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Food and Health

This document covers the topics related to how food and diet interact with eczema, psoriasis, acne, digestive diseases, respiratory diseases, allergies, mental / emotional diseases, headaches, insomnia, fatigue, recurrent infections, ADD and ADHD. It also discusses how diet interacts with our genes, making us more or less susceptible to various diseases.

Why food?

Food is a requirement that connects us all. Everyone needs food as a source of energy to fuel for the body and as a source of building blocks for maintenance and repair. Food also provides us with medicine in the form of infection-fighting phytochemicals, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. Food connects people for social, cultural and business purposes. However, while it can be a source of vitality and pleasure, it can also become a source of suffering.

A good homeopath will seek out obstacles to cure in each case before proceeding with treatment. Ancient healing systems such as Chinese traditional medicine and Ayurveda recognise the importance of dietary imbalances in disease. Even conventional western medicine catalogues the influence of nutrition on health and disease, but medical doctors often sideline this aspect of patient management in favor of achieving quick symptomatic relief.

Food may not always be the main cause of the problem, but rather a contributing factor or an obstacle to complete cure. People don't often suspect food as a part of the problem, since the symptoms may not be digestive in nature and may not occur directly after having eaten a meal.

Food hypersensitivities

We more frequently see patients suffering the consequences of their dietary intakes for some time after the have consumed a particular food; sometimes starting up to 3 days after having consumed a particular type of food and continuing for as long as 4 weeks in some cases. This makes pinpointing the food culprit almost impossible, given the fact the other foods have been consumed during the period before the symptoms develop.

This is particularly the case when one has food hypersensitivities, which can result in one or more of a myriad of symptoms such as headaches and migraines, asthma, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Crohn's Disease and even Juvenile Diabetes. Some people refer to food hypersensitivities as food intolerances, but the correct term is food hypersensitivities. Testing for food hypersensitivities involves IgG testing. If you are interested in IgG testing please contact our receptionist on 0117871221 to make an appointment.

Other ways in which diet can cause disease

Some food reactions are neither IgE nor IgG mediated. Some reactions are due to histamine related enzyme deficiencies, digestive enzyme deficiencies, due to imbalances in the gut ecology, due to gut inflammation or due to other diseases such as Inflammatory Bowel Disease, Irritable Bowel Disease, hernias, ulcers, and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).

Sometimes the symptoms related to diet are due to deficiencies and / or excesses. In these cases the person usually doesn't realize that dietary imbalances are the cause of the symptoms such as in cases of fatigue, recurrent infections, recurrent muscle cramps, insomnia, depression, heart palpations, hair loss, diabetes, cancer etc.

Investigating the links between food and symptoms

People often pick and choose their own tests as they try to diagnose their diseases or ascertain to cause of their symptoms using information from the internet combined with advice from friends and family. The truth of the matter is that pinpointing the role of food in a person's symptoms or disease is very complex and can be challenging, even for a trained professional.

You may save yourself some time and pain making an appointment with a practitioner experienced in investigating the role of food in disease. Such a practitioner would take a full medical and diet history and combine this with information from a variety of indicated laboratory tests, often including IgE and IgG food tests, tests for evidence of nutritional deficiencies and metabolic diseases.

Food and Allergies

An allergy is an abnormal reaction of a person's immune system to a normally harmless substance. Some people have severe reactions to food that can result in extreme swelling of the eyelids and/or lips or an unanticipated visit to the emergency room due to anaphylactic shock. Other people have milder reactions to food, but the symptoms are still very uncomfortable – skin rashes (including hives and eczema), itching skin, difficulty breathing (including asthma), sinusitis, headaches, digestive complaints etc. The milder symptoms are often more chronic (i.e. on-going) and the person is often unaware that their symptoms are being trigger by food.

Sometimes the reaction a person has to food is a hypersensitivity reaction as opposed to an allergy reaction. Some examples of diseases that food hypersensitivity reactions are associated with include asthma, eczema, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), functional dyspepsia, migraine & migraine-like headaches, crohn's disease (a severe inflammatory bowel disease) and juvenile obesity.

Processed Foods

Reports suggest that the incidence of conditions such as asthma, allergic rhinitis, and atopic dermatitis (i.e. eczema) has increased during the past decade. Many scientists believe that the consumption of processed foods and the high levels of stress in our daily lives are major contributors to the rise in the frequency of these conditions. Processed foods contain higher levels of additives and preservatives, flavouring agents, and colorants. Food sensitivities can also be triggered by chemicals in our food such as preservatives, pesticides, fungicides, insecticides, and food spoilage chemicals such as sulfites.

Allergies and hypersensitivities to food preservatives and additives have been widely published. For example a long list of preservatives commonly used in literally thousands of different processed foods, flavouring agents and dyes are known to cause hives.

Heavy Metals

A number of heavy metals such as arsenic, aluminium, cadmium, lead, mercury and nickel are found in our foods through fertilizers, colorants, additives, insect sprays and pollution to name but a few. These metals can either be part of the cause of allergies or can aggravate the allergies themselves.

Food and eczema, psoriasis, acne

Experience gained from treating various patients confirms that testing for food hypersensitivities and following a diet that eliminates the problem foods assists in treating eczema and psoriasis. Other individualized dietary advice related to eczema flare ups, such as the avoidance of histamine stimulating foods and drinks can also assist.

Acne is often aggravated by increases in steroid (sex) hormones. Certain foods commonly consumed can stimulate insulin-like growth factor and insulin, which in turn stimulates increases in the sex hormones associated with acne. Just one example of such a food is milk and other dairy products.

A dietary approach to acne, psoriasis and eczema is imperative, but it is not sufficient on its own. A holistic treatment plan using herbs, homeopathy and individualised nutraceutical supplements as necessary should be added. In cases of psoriasis and eczema it is often useful to do other testing such as heavy metal toxicity screening.

Food and digestive diseases

Abdominal bloating and pain, as well chronic constipation, diarrhea are common symptoms. In most cases the underlying cause of these symptoms isn't serious, but they can severely affect a person's quality of life. These symptoms are often blamed on irritable bowel syndrome without the benefit of adequate investigation. Investigation of these symptoms involves a thorough case taking combined with various diagnostic tests.

Although food hypersensitivities are not always to blame, these should be excluded as a contributing factor with appropriate testing. Certain digestive disease such as gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) will always benefit from dietary and lifestyle changes in addition to treatment. Remember that certain drug treatments for reflux can cause bloating as a side effect.

Food and respiratory diseases

Asthma is a disease sometimes fuel by allergies. Usually the triggers for asthma are inhaled allergens. Food and food additive allergies (caused by IgE reactions) are implicated in some asthma attacks too. In addition to this food hypersensitivity can play a role in not only asthma, but can contribute to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), chronic sinusitis and chronic cough, including chronic bronchitis. Knowing what foods aggravate your asthma is an important component of your treatment regime. Various complementary interventions, including allergy desensitisation can work well for asthma.

Food and mental / emotional diseases

It is always important to consider the influences of diet in cases of depression, anxiety, irritability, and problems with memory & concentration. Incorrect diet can result in coexisting nutritional diseases such as anemia, insulin resistance or specific vitamin and mineral imbalances that will present with changes in mood or cognition.

The latest research in depression, bipolar disorder and anxiety recommends including specific nutrients and supplements even in conjunction with drug treatments to improve the outcome of mood disorders. This should be done in addition to addressing unique nutrient disturbances present in each individual.

A trained practitioner, experienced in assessing and treating mood and cognitive disorders holistically will rely on a thorough case history including diet and lifestyle habits together with the results of various diagnostic techniques, including laboratory testing to assess nutritional status to develop a treatment regime for such disorders. Additional testing such as neurofeedback and urine heavy metal challenge testing may complement such an approach.

Other lifestyle factors such as exercise, timing of meals, sleep quality and quantity, various vices such as intake of alcohol, recreational drugs and stimulants including caffeine should also be taken into consideration.

Food and headaches

Chronic and recurrent headaches, including migraines, are a challenge to treat. There are so many possible causes and contributing factors to consider. One thing is certain, it is imperative to investigate the role of diet in chronic and recurrent headaches. There are so many ways in which diet can contribute to headaches; food allergies, food intolerances, various specific dietary deficiencies and excess, not to mention deficiencies in certain enzymes needed to break down histamine in food. The content and timing of meals can also play a role. It is worthwhile being assessed by a practitioner knowledgeable in investigating the link between diet and headache.

Looking at diet alone, however, is often not sufficient to treat recurrent headaches. Many other factors such as menstrual cycle in women, sleep disorders and blood disorders should always be taken into consideration as part of a thorough investigation. The causes and contributing factors of recurrent headaches whether diet or otherwise can vary greatly from person to person, which is why an individualised diagnostic and treatment approach is so important.

Food and insomnia

The treatment of insomnia should be approached holistically. Although drugs that induce sedation works well for many people, the side effect of daytime drowsiness is intolerable for some people. Medical drugs also don't work for everyone. Treating the underlying imbalances is a better approach. Taking into consideration medical drug history, diet and sleep hygiene are very important in addition to other diagnostic approaches. Certain diseases related to nutrition can have a big influence on sleep quality. A thorough evaluation will include testing for nutritional deficiencies related to sleep in addition to a complete case history taking that may highlight dietary intake of foods and drinks that can have a negative impact on sleep. Certain nutritional diseases such as anemia and type 2 Diabetes can influence sleep quality.

Food and fatigue

There are many causes of fatigue. All possibilities need to be considered and investigated by an experienced practitioner. Dietary imbalances can contribute to fatigue in a number of ways. Anemia (caused by either iron or vitamin B12 deficiency) is just one of the most obvious nutritional causes of fatigue. The timing of meals, as well as the content, of the meals can provide a lot of information regarding contributing factors in cases of fatigue. People often consume stimulant drinks such as caffeinated drinks to help them cope with fatigue. This only creates more severe fatigue in the long run and should thus be avoided once the correct treatment for fatigue is started.

Food and recurrent infections

Diet can play a major role in various cases of recurrent infections, whether recurrent urinary tract infections, recurrent respiratory tract infection or recurrent vaginal and oral thrush. Nutrient deficiencies and excesses can have a big impact on immune function. All patients presenting with recurrent infections should be investigated for nutrient deficiencies and excesses related to immune function in addition to a full case taking and other diagnostic testing before a holistic treatment program is commenced.

Food and ADD / ADHD

Attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are two of the most common behavioural disorders in children today. Symptoms may include distractibility, impulsivity, inattention, low frustration tolerance and sometimes hyperactivity. While the precise causes of ADD / ADHD are not yet fully understood, a number of genetic and environmental risk factors for the disorder are recognized. Many specialists believe that nutritional issues may also have an impact on the condition.

Foods high in sugar and carbohydrates have properties that may actually keep the brain from functioning normally, causing poor impulse control and difficulty in focusing. Even fruit juices are high in sugars and should be diluted. Artificial sweeteners are not the answer for replacing sugars as they can cause their own problems problems or have side-effects. Safe natural sweeteners such as Xylitol should be used instead.

Individuals with ADD/ ADHD are more susceptible to the effects of caffeine and its powerful stimulant effect. The caffeine can also increase anxiety levels which are often already raised in ADD / ADHD.

Nutritional deficiencies are also a big factor contributing to the symptoms of ADD / ADHD. Nutrient deficiencies of amino acids, omega 3 fatty acids, and very specific vitamins and mineral are very common and may vary from patient to patient. These nutrient deficiencies will always be considered when you visit an ADD / ADHD practitioner with the knowledge and experience to create a holistic treatment plan.

Accumulated research evidence shows significant symptom improvement in children with ADD / ADHD when avoiding artificial food colorants (AFC). Of children with suspected AFC sensitivities 65-89% reacted when given artificial food colorants. There have also been research suggesting that some children are also sensitive to or allergic to dairy, gluten, preservatives, other food additives, salicylate-containing foods such as grapes, tomatoes and oranges, and common non-salicylate foods (milk, chocolate, soy, eggs, wheat, corn, legumes). Children with attention deficit are seven times more likely to have food allergies and food hypersensitivities than the general population.

A recent Dutch study found that putting children diagnosed with ADHD given a diet aimed at eliminating previously undetected food hypersensitivities decreased hyperactivity in 64% of the studied children.

Toxic metals such as lead and mercury increase the risk of developing ADD / ADHD in children. These can be found in pesticides and herbicides used on fruits and vegetables (these are also injected in animals farmed for food to stimulate growth), as well as in drinking water. Certain fish (especially tuna and salmon) can contain high levels of mercury which is not safe, especially to an individual with ADD / ADHD. Foods wrapped in plastic or cellophane should be considered unsafe due to contamination with the harmful petrochemicals that are used to make these plastic products.

Processed meats and other processed foods contain many hidden chemicals that can trigger impulsive actions and hyperactivity.

Taking a close look at diet is essential to a detailed assessment of ADHD with a holistic view in mind. Considering diet is just one facet of an individualised treatment program. Alternative treatments utilizing a combination of homeopathy, herbs, diet, supplements, neurotherapy assessment and chelation of heavy metals when required are most effective when prescribe by a trained, knowledgeable and experienced practitioner with access to the latest research information on these modalities as they relate to ADHD.

Alternative treatments should definitely be prescribed according to each individual patient's characteristic symptoms. Possible causes, contributing factors, obstacles to cure, the individual symptoms (mental, emotional and physical), lifestyle and age of the patient all need to be considered when developing a treatment plan, once special testing has been completed.

To make an appointment with Dr Davidson please contact her receptionist on 0117871221.

Nutrigenomics and Epigenetics

Know how your lifestyle choices interact with your genes

Epigenetics is one of the latest and most intensely studied fields of scientific research. It refers to situations where non-genetic factors cause your genes to behave (or "express themselves") differently. Some examples of factors that can epigenetically influence the expression of your genes include nutritional and lifestyle factors, exposure to toxins, quality of sleep and even emotions. These changes in genetic expression set in motion physiological events that will result in either better or worse functioning of your body; health or disease.

Nutrigenomics assesses how one's genetic make-up determines what type of diet and other lifestyle factors are required to achieve and maintain good health. Nutrigenomic testing can detect genetic weaknesses that can make you vulnerable to diseases such as type 2 diabetes, obesity, heart disease, stroke and certain cancers. However, the types of genetic weakness studied in nutrigenomic (called single-nucleotide polymorphisms or SNPs) can be modified by specific lifestyle and dietary changes as well as individualised, targeted supplementation.

In order words specific diet and lifestyle changes can be prescribed to epigenetically modify the risks and benefits associated with your genetic makeup to minimise your genetic weakness while maximising your genetic strengths.

Nutrigenomic Testing

DNA Health

The genes we carry significantly affect our health and susceptibility to various chronic diseases. Many diseases are preventable through the correct diet and lifestyle choices. DNA Health tests for variations in genes that play a crucial role in a number of metabolic processes which are key factors in the onset of chronic disease.

DNA Health is designed help you make the best diet and lifestyle choices based on your unique genetic make-up. It tests 20 genes involved in various key biological processes, including cholesterol metabolism, bone health, inflammation, antioxidant status, insulin sensitivity and vitamin B metabolism (including methylation). The results of this test can help

formulate a plan to reduce your susceptibility to a wide variety of diseases from some cancers to depression.

The DNA Health test is available through Dr Cornelia Botha. Contact her receptionist on 0117871221

R3500.00 (includes a follow-up consultation to explain the report).

DNA Diet:

Genetics can determine the way a person responds to diet and exercise, as well as an individual's susceptibility to obesity when exposed to unfavourable environmental factors. In fact 40% to 80% of the variance in body weight is due to genetic factors. This helps to explain why not everyone becomes obese even though people may be exposed to similar environments. Genes involved in the regulation of energy expenditure, insulin control, appetite and fat metabolism all play an important role in weight regulation.

DNA Diet is a genetic test that assesses 13 genes that impact metabolism and exercise. Your detailed report will include tailor made recommendations for nutrition and an exercise programme.

The DNA Diet test is available through Dr Cornelia Botha. Contact her receptionist on 0117871221

R1500.00

If you would like to do additional testing to ensure that other diseases or hormone imbalances are not contributing to your weight gain or weight loss please contact Dr Botha's receptionist on 0117871221 to make an appointment.

DNA Fit:

Where does your training performance potential lie? Are you a sprinter or should you be spending hours training for marathons? Personalise your training regime based on the knowledge of your genetic make-up.

DNA Fit is a genetic test that provides insight into your potential for sporting performance and trainability, optimal exercise selection, recovery strategies and injury management. The test is suitable for the elite performance athlete as well as the recreational athlete looking to maximise their training returns and reach peak levels of conditioning. DNA Fit tests for genes in three categories that relate to sporting performance: Power and Endurance, Recovery and Tendon Pathology.

The DNA Fit test is available through Dr Cornelia Botha. Contact her receptionist on 0117871221

R 2950.00

To make an appointment with either Dr Botha or Dr Davidson please contact their receptionist on 0117871221.