coloring to achieve a tint close to that in nature. [11]

As far as fats are concerned, with the exception of trans fats (hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils), our bodies need fat of all varieties, including proper amounts of the

saturated type, for healthy cell membranes and other body functions. Be very cautious about trans fat, though. Even though a product may list "0 trans fat" per one serving, the food companies have lobbied our FDA to allow .5 grams in a serving to be listed as "0 grams". It is possible to eat up to 10 grams of disease-causing trans fat from some products listing the "0" amount. Look for the words "hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated" in the ingredients. Trans fats are found in almost all baked goods, many cereals and almost all cracker products. They exist in most of the processed products that are distributed to hospitals, schools and other institutions. [13] See the enclosed list.

Another unhealthy type of fat used to replace trans fat in processed and other packaged goods is called interesterified fat. Interesterification is another method of "hardening" fats and oils to prevent spoiling. Interesterified fats are just as deadly as trans fats. They do not exist in nature. Interesterified fats are not required to be listed in the nutrition information labels, either. To protect ourselves and families we need to stay away from foods you would formerly have suspected of containing trans fatty acids.

I realize that the above is quite a bit (and all at once) to "digest", but there is much more that I could mention. Based on the information though, I strongly urge that you closely investigate your child's breakfast and lunch offerings as well as the snacks available, both at home and at school. We have, over many years, been conditioned to assume that the items (for the most part) available from supermarkets and other sources of food and meals are healthy, or, at least, not harmful. Unfortunately, as is obvious by the statistics on overweight, obesity, allergies and nutrition and lifestyle-related chronic disease, this is certainly not the case.

While changes need to be made in the distribution of food, and in the information about which foods, food additives and processing methods are deemed healthy by our federal, state and town governments and our school districts, we can be proactive and watch closely as we shop for and prepare our families' meals and snacks.

We all care deeply about our children's well-being. Common sense tells us that our food sources should be health-promoting, not health-defeating. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, wrote, "Let your food be your medicine, and your medicine be your food". It is still possible to follow his excellent advice.

If you have questions, please call me. I would be pleased to speak with you.

Rod Cartocci B.S., M.P.E., Dip. C.N.

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LIST OF COMMONLY ADDED FORMS OF SUGAR

- Agave nectar
- Brown sugar
- Cane crystals
- Cane sugar
- Corn sweetener
- Corn syrup
- Crystalline fructose
- Dextrose
- Evaporated cane juice
- Fructose
- Fruit juice concentrates
- Glucose
- High-fructose corn syrup
- Honey
- Invert sugar
- Lactose
- Maltose
- Malt syrup
- Molasses
- Raw sugar
- Sucrose
- Sugar
- Syrup

TRANS FAT FOOD LIST

Breads and baking products
Biscuits made from mix
Biscuits/rolls made from refrigerated dough
Coating mixes for fish, meat and poultry
Stuffing mixes
Taco shells
White and wheat flour breads

Breakfast foods
Cinnamon buns
Danishes
Doughnuts
Muffins
Pastries/bakery items with frosting
Toaster tarts/strudels

Candy
Caramels
Chocolates
Fruit chews
Seasonal candy
Taffy-like candy

There's more, so read more

Desserts
Cake sprinkles, decorations
Baking chips
Cakes and cake mixes
Cakes/cupcakes with icing
Ice cream cakes
Pie crusts
Pound cake
Ready to spread frosting
Refrigerated cookie dough

Dips and snacks
Bean dips
Cheese and Pretzel snack kits
Cheese and cracker snack kits
Chocolate or yogurt covered snack
Cookie snack kits

Cookies/crackers
Corn chips
Nacho cheese dip
Microwave popcorn
Potato chips/sticks
Pretzels filled with cheese
Pudding snacks

Fast foods
Biscuits
French fries
Fruit pies
Fried chicken
Fried fish sandwich
Most deep-fried fast food
Mixed meals from a box that contain buttermilk biscuit topping, cornbread topping, Dumplings or pouched seasonings

Fats and oils
Light spreads
Margarine, hard stick and tub types
Vegetable shortening, regular and butter flavor

Frozen foods
Breaded fish sticks
French fries
Fruit pies and pie crusts
Pancakes and French toast
Pastries
Pizza and pizza crusts
Pot pies
Waffles

Milk and milk products
International and instant latte coffees
Refrigerated fat free non-dairy creamers
Refrigerated non-dairy creamers
Whipped toppings

Salad and salad dressing
Prepared salad dressing
Soups and stews
Bouillon cubes
Boxed onion soup and dip mix
Ramen noodle and soup cups