

Franken-Foods: Defending Your Family's Future

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Franken-Foods are just like Frankenstein--artificially constructed, using dead parts, without a soul, killing without intent. They cause or contribute to a myriad of illnesses, some of which we call aging, weight gain, arthritis, asthma, IBS, depression, heart disease, cancer, reflux, etc. We need to be informed and vigilant in removing them from our kids foods and our bodies, where they hide in our fat, muscle and brains (see my article on detox and elimination for more information.)

Years ago, I put my foot down about hydrogenated oils, a major source of trans fats. At that time, they were everywhere--in cereals, baked goods (Entenmann's often used them as a first ingredient), peanut butter, microwave popcorn, fast foods, you name it. While it was hard to resist the taste and convenience, I felt the benefits outweighed the loss.

Recently, the federal government, despite the food industry lobbyists, could not refute the public health data, and required that packaging listed the trans fats in foods. The industry responded as they usually do, not by reducing these fats, but by reducing the size of each serving, so if less than 0.5 grams per serving, it could list the trans fats as zero. I taught myself and my patients to look at ingredients, and if they saw the word "hydrogenated" it meant POISON.

Well, finally, due to consumer demand and other bad press, companies and restaurants are eliminating added trans fats. While that is a step in the right direction, at the same time, the food industry is finding new substances to produce food cheaply, with addictive taste and long shelf life, exactly the opposite of what we need for our health.

Let me list what I think are the eleven worst offenders (I had a hard time keeping the list short). Unlike David Letterman, I will list the worst foods and related chemicals first.

1. Heavy Metals. These include mercury, lead, cadmium, arsenic, and aluminum. Known sources are silver fillings in teeth, fish, coal burning (China is polluting the Pacific ocean and wild salmon), soil, water, smoke (including barbecue), preservatives and others. Aluminum is not only present in cans, but also in antacids, baking powder, and deodorants. Some people have a genetic ability to "chelate" (bind) and excrete small amounts of these metals, while other people, especially children, are vulnerable to even routine amounts used to preserve vaccines.

If the government says limit tuna to once per week, it means it should be once per month, if at all. While hard to avoid, we need to eat smaller fish, such as sardines. We need to avoid sources of aluminum. Taking certain minerals, supplements and herbs, such as magnesium, vitamin C, alpha lipoic acid, cilantro and healthy greens on a regular basis naturally defend us against these compounds that are both entering our body and those that are hidden within our bodies.

2. Hydrogenated Oils. While they are being removed and outlawed, there are many hidden sources. For example, when foods such as french fries are cooked at high temperatures, even with good oils, these toxic oils form. They take months to eliminate from our cell membranes, where they confuse hormonal and other cell signalling, contributing to diabetes, cancer, allergy, hormonal imbalance and other chronic diseases.

3. Genetically Modified Foods. Genes contain DNA which determines the sequences of amino acids in proteins. Genetically engineered or modified ("GM") organisms, such as soy and corn (over 60% of the current US crop), contain synthetic sequences that never before appeared over billions of years of evolution. While research demonstrates that GM food can cause illness in most species, and will ruin our environment, these foods and products were pushed through the governmental approval process due to the power of lobbyists. In the US, Foods that contain these mutant foods do not have to be labelled, and most Americans are not aware of how prevalent they are.

These GM plants cannot be contained--their pollen mixes in the air with that from non-GM organisms. GM bacteria, now used routinely in industry, can share its altered DNA with other organisms, including animal hosts. It is hypothesized that GM foods are in part responsible for increasing allergy. Europe will not buy America's GM products. There is a free CD about GM foods available through the Sierra club, entitled "You're Eating What!"

4. Pesticides. They are rampant in all our non-organic foods. And while, individually, at low doses, they may not cause cancer or other diseases, it is virtually impossible to study the effect of hundreds of these chemicals as they accumulate in our body, sometimes called "the cocktail effect".

Pesticides are used extensively in conventional agriculture. The pesticides that are banned in the US are exported to third world countries, who use the pesticides and then export their produce back to the USA. Many pesticides are derived from petroleum, and have a structure that resembles estrogen in our bodies, called xeno-estrogens. They are hypothesized as one of many causes of early menarche, infertility, breast cancer, declining testosterone and sperm counts in men, and other ills. Conventional products such as butter or cheese are worse than milk because the pesticides are concentrated when these products are made. Everyday products, such as coffee, tea, and strawberries, and "healthy" foods such as spinach and apples, can be as toxic as food that we know are unhealthy. These toxins can remain in our bodies and accumulate for decades. I think of conventional produce as made of plastic. Though cheaper, they are empty of nutrients and full of petroleum derivatives.

5. Artificial Sweeteners and Flavorings. These substances, such as aspartame, Splenda, MSG and others, have similarities to certain neurochemicals and can cause overstimulation of certain parts of our brain. They are linked to ADHD, Parkinson's disease, and other neuro-degenerative diseases. In addition, they can confuse our metabolism and endocrine systems, causing weight gain. In fact, there is more data suggesting that diet foods cause weight gain rather than weight loss. It is better to have a bit of sugar than these toxins, which, like others, can reside within the body for decades.

6. Sugar and Corn syrup. Corn syrup is 10-20x sweeter and cheaper than sugar. Both corn syrup and sugar, only used by society for the past 100 years or so, again confuse our pancreas and adrenal glands. While giving us a brief burst of energy, the net result is a debt that we all recognize as sugar craving, fatigue, and a myriad of ills. I don't need

to repeat here the incontrovertible data on obesity and diabetes, extending now into childhood. Since most corn is now Genetically Modified, therefore most corn syrup, though unlabeled, is genetically modified.

7. Conventional meats and eggs. Not only are these animals loaded with antibiotics and hormones, they are treated with extreme cruelty. They also feed these animals byproducts of other (sick) animals, as well as GM corn and soy. If we saw how these foods were produced, we would never go near them! Many of us need some animal products to feel well. We need to eat less, but better quality animal products.

8. Plastics. The advantage, and disadvantage of plastics is their durability. Plastics, and the chemicals used to make them, get into our soil, our foods, and our bodies, and may not deteriorate for decades if not hundreds of years. Many of these chemicals are petroleum based and have the same characteristics as pesticides, discussed above, causing problems with our hormonal and immune systems. While it is virtually impossible to live a plastic-free life, we all need to decrease our use of them, and move back to safer materials such as glass, ceramic, iron and steel.

9. Dairy. We are the only species that regularly consumes another's milk. Conventional cow milk not only contains cow hormones, but the same antibiotics and pesticides discussed above. While organic dairy (including butter and cheese), or goat products are less toxic, they still are a source of allergy and inflammation for many. Pasteurization and homogenization have been around only for a little over a hundred years. These processes certainly alter the nature of the milk, which some claim as a cause of modern milk's toxicity. Despite the marketing of the dairy industry, milk is not a good source of calcium or protein. If you have children or grandchildren, or are concerned about cancer, heart disease, osteoporosis or diabetes, you need to read Campbell's book, China Study.

10. Breakfast Cereals. The history of breakfast cereals is quite interesting. At first, they were developed as "health foods" by people such as Kellogg's and Post. However, in the late 1800's when one company started coating their cereal with sugar (to the outrage of the other companies) their sales took off, and all companies had to follow suit. Nowadays, breakfast cereals are no better than candy, to which a cheap multi-vitamin pill has been added to rationalize their consumption. They are heavily marketed to our children, focusing on the "nag" factor, which makes Moms relent to their begging children. In Europe, companies are not allowed to market to children under the age of 12!

11. Fluoride, Bromine and Chlorine. These halides, used as disinfectants, are present in our water, soil, and food. They compete with iodine processing and are probably contributing to our epidemic of thyroid disease. See my future article on this topic.

What Is Left to Eat? This information, while potentially overwhelming, is empowering once one gets over the shock. The issue of "my kids and family won't eat healthy foods" is simply dealt with by continually educating ourselves, and by having only healthy foods in the house. Making small changes, one at a time, such as by converting from conventional milk and produce to organic, is a powerful first

step.

While organic produce food seems to be more expensive, it not only is free of these chemicals, the quality and quantity of nutrients in organic food makes the price worth while, especially for our kids and anyone else that you love. There is data showing that kids who eat organic foods are healthier.

When buying animal products, look for terms such as "Organic" and "Grass Fed". The words "natural", and "free-range" may not mean that the foods are healthy.

We all need to invest in our health if we want our future generations to be healthier than us. The current trend is now in the opposite direction, with increasing illness in the children of industrial countries. The explosive growth of the organic and sustainable food industries demonstrates that we are not alone. The food industries will respond to our demands if we vote with our pocketbook for healthier choices.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This general information should not be used to make decisions about medical care without the involvement of an experienced practitioner.

For More Information

- O See Dr. Cheikin's related articles on: Allergy, Inflammation, Gastro-Intestinal Dysfunction, and Hormone Havoc
- O Dr. Cheikin's website, www.cheikin.com, has helpful articles on related topics
- O Dr. Cheikin offers workshops on topics such as Chronic Pain, Journaling, Nutrition, Weight Management, and classes in yoga, meditation and other wellness methods. Please call to be placed on his contact list or if you wish to host a Workshop.
- O Campbell, TC & Campbell TM: The China Study: The Most Comprehensive Study of Nutrition Ever Conducted and the Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss and Long-Term Health. Benbella Books, 2005. ISBN: 1932-100-385.
- O Pizzorno, Joseph: Total Wellness: Improve Your Health by Understanding.... Prima, 1997, ISBN 0761-510-94X.
- O Bland, Jeffrey: The 20-Day Rejuvenation Diet Program. Los Angeles: Keats, 1999. ISBN 0879-839-805.
- O Lieberman, Shari: Real Vitamin & Mineral Book: Definitive Guide to Designing Your Personal Supplement Program, 3rd Ed. NY: Avery, 2003. ISBN 1583-331-522.
- O Erasmus, Udo: Fats that Heal, Fats that Kill, 2nd Ed. Burnaby BC Canada, 1993. ISBN 0920-470-386.
- O Boutenko Victoria: Green for Life. Raw Family Publishing, 2005. 0970-481-969.
- O Gittleman, Ann Louise: The Fast Track Detox Diet: Boost metabolism, get rid of fattening toxins, jump-start weight loss and keep the pounds off for good. Morgan Road Books, 2006. ISBN 0767-920-465.

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