

Nancy Utter column from March, 2007

Headline:

Uncovering Food Sensitivities

Story:

“One man’s food is another man’s poison” is a statement made by the Roman healer and philosopher Lucretious 2000 years ago. What Lucretious meant was that we all like different tastes and foods and while one person may love brussel sprouts another person may see them as disgusting and inedible. In practice I apply this saying to how our bodies react to the foods we eat.

Food sensitivities are very common and are often difficult to detect. One reason that they can exist under cover is that our reactions to foods are highly individualistic and there are few standards we can rely on to tell us exactly what our reaction to food will look like.

We may all be familiar with the extreme allergic reaction that some people have to peanuts and shellfish which is life threatening. This type of reaction is clear and easy to diagnose. Food sensitivities or intolerances on the other hand are often not as obvious and are harder to pin down. However, they are frequently the root cause of many health problems. We are what we eat for better or for worse.

How do you know if the foods you are eating are making you sick? Some common health issues associated with food sensitivities are asthma, arthritis, chronic sinusitis, mouth sores, skin rashes, digestive problems, headaches, recurrent bladder infections, hypertension, hyperactivity, constipation, diarrhea, brain fog, chronic pain, chronic ear infections, angina, fatigue, weight gain, hormone imbalances and even infertility.

Signs of foods sensitivities are dark circles under the eyes, fatigue, chronic runny nose, frequent colds, joint pain, indigestion, gas and bloating, and muscle pain. When I am eating a food that sets off an immune system alarm it can show up in any part of my body and in many different forms.

Our immune system is responsible for food sensitivity reactions. Our digestive tract contains more active immune tissue than almost anywhere else in our bodies because our digestive system is one of the few places in our bodies that is directly open to the outside world. Our immune system protects us from foreign invaders and is responsible for surveillance of every molecule that we come in contact with. It decides what is safe and what should be attacked and eliminated. Food is assessed too.

So how can you tell if you have food sensitivities? There are several ways to do this. One way is to do an elimination diet where most of the typical reactive food groups are taken out of the diet for a time period then added back in one at a time to see if a reaction occurs.

Another option is a food sensitivity blood test. The blood test results give you a list of foods that created a reaction when combined with your blood. The advantages are that it is quicker and easier than an elimination diet plan.

The main goal is to identify problem foods and remove them to let the body heal. Additional support for the immune and digestive systems also promote this healing process. The moral of the story is that food can be healing or harm us and the main goal is to find a meal plan that is specific to our own unique needs and body chemistry and which will optimize our state of health. Bon appetite!

*Dr. Nancy Utter has a new clinic opening in April - Durango Natural Medicine.
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