

FOOD A BLESSING OR A CURSE?

By Dr. Joseph Collins

In the book of Genesis we see that immediately after God created all things and clarified mankind's relationship with creation. He set out to answer a question that has been asked innumerable times since that day: What is there to eat? To this God has answered, "I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." (Gen. 1:29) So we see that we are first provided with grains (seed) and fruit, which by any account is a good foundation for a healthy diet. In Genesis 9:2 & 3 we see that poultry, meat and fish were added to our diet. As we continue through the Word of God we see butter, milk, beans, melons and cucumbers, garlic, herbs and spices, grapes and nuts. Truly the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof (Psalms 24:1).

But what happens when eating these foods bring us discomfort and pain? What does it mean when you have bloating or cramping after eating certain foods, or they cause you to feel exhausted, irritable or make your joints ache? Are these foods really a gift from God or are they a curse? To answer these questions we have to understand the cause and treatment of food allergies and food intolerances.

Food allergies are when the body has an actual immune system reaction to the food and may develop antibodies to it, and then react whenever the food is eaten. An allergic reaction to strawberries is an example of this type of reaction. Food intolerances usu-

ally mean the body cannot tolerate a substance that occurs naturally in the food. An example of this would be theobromine which occurs naturally in chocolate and can cause severe headaches in some people at risk for migraines. Now this doesn't mean that because some people react to strawberries and chocolate that they are not gifts from God (see Romans 14:20). It does mean that affected people must take some care in the use of these gifts.

I think Philippians 4:5 expresses it best: "Let your moderation be known unto all men." Food allergies and intolerances develop when the same food or group of foods are eaten too often in people who are predisposed to reacting to them. Not everyone is going to develop reactions to foods, but if you are experiencing long-term symptoms that cannot be diagnosed—let alone be controlled—food reactions should be considered. There are expensive tests available to diagnose food reactivity, but these should be reserved for severe cases and ordered by a licensed health care practitioner. I try to make natural medicine less expensive, and easier for my patients. If the truth be told, you can discover most of your food reactions with a pencil and a few sheets of paper.

In practical terms, this is how preventing and controlling food reactions works: Keep a diary of what you eat for one week. On this diary write down symptoms that concern you, even if you have "gotten used to" the symptoms. Now look for patterns of symptoms related to foods. You may notice that you feel sick every Monday, and that you only have peanut butter once a week, on your Sunday waffles (one child was cured of Monday morning sickness by stopping this weekly routine). You may notice your joints are aching the day after tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants or bell peppers (these vegetables all belong to the tobacco family and contain compounds that cause joint pain in some people). Some people have noticed they have severe stomach bloating and diarrhea, or irritability and headaches after eating dairy products, corn, or wheat (dairy, corn, and wheat are at the top of the list of foods to use carefully in some individuals).

As you can see, this is an easy way to learn a lot about what you are eating. After you have looked for patterns that reveal food reactions, look for the most important factor in preventing food reactions: variety! Remember, God has given us every seed and fruit. How many different grains are in your weekly schedule? Two? Wheat and corn, right? Consider adding more rice, millet, teff, quinoa, buckwheat, and amaranth to your meals. You may have never heard of some of these grains, but take some time to learn about them, as well as new fruits and vegetables. There are many good books to help you learn more about food reactions, or call a physician trained in recognizing and treating food allergies and intolerances.

Most of all, have fun adding variety to your meals. Exploring the fullness of God's blessings can be a wonderful experience. And as you grow in your understanding of health and nutrition, take time to thank and to trust in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. (1 Timothy 6:17)

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