

# Food As Medicine

Hippocrates, a Greek physician in the 4th century, said, “Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.” It was true then and it is just as true today.

This is easily noted when in the 1700’s sailors recognized that those who ate citrus fruit were able to avoid the disease known as scurvy and those that missed out on the citrus fruit developed scurvy. When those sailors with scurvy were given citrus fruit, they became well again. It was the Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) in the citrus fruit that was needed by the body to function properly. It seems so easy in hindsight to be the detective in the scurvy case but at the time it was not so obvious.

We learned from this history that there is a definite link between nutrients in food and disease. Given our Standard American Diet (appropriately called SAD) it is no wonder that heart disease, diabetes, cancer and dementia rates are skyrocketing!

Did you know that 75 percent of children ages 7 -11 already have beginning signs of heart disease in their blood vessels? Yes you read that correctly--3 out of 4 children are already sick!

Did you know that 79 million people live with prediabetes? The numbers are growing with 25 million people in the U. S. already having the disease and 7 million of these do not even know they have it yet!

Did you know that a woman has a 38 percent lifetime risk of developing cancer and if you are a man that risk increases to a 45 percent chance in his lifetime?

Did you know that the projected number of people suffering from dementia in 2030 will be 75.6 million people and it is expected to triple by 2050 to 135.5 million people?

Do you understand that this is not normal? Our modern lifestyle is making us sick!

We sit too much and eat without thinking. Then we wonder why we are sick. The only way to reverse the trend is to change our choices and we do that by informed decision-making. We have to choose to eat healthfully and be fit through activity or exercise. We have to educate ourselves through reliable sources on how to be smart consumers. Personal responsibility is key for a positive outcome with your diagnosis.

Good nutrition is our foundation to a healthy life. Foods such as fruits and vegetables have a bountiful number of phytochemicals, vitamins and minerals in them all working together. These nutrients keep our bodies functioning normally and help fight off disease.

Nutritional scientists are trying to identify and understand how each one works and the effects they have on the human body. There are thousands of phytochemicals in fruits and vegetables and we understand only a few of them. For instance lycopene is the best known phytochemical in tomatoes. We know lycopene is a carotenoid and it helps reduce the risk of prostate cancer by activating phase II enzymes. Yet, lycopene is just one of thousands of phytochemicals in a single tomato.

Yellow and red onions also are powerful in the fight against cancer. They are considered an allium vegetable and contain organosulfur compounds. When the cell walls of this vegetable are broken – by chewing or chopping – then the chemical reaction begins. This reaction appears to detoxify cancer cells and halt their growth. So if you eat onions everyday then you may have stopped a cancer in its tracks without ever even knowing you had it!

Educated food selection is your first line of defense in maintaining your health or improving your illness. Modern medicine and medications have their place in your treatment AFTER YOU have done your part! According to the listed disease trends, you may be fighting for your life and not even know it yet.

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