

# DR. CHRISTOPHER'S *Herbal Legacy Newsletter*

## **Good Health: Easier Than you Think**

by Doreen Spackman, M.H.

We are having the Master Herbalist Certification Seminar at The School of Natural Healing this week so I wanted to share something I learned at the school that changed my life. I was amazed when I found out the amount of protein, good fats, different carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and water that naturally occur in fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and legumes. I could get all the calcium and protein that my body needed from these whole foods. I had always been told that I needed to drink milk to get my calcium, and meat for protein. I had no idea how wonderfully packed with nutrients these other foods were.

We all know these nutrients are important for our bodies, so why do we not search them out and find their best sources? So many people around us choose fad diets that range from high carb, low carb, high protein, etc. Not to mention fats, especially in this area fads flip from all fats are bad to conflicting reports on which ones, if any, are helpful. Many people are resorting to unhealthy practices that are so dangerous to the body. I have a friend that was so strict on not eating any fat that she was unable to have children for several years. It was not until she changed her diet by eating healthy, nutrient-rich foods including avocados and other healthy fats/oils that she was able to conceive; she is now having her 4th child. If we would just eat better, we would feel better and best of all have a better quality of life. All of the nutrients our bodies require work together (and science will be the first to admit they cannot explain every such way) and it is important to eat them in whole foods rather than supplements or isolated sources.

Your body needs fiber, nutrients and calories to feel full or you will still be hungry. The best thing to do is eat food that is high in fiber and nutrients and low in calories. Where do we find such wonderful combinations? Fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and legumes. There is such a huge variety to enjoy.

Protein builds and repairs tissue and muscles are tissue; you have more than 600 in your body. It also helps with skin, bones, blood, hair, all internal organs - including the brain and the heart. Plant protein actually helps lower cholesterol, protects against cancer, and promotes strong bones whereas animal protein does just the opposite. There are so many enjoyable protein-rich plant foods. Vegetables, nuts, legumes, and grains; some grains (Quinoa, Amaranth, Buckwheat) are even complete proteins and easy to fix.

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With Carbohydrates I used to get so confused, this is what I have since learned. It's not so much a matter of if it is a simple or complex carbohydrate... it is more so, which simple or complex foods you choose to eat. Simple carbs are sugar so you could have fruit (good choice), also in the simple category you could pick a sucker or hard candy (not a good choice). The candy is missing all of the nutrients and fiber. That may seem like a no-brainer, but when we are hungry or need some quick energy, do we grab the fruit or the candy. I know when I was in High School and got done with a volleyball game or a gymnastics meet I grabbed the candy bar and soda (bad choice). Complex carbs are rich in starch/fiber: vegetables, seeds, legumes and a huge variety of grains, and nuts. Oh! but then there are cookies, cakes, sweet rolls, and donuts. Remember carbohydrates provide the energy for your brain function and your central nervous system. So, just be wise in what types you feed your body.

Fats help with fuel for the body, normal brain and nerve function, and delivery of fat-soluble nutrients. Fats also help lower bad cholesterol and increase good cholesterol. There is a great variety of fats to eat; nuts, seeds and most people know that avocados are a great source also, but did you know that green leafy vegetables and some fruits have them too (avocado, coconuts (drupe/fruit), etc.)?

Vitamins - among the most popularly known are vitamin A, and more than one B vitamin which have different names like B1 also known as Thiamine or B2 - Riboflavin, B5 - Pantothenic Acid. There is vitamin C, and E and did you know your body can make and store vitamins D & K? What foods have all of these vitamins?... you guessed it! The best sources are fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds and legumes.

Minerals are needed for building strong bones, teeth, nerves, soft tissue, muscle and much more. Two more familiar minerals are calcium and potassium. Most fruit has calcium but oranges and grapefruit are some common ones that are high in calcium.

I am so grateful for the things I have been able to learn it has enhanced the quality of my family's life and we love eating nutrient rich food. It's been a great adventure! Have a healthy and happy day!

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