



November 21, 2009 – Grand Rapids, MI

## Inbox Legends

The increased use of email has moved chain letters from the Postal Service to the Internet, and you've probably gotten several that ask you to pass them on to 10 other people. Health seems to be a particularly popular subject of those chain emails, giving rise to inbox legends (as opposed to urban legends.) A friend and long-time reader passed one on to me to ask my opinion, and I decided to share my answer with you because this one has just enough truth to make it seem plausible. The primary topic is about eating fruit, but it's also combined with another chain email about cold water causing cancer. Let's take a look.

### Putrefying Foods

I chose this phrase from the first part of the chain email because it sounds disgusting. The concept the author is talking about is food combining as promoted by the natural-hygiene movement; in this case, the idea is that you must eat fruit on an empty stomach. The idea is that if you eat fruit with other foods, it will join all the other putrefying foods and that is somehow a bad thing. Putrefaction is the decay of proteins by microorganisms; the organisms don't require oxygen to do so, and when they break down food they produce gas. Hence, the chain email suggests that's why we belch after a meal including fruit.

It's not quite as simple as that. First, most belches are caused by swallowing air as we eat, and we all do that; carbonated drinks are another culprit. But the more complicated answer is that digestive enzymes start the digestive process in the early part of the small intestine, and probiotics finish it in the latter part; if we don't produce enough digestive enzymes or we don't get enough probiotics, that's more likely to cause gas than anything else. If you feel bloated after meals, take a digestive enzyme 15 minutes before you eat and take a probiotic every day.

### Cooking Destroys All the Vitamins

If that were the case, we'd all be dead because most of us cook our vegetables. In the chain email, the author talks about pasteurization destroying the antioxidants in fruit juice. No doubt drinking fresh squeezed juice is better, but the pasteurization process is necessary to kill the bad bacteria. However the juice is not boiled. Some of the vitamins will deteriorate but not all, and some is better than none. Most people get only two servings of fruit per day, and juice is a big part of those two servings. But it's another reason to take probiotics every day, because processed foods have to be free of all bacteria, and you need the probiotics to make up for what you're not getting in food.

### Drinking Cold Water After a Meal = Cancer

In the chain email, the author says cold water mixes with any fat you've eaten to become sludge and implies that sludge will stop the digestive process. The result? Cancer. This is wrong on so many levels that it's tough to take seriously. Within 60 seconds of drinking ice cold water it's raised to body temperature; the fats are already at body temperature. How is sludge going to form? The only person who would write this is someone who doesn't understand digestion at all.

A diet high in fat is a risk factor for cancer, but it doesn't work the way it's described in the email—a high-fat diet seems to affect estrogen levels and the production of inflammatory hormones. That's not immediate but over a

long enough period of time, it is a risk—another reason to reduce your fat intake and eat more fruits and vegetables, any darn time you please.

## Heart-Attack Warning Signs

This one is true to some extent: there are more warning signs than just pain in the left arm, and they can be more subtle in women than in men. Pain in the jaw or neck, nausea, extreme shortness of breath, and pressure in the chest can be symptoms of a heart attack. Remember the rule: when it doubt, check it out.

But the thing that really gets me is this statistic: “60% of people who have a heart attack while sleeping never wake up.” How could anyone know that? Who’s going to verify that they never woke up? To quote a statistic implies that someone measured it, which means all the people who died in their sleep would have to be autopsied. There’s no such research.

## The Bottom Line

We all seek more energy but sometimes when we eat, our energy level seems to go down. It’s generally not what foods we combine that’s the problem—it’s that we eat too much, and most of us will experience that this coming Thursday. There are probably foods that cause you to bonk or have an energy crash after you eat them—a bagel with cream cheese or a turkey sandwich. We blame it on blood sugar or in the case of the inbox legend, improper food combining.

Try this instead: eat half of it. Give away the rest, or wrap it up and save it for later. My guess is that you won’t bonk and you won’t have any digestive issues either. Life is complicated enough without adding a schedule of what foods you eat when. As I said earlier, just eat more fruits and vegetables—any darn time you please.

What are you prepared to do today?

**Dr. Chet**



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