



Good Health -- Great Future

Issue A10

"Making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, that's creativity."

CHARLES MINGUS
Musician & composer

Don't Forget:

To include plenty of super foods in your diet:

Almonds, walnuts, avocados, green herbs, chilli, broccoli, garlic, oranges, soy, raspberries and other berries, tomatoes, yogurt, soy, spinach, tea (inc. green tea), oats.

Research tells us that these foods may provide us various health benefits and are worth particular attention.

Welcome

Hey all you parents out there! For healthy and happy kids make sure you feed them up with plenty of white bread with lashings of chocolate/nut spread on it. Why? Because the chocolate/nut spread has a low GI and it's on TV; so it must be good!. My poor kids (born to a health consultant dad) thought that was the best and most valid health information they had ever encountered -- even though they had never heard of GI (Glycemic Index). Another advert that recently caught my attention was that of an acclaimed dietitian, smiling over a box of Coco Pops, professionally explaining the benefits of a couple of the vitamins or minerals contained within.

Let's not forget that the chocolate spread and cereal manufacturers are in the business of making money for shareholders -- their primary business focus is not the enhancement of health outcomes for our children. A possible health benefit (no matter how small it maybe) is a great marketing opportunity for the manufacturers, because it connects with caring people. After twenty years in the health industry I can see not much has changed in this regard: if a product has a sliver of health benefit it will be exploited to the max. whilst other, not so good, features are discreetly left in the background.

Sure the odd Nutella sandwich for a child is an okay treat, but certainly not daily. Offering healthy options such as a piece of fruit or a handful of nuts is a much better idea and stronger modeling for the child's future. Try to buy foods as close to their natural state as possible. It's also important to be an astute label reader. If you would like to receive a fact sheet on effective reading of food labels: reply with "LABEL" in the subject.

GI (Glycemic Index) is a hot topic -- our team are fielding more questions about it than any other issue at the moment. There are many reasons for this, not least the marketing opportunities taken by some food manufacturers. Thus we have included GI as our feature article in this issue. I hope this provides some practical information about the topic. Also, included is a good web site to follow up if you are keen to gain more detailed knowledge about GI.

On to another topic: as Christmas shopping begins may I suggest we keep health and the environment in mind. Sporting equipment, new runners, a cycle, club memberships etc. are healthy gifts with great outcomes. Also, try to choose gifts that require less packaging and last a long time. The plant nursery is a great stop for Christmas gifts.

From all of us at Health Futures may we wish for you a wonderful Christmas. We hope 2007 brings you achievement of all the goals you set for yourself. Oh! and for a couple of days over the holidays forget all that health stuff you've heard from us this year -- we certainly will.

Rob Edwards and the Health Futures Team

It's a Bit Yuk! No Not For Me!

That's a response I once received when I offered a Colocare kit to a participant in our health appraisal program. The product is simply a piece of paper impregnated with chemicals, you toss it in the loo (after a poo); if a particular colour change occurs this suggests blood is present in the stool. Then, of course, it's important to report to the family doctor and investigate further. Yes that is a bit "Yuk!", but we have had a number of people over the years find early bowel cancers that they have subsequently been treated (see www.healthfutures.com.au/news [Issue A6] for an example where a 46 year old felt he saved his own life). Did you know that only a little over half the people who participate in our appraisal program take up that option?

Recently in Townsville I was delivering a seminar when a member of the audience brought up the topic of people's odd reluctance to something that could be so valuable. The discussion moved on to the hesitance that many people have in taking preventive actions such as PAP tests, visually checking stools for blood and so on. She suggested that we, at Health Futures, should be looking harder for ways to get people past the "Yuk! Factor". She is right and we will continue to review our reporting and practices in an attempt to increase compliance -- hopefully without annoying or mothering you.

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The benefits of small proactive/preventive strategies can be massive. In my seminars I spend some time discussing self checking practices. In doing so I urge audiences to take a moment to consider the two extremes of the discussion:

On one hand we are talking about: Bowel Cancer, Melanoma, Cervical Cancer; Breast Cancer; Testicular Cancer -- if any of these touch you or the people near to you it can be a horror story. On the other hand I've suggested: have a quick look to check for blood in the stool; monthly skin self examination; PAP test; monthly breast self check and annually with doctor; mammogram if relevant; monthly testicular self check etc. In practice they are all relatively simple actions, but in the context of my first points, they are potentially life saving.

Makes sense, but for many people these actions are "A Bit Yuk!" and therefore easily put off until "tomorrow" -- which of course never comes. How do we help people get over the "Yuk! Factor"? I'm not sure other than to emphasise the huge potential returns and to urge people to give it the importance it deserves. And probably to keep nagging away at the topic.

Also, getting issues checked out with your doctor should not be delayed. Whether it is further blood tests, a colonoscopy etc. I met a fellow in 2002 who told me that, in 1993, his doctor gave him a referral to have a colonoscopy -- nine years later the referral was still in his office draw. His reason: "I was not keen on the idea" (another "Yuk! Factor"). I considered that his doctor must have been concerned, perhaps even checking for bowel cancer. I bluntly told him that he was a fool and lucky.

Over the years we have identified many people with worrying blood profiles, high blood pressure etc. We give strong recommendation that they follow up with their doctor. Yet it's not uncommon for us to meet them a year later and find out that they did not follow up, because: "It was only a bit high" or "I hate needles!" or "Yes, I've been meaning to do that" In our society we take for granted how extraordinary (in a global context) our health care system is -- please, please please use it to avoid disaster rather than being forced to use it in an attempt to repair things when it's perhaps too late.

Do you take these proactive actions? Have you any outstanding check ups? If you have room for improvement you might consider some New Year's resolutions to help you jump the hurdle of the "Yuk! Factor". Regarding self checking there are tons of good web sites for information so Google what you need.

Healthy Entertaining

Most of us have experienced French onion dip, cabanossi pieces, cheese cubes and crackers -- not so healthy nor entertaining. This festive season go easy on full cream dips, salami, little frankfurts, chips, cheezels, party pies, sausage rolls, confectionery and salted nuts. Try some of these healthy alternatives and listen to the positive feedback you'll get:

- Fruit platters: try rockmelon sliced in a fan, small bunches of grapes, piles of strawberries and raspberries, halved passionfruit, coconut dipped banana pieces, kiwi fruit, orange segments, lychees, sultanas and other dried fruit. Try as fruit kebabs (pieces of fruit skewered).
- Healthy dips based on ricotta, cottage cheese, low fat sour cream or tomato salsa.
- For dippers use vegetable pieces such as celery, carrot sticks, green beans, cauliflower and broccoli florets. Try also bread sticks or lightly toasted wedges of pita, Lebanese or plain breads.
- Serve small bowls of cherry tomatoes, cherries, unsalted nuts, sultanas, raisins, dates, and dried fruits such as apricots, apples and pears
- Popcorn, pretzels and roasted chickpeas
- Small wholemeal sandwiches
- Small bowls of olive oil with chopped fresh herbs for people to dip crusty bread.
- Bruschetta (chopped basil, tomatoes and onion on garlic oil coated bread - use long bread sticks cut two centimetres thick).
- Antipasto platter of sun dried tomato's, marinated zucchini, roasted eggplant and capsicum.

"The way to happiness: keep your heart free from hate, your mind free from worry, live simply, expect little, give much."

BARNEY O'LAVIN

Don't Forget:

When it comes to New Year resolutions:

Set specific goals

Be realistic

Write down the goals

Consider the benefits

Review your goals

Reward yourself

Also, try to use the Christmas break to relax and recharge rather than running yourself ragged and starting the new year on the wrong foot.

Have fun and be safe.

GI (Glycemic Index)

For many of us, all we want is “tell me what to eat and what not to”. GI helps in this regard, but GI tables are determined by extensive biochemical analysis and the result can be complex and confusing. The simple messages can get lost in the detail. Below is some basic information and a few examples we hope are of value.

The Glycemic Index is a method of ranking different carbohydrates according to the impact they have on our blood sugar levels: their rate of glycemic response (i.e. their conversion to glucose in the body). GI uses a scale of 0 to 100, with higher values given to foods that cause the most rapid rise in blood sugar. Pure glucose serves as a reference point with a GI of 100.

Nutritionists used to believe that all simple sugars were digested quickly and caused a rapid rise in blood sugar, and that the opposite was true for "complex carbohydrates". But that's not always the case. Whilst many sweet foods do have high GI's, some others such as potatoes and white bread score even higher than honey or table sugar (sucrose)!

One of the major reasons that GI is important is that your body performs best when your blood sugar level is kept relatively constant. Generally foods with a low GI are better at controlling blood sugar levels and appetite, leaving you with a feeling of fullness. If your diet includes many highly processed carbohydrates such as sweets, white bread and many fast foods (with high GI) you will experience sharper shifts in the blood sugar levels and be left feeling hungry and lethargic. These foods can also negatively impact your long-term health if eaten too frequently.

Carbohydrates are classified as follows in the GI:

- o Glucose itself is awarded a GI rating of 100. This is the highest score as it is pure energy.
- o Foods below 55 are considered low GI foods and are the best foods for regulating and maintaining a stable (or perhaps “normal”) blood glucose level through the day. Examples of these foods are multi-grain bread, rolled oats and yogurt.
- o Foods above 56 but below 69 will have a stronger effect on the glucose levels than low GI foods. Examples of these foods are beetroot, popcorn and croissants.
- o Foods ranked above 70 have the most dramatic effect on our blood sugar levels and should be eaten in small quantities. Examples of these foods are cornflakes, donuts, waffles and pretzels.

If your diet consists of mostly low GI foods you are likely to feel fuller for longer, which should lead to the consumption of fewer calories/kilojoules. It's not a miracle diet and unrealistic for most people to attempt to eat only low GI foods. The key is to strike a healthy balance. Yes its back to the old, not so dramatic advice: eat plenty and a variety of fruit and vegetables; choose wholemeal breads and wholegrain breakfast cereals; have modest portions of fat trimmed meats; plenty of water and make physical activity a regular part of your lifestyle. For a copy of our “Good Eating Guidelines” visit www.healthfutures.com.au [Issue A4].

YEP! we have heard it all before -- our bodies have been around for more than two million years and the body's basic needs have not changed a great deal in that time. So keep it simple and keep it happening.

For more depth visit www.nutritiondata.com/glycemic-index.html. This site provides some excellent material. Otherwise there are many credible web sites when you google Glycemic Index (but probably best to dodge the sites with products to sell).

GI is of particular importance to diabetics. If you are diabetic or at risk of becoming diabetic we urge you to seek the assistance of a qualified dietitian who will provide advice and eating plans in the context of your particular situation.

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Print this page, then enter a "Rating" from 1 to 5 as to how well you take care of yourself in that particular area. 5 means that you are very proactive in managing that particular aspect of your lifestyle; 3 means there is room for improvement, 1 means it is in a pretty bad way.

This is not designed as a detailed analysis. Just approximate how you are going for each point, for example: "Dietary Fibre Intake" ask yourself: do I eat whole meal bread, include plenty of vegetables, have a couple of pieces of fruit each day, choose whole grain cereals and so on?

Use the low ratings to identify areas that may be improved -- opportunities to invest in your future health and well being.

Enter "Goals and Actions" in the space provided. Make a diary note to revisit the table two monthly.

Don't do this in a hurry (it's far too important), take some time to ponder where you are at and how you can make positive change in the context of the other demands on your energy and time.

Have a great day

How Do You Rate Yourself?

Consider www.healthfutures.com.au/planner (use HF Code: P1111) to manage your goals.

	Rating	Goals and Actions
Physical Activity		
Body Weight		
Alcohol		
Cigarettes		
Dietary Fibre Intake		
Dietary Fat Intake		
Sugar Intake		
Fluid Intake		
Stress Management		
Time to Relax		
Back Care Exercises		
Cholesterol/Triglyceride		
Skin Self Checking		
Check Stools for Blood		
Breast/Testicular Self Check		
PAP Test		
Mammogram		
Prostate		
Dental Check Up		

Replies, Replacement Reports and Back Issues

For back issues of this newsletter visit www.healthfutures.com.au/news. The newsletter goes to many thousands of people so again it is not possible for us to respond to specific health related questions.

For those who have taken part in the Health Futures Appraisal Program a new appraisal report is available (Version: October 2006). Due to the number of people who have taken part in our programs, we are unable to provide new reports without charging a fee. The fee is \$65 for production and postage of a CD (approx. 3000 pages of resources). Reports are sent after payment (by cheque) to: Health Futures Pty Ltd, Level 1, 44-52 Townshend Street, Phillip ACT 2606. Please indicate date of birth and if your name has changed.