

Regular exercise and a nutrient-rich diet are the most effective strategies to avoid osteoporosis.

The force of muscles pulling against bone stimulates bone remodeling and bone formation. Limiting heavy protein and sodium intake, reducing alcohol, and not smoking are also fundamental to maintaining strong bones.

The push to provide costly and risky medical solutions for low bone density in healthy women is drawing attention away from the very important issues of preventing falls in the elderly, diagnosing genuine sufferers, and encouraging regular exercise and appropriate diet to maintain bone health. It is essential that all of us become educated about the accuracy of diagnostic methods and the safety and effectiveness of any treatment before we embark upon it.

To purchase *The Osteoporosis "Epidemic": Well Women and the Marketing of Fear*, by Gill Sanson (Penguin Books, New Zealand, 2001), contact info@bonestory.com, or visit the Web site at www.bonestory.com

Any Way You Slice It, Bread May Not Be the Staff of Life

I don't know about you, but I love bread—all kinds of bread. Bagels, rye bread, muffins, Portuguese sweet bread, sweet rolls, baguettes, you name it. There's just something so satisfying about bread and grain products such as rice and pasta. I could eat them daily. But I don't. Why not? Because over-consumption of grain-based foods, particularly refined grains (but not always) in all their delicious forms, sets the stage for most of the degenerative diseases we suffer from in this culture, including heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. As tough as it is to admit it, more than any other factor, the key to midlife weight loss and health is to cut way back on grain products.

Despite overwhelming evidence of the harm they do, grain-based foods comprise the bulk of the American diet. And most nutritionists and even the venerable U.S. Government Food Pyramid recommend 6-11 servings per day as the foundation for health.

In her book, *Going Against the Grain* (Contemporary Books 2000, a division of McGraw Hill), **Melissa Diane Smith**, a nutritionist and health educator, gives the following reasons why a high grain intake isn't healthy for most people:

- Grains are high in carbohydrates and calories, especially considering the nutrient levels they provide.

- Grains are used to fatten livestock. They do the same for humans when eaten in excess.
- Millions of people are intolerant to common grains and, after eating them, develop allergic symptoms: aches and pains, malabsorption of nutrients, gas and bloating, and other GI upsets.
- High-grain diets are implicated in most modern-day health problems including autoimmune diseases, heart disease, adult onset diabetes, and some types of cancer.

After years of experimentation, I've discovered just how much grain I can tolerate without health problems—and it isn't much. After years of eating a low fat, high grain diet, and bringing up my children on that same diet, I've come to the realization that a low- or no-grain diet is healthiest. (There's nothing like having a tendency to store excess fat to motivate you to figure it out! I can tell you, if I were eating the same diet that I did when I was 32, I would weigh 170 pounds.) And the same is true for hundreds of my patients, and millions of other Americans.

But as the author points out there is enormous economic pressure to keep pitching carbs and grain products. Watching TV is already an addictive exercise; you need an addictive food to go with it. Increasingly, researchers are finally pointing out the downside of grains, and a group of pioneers have written about these issues for years.

How Much Grain are You Eating?

Most Americans start off their day with a muffin or bagel, eat a sandwich for lunch, cookies for a snack, and then have pasta or Chinese take-out with fried rice—or pizza, complete with an extra-thick crust—for dinner. That's a lot of grain. And though some of the nutrients in organic, unrefined whole grains are good for us, overloading on grain in general doesn't work for most people.

And grains can also become addictive. Studies have shown that cereal grains, especially wheat, corn, and barley, contain opioid substances known as exorphins which literally means morphine-like molecules from the outside environment. (Dairy products also have been shown to have exorphins.) These substances bind to the same receptors in our brains and travel along the same pathways used by other addictive substances such as alcohol and sugar, creating a temporary "high" that sets you up for cravings.

I've watched several of my patients get "drunk" on grain- and sugar-containing foods such as cookies or pastry. They become spacey, clumsy, and can't focus; one nearly became comatose. Smith also points to

research that shows that partially digested compounds in foods such as grains and milk can increase appetite and slow metabolism.

Gluten-containing grains such as wheat can also cause a type of delayed food allergy that actually triggers cravings for the very food that is the culprit. It's estimated that 10–60 percent of the population suffers from these types of sensitivities. Symptoms can show up hours or even a few days after the food is eaten so it can be difficult to make the connection between the food and the symptom. The following are common symptoms of delayed food sensitivities that often occur when lots of grain is eaten habitually:

- ❁ Tiredness or exhaustion—particularly after meals or even a full night's sleep.
- ❁ A tendency to gain or lose more than a couple of pounds a day.
- ❁ Puffiness, swelling, and dark bags under the eyes.
- ❁ Digestive issues such as bloating, gas, constipation, abdominal pains, or cramps.
- ❁ Excess mucus formation characterized by a chronically congested nose, postnasal drip, runny nose, frequent infections, sneezing fits, phlegm.
- ❁ Chronic pain (arthritis, muscle aches, stiff joints).
- ❁ Headaches, especially cluster and migraine.
- ❁ Emotional, mental, and behavioral symptoms such as mood swings, unexplained irritability, panic attacks, hyperactivity, and depression for no apparent reason.

All of these problems are exacerbated if you drink a lot of alcohol, use antibiotics regularly, or use nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen regularly.

Genetically Engineered Foods Can Enhance Grain Allergies

I'm completely against genetically modified foods and consider them dangerous until proven otherwise. Using them and allowing industry to use them is like opening a Pandora's box that I don't even want to think about. What I know for certain is that they hold the potential to create even more problems with grain sensitivity.

Genetically engineered foods with drastically altered proteins are surely going to contribute further to delayed food sensitivities. Smith gives the following example: "Consider what would happen if an allergic person ate some corn—which is a common allergen to begin with—and the corn was altered to include its own pesticide using a bacterium carrier. The body would then have three toxic invaders to deal with. This

Wheat and Allergies

If you have a sensitivity to wheat, you might be reacting to one or more of the many different potential allergenic components in wheat, including:

- Albumins
- Globulins
- Gliadins (of which there are 40 different types)
- Gultenins (of which there are 40 different types)

From *Going Against the Grain*

triple allergy threat would undoubtedly make the original sensitivity to corn much worse."

How to Go Against the Grain, Lose Weight, and Regain Your Health

I've touched only the tip of the grain iceberg here. If you want more data to be convinced, I urge you to get a copy of *Going Against the Grain*. For those of you who can relate to what I've said and want to get started with reaping the health and weight loss benefits of grain reduction, here's what I recommend:

- ❁ Keep a daily food journal for two weeks. Notice how much grain you really consume.
- ❁ Start to replace the grains you're eating with non-starchy vegetables such as kale, zucchini, tomatoes, summer squash, spinach, etc. (*Note:* The book offers three levels: Eliminating Wheat Only, Eliminating Gluten Grains Only, or Going Totally Against all Grains.) I personally do well by limiting my grain intake to two to three small servings per week—that includes all bread, cookies, pasta, muffins, and desserts. Some of you will be able to do more, some less than that.
- ❁ Avoid or limit your intake of concentrated sweeteners such as sugar, fructose, and high-fructose corn syrup, which are often hidden in fruit juices and many other foods.
- ❁ Eat adequate (about the size of the palm of your hand) amounts of lean protein throughout the day, including breakfast. I start my day with a Revival Soy shake (1-800-500-2055) which gives me 20 grams of protein—the amount in most meal replacement bars, no grain, and almost no carbs. It keeps me going strong until lunchtime, when I have grilled salmon and salad greens.
- ❁ Be prepared for the 4 p.m. mood and blood sugar slump. The emotional body rears its head at 4 p.m. when both our blood sugar and cortisol tend to plummet (especially if we haven't eaten enough protein and have eaten too many grains or sugars.) This is made worse by stress. Make sure

you have a healthy, lean protein snack available. Otherwise you'll knock people over racing to get a sweet grain or candy snack. Revival now has low-carb bars that are great for travel or taking to work for a snack. Other good work or travel snacks include nuts and fruit. So does USANA in the form of Lean Bars (1-800-950-9595). I also enjoy the Cookies and Cream Keto Bars available by calling 1-800-542-3230.

- Move to enhance your mood. Ten minutes of brisk walking (leave your desk and start walking even if it's just in the stairwell) will decrease your carbohydrate and grain cravings and enhance your own body's natural endorphins. A protein snack will help you maintain both your mood and your blood sugar so that you won't binge later that evening.
- Increase your intake of omega-3 fats either through supplements such as DHA or by eating ground flaxseed and/or salmon. (Next month I'm going to tell you about a wonderful new way to get the best salmon possible for this purpose!)
- Decrease your intake of high-glycemic index fruits (such as bananas), starchy vegetables, beans, alcohol, and dairy products, according to your symptoms. Track your symptoms along with your diet in your food journal until you identify connections.
- Eat foods as fresh and as close to their natural state as possible. For example, order a grilled piece of lean protein, a green salad, and lots of vegetables instead of potatoes and rice. When I'm traveling, I can go to any fast food restaurant and simply avoid the grain. For example, order a grilled chicken sandwich and just remove the bread. I often get a "salad shaker" with low-fat dressing too. The salad greens come in a plastic cup with a dome. Add dressing and shake to coat the greens, then add a few croutons. It's pretty good in a pinch. Also, I've found that Greek restaurants are some of the best places to go against the grain. Just remember to "hold the pita bread"!
- When you reach for grains, try organically or wild-raised and harvested varieties such as kamut, quinoa, millet, amaranth, cream of rye, and spelt. They'll give you genetic variety and help you "beat the wheat" trap along with the monoculture monolith—most wheat products are now raised from the same strain, which encourages allergens and discourages diversity.

Eating "against the grain" is the answer for which many of you have been searching—for weight loss, symptom relief, and a healthier, happier, outlook on life. Please give it a try. You won't be sorry.

Warmly,

Christiane Northrup, M.D.

References

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October 28, 2002—Telegathering: Dr. Northrup will join *New York Times* best-selling author Cheryl Richardson for a telegathering from 9 to 10 p.m. EST. Call 1-646-519-5860 and punch in PIN: 2346# on the date & time of the event. For details, go to cherylrichardson.com or drnorthrup.com

November 6, 2002—Keynote address: "Creating Health Through the Mind-Body Connection," O'Keefe Sports Complex, Salem, Mass. Call 1-978-542-7555, or visit www.salemstate.edu/series/SER-northrup.php

November 16, 2002—Keynote Address: "Trusting the Wisdom of Our Bodies," The Feminine Face of Medicine Conference, Virginia Beach, Va. Call 1-800-333-4499.

Jan. 10-13, 2003—Health and Wellness discussions with resort guests, Lake Austin Spa Resort, Austin, Tex. Call 1-800-847-5637, fax 1-512-372-7362; e-mail info@lakeaustin.com or go to www.lakeaustin.com

Christiane Northrup, M.D., author of Health Wisdom for Women, has been in private practice in southern Maine since 1979. A graduate of Dartmouth Medical School and a past president of the American Holistic Medical Association, Dr. Northrup is a former assistant clinical professor at the University of Vermont School of Medicine. She is author of Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom and The Wisdom of Menopause. She is working on a book about mothers and daughters.