



August 7, 2010 – Grand Rapids MI

## Urban Legend: Cancer Part 2

Continuing with the urban legend email titled *Johns Hopkins Update: Very Good Article*, Part 2 focuses on nutrition. As I said, I'm reprinting the entire email as I received it. Remember, I specifically asked Paula not to edit the email so you can get the real flavor for the way it was written—torture! We applied a few cookies, and I think she'll recover.

### Part 2

*11. An effective way to battle cancer is to starve the cancer cells by not feeding it with the foods it needs to multiply.*

*\*CANCER CELLS FEED ON:*

*a. Sugar substitutes like NutraSweet, Equal, Spoonful, etc are made with Aspartame and it is harmful. A better natural substitute would be Manuka honey or molasses, but only in very small amounts. Table salt has a chemical added to make it white in color Better alternative is Bragg's aminos or sea salt.*

There's no evidence that anything in this paragraph is true. If they have no calories, exactly how do they feed cancer cells? Recommending sugars from honey would seem to cause cancer cells to grow. Oops. That's a different Urban Legend I'll deal with at another time.

*b. Milk causes the body to produce mucus, especially in the gastro-intestinal tract. Cancer feeds on mucus. By cutting off milk and substituting with unsweetened soy milk cancer cells are being starved.*

There's no evidence that milk produces mucus or that it feeds cancer. Just because your mouth gets a little pasty when you drink milk doesn't mean it's producing mucus; the enzymes released from your mouth and digestive system start to break down the milk sugar, and that may contribute to the pasty sensation more than anything else.

*c. Cancer cells thrive in an acid environment. A meat-based diet is acidic and it is best to eat fish, and a little other meat, like chicken. Meat also contains livestock antibiotics, growth hormones and parasites, which are all harmful, especially to people with cancer.*

Cancer cells thrive wherever they can get food. While it's true that too much protein can cause the body to be slightly more acidic, there's little evidence that becoming more alkaline will stop cancer cells from growing once they are there. However, if people will eat more fruits and vegetables and a lot less meat, I think that will help the immune system—alkalinity aside—and there's actually research to back up that idea.

The second part about antibiotics, growth hormones, and parasites drives me nuts. If someone can show me the evidence for any of those, please send it to me. I checked again and I can't find any research to support those notions; everyone says it, but no one has proved it. What I have found are numerous studies that show that there are plenty of bacteria on meat, vegetables, and fruits that don't seem to affect us—one good reason to take probiotics every day. As for the parasite statement, where are they getting their food? The dumpster? Again, no proof.

*d. A diet made of 80% fresh vegetables and juice, whole grains, seeds, nuts and a little fruits help put the body into an alkaline environment. About 20% can be from cooked food including beans. Fresh vegetable*

*juices provide live enzymes that are easily absorbed and reach down to cellular levels within 15 minutes to nourish and enhance growth of healthy cells. To obtain live enzymes for building healthy cells try and drink fresh vegetable juice (most vegetables including be an sprouts) and eat some raw vegetables 2 or 3 times a day. Enzymes are destroyed at temperatures of 104 degrees F (40 degrees C)..*

There's no evidence that all enzymes from foods survive the gut; enzymes are mostly proteins and when you ingest them, the body treats them like any other protein and digests them. There's no indication that they're reconstituted when they're absorbed. Hey, I want you to eat more vegetables and fruits, and juicing is great, but I can't just say things that are untrue to get you to do it. The last statement could be a problem for most things we eat in the summer: temperatures may exceed 104 degrees in the fields or the trucks. What does that do to those enzymes?

*e. Avoid coffee, tea, and chocolate, which have high caffeine Green tea is a better alternative e and has cancer fighting properties. Water-best to drink purified water, or filtered, to avoid known toxins and heavy metals in tap water. Distilled water is acidic, avoid it.*

Again, there's no evidence that this is true. The latest research seems to indicate that the phytonutrients in chocolate, coffee, and tea are beneficial for immune function, and we're all happy about that. As for the water, the pH will vary wherever you live. Blanket statements don't really help; links to your local water treatment plant would be better. Distilled water is exactly pH neutral.

*12. Meat protein is difficult to digest and requires a lot of digestive enzymes. Undigested meat remaining in the intestines becomes putrefied and leads to more toxic buildup.*

This is wrong on so many levels that it's tough to take seriously. However, urban legend emails like to use the word putrefy because it sounds disgusting and most people don't know what it means. It simply means the breakdown of protein by bacteria. It can release foul odors. Okay; that's what digestion is all about. Using a technical definition is really just stating the obvious. And I've talked before about the idea that anything can remain in the gut for long periods—it can't possibly happen. Some people have slower digestive systems than others, and a lack of fluid and fiber can slow down transit time, but believe me when I tell you that everything—everything—moves on out of there.

*13. Cancer cell walls have a tough protein covering. By refraining from or eating less meat it frees more enzymes to attack the protein walls of cancer cells and allows the body's killer cells to destroy the cancer cells.*

The first sentence is true. Beyond that, it's nonsense. It would mean that your digestive enzymes enter the blood stream. Unless you have pancreatitis, that's just not true. And if you do have it, you'd better be under a doctor's care.

*14. Some supplements build up the immune system (IP6, Flor-ssence, Essiac, anti-oxidants, vitamins, minerals, EFAs etc.) to enable the bodies own killer cells to destroy cancer cells.. Other supplements like vitamin E are known to cause apoptosis, or programmed cell death, the body's normal method of disposing of damaged, unwanted, or unneeded cells.*

I always wonder if this email was started by someone who sold some of those products—some of the phrases are taken directly from statements touting the benefits of some of them. But here's the thing: you never have to take an herb in your life. It doesn't mean you shouldn't, but they aren't nutrients in the sense of vitamins or minerals that are critical for normal cell production. My question is why do you need something the body doesn't make to help the body function normally? While I certainly believe in taking supplements, it's to make up for what we don't get from our foods. If our bodies are well-nourished, we can handle many health challenges. There's some evidence that the right nutrients can help do that. But herbs, while having some medicinal benefit, simply don't qualify as necessary or essential nutrients.

*15. Cancer is a disease of the mind, body, and spirit. A proactive and positive spirit will help the cancer warrior be a survivor. Anger, un-forgiveness and bitterness put the body into a stressful and acidic environment. Learn to have a loving and forgiving spirit. Learn to relax and enjoy life.*

How can you disagree with that? But whether you will be able to survive cancer with a better attitude, no one really knows; that research has never been done, and one principle I hope you learn from my messages is that lots of anecdotes don't equal proof. Cancer is a disease that can be eliminated, and if not that, managed. If you decide to take it on and put your whole self into fighting it, you have a better chance of survival.

16. *Cancer cells cannot thrive in an oxygenated environment. Exercising daily, and deep breathing help to get more oxygen down to the cellular level. Oxygen therapy is another means employed to destroy cancer cells.*

I want you to exercise, but I can't lie and say that the extra oxygen will help prevent cancer because we don't know that. On top of that, exercise doesn't give you that much more oxygen; your blood is already more than 96% saturated at rest. The reduction in cancer in those of us who exercise is more likely due to the reduction in inflammation.

## The Bottom Line

Like many urban legends, this one has a kernel or two of truth surrounded by acres of nonsense.

The best treatment for cancer is prevention. While we can't change our genes, we can do all that we should to reduce the risk. Exercise, reduce fat intake, eat more vegetables, eat more fruit, manage stress, take supplements—those are the things that help our bodies. Urban legends should go the way of the dinosaurs.

What are you prepared to do today?

*Dr. Chet*

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