

Omitting wheat and dairy products improved health

Today, I want to tell you a story. Dolly Rosenbaum of Newark suggested it should be the basis of my next book, but a column will suffice. If it helps just one of you, or someone you love, it will be well worth reading.

Over 25 years ago, I was diagnosed with adult-onset asthma. It was stress-induced, and I had plenty of that on my plate, with a house, husband, three active kids, a cat, extended family, a Girl Scout troop, a weekly column, holidays, women's church work and more all needing my attention. I'm sure many of you can relate.

Allergic reactions developed around the same time. After going through testing, it was determined that I had no food allergies, but lots of environmental ones. It seemed I was allergic to living in Delaware! Before long, I was getting allergy shots and taking three pills a day to breathe without wheezing.

Somewhere along the way, in developing a more holistic approach to my health, my intuition kicked in and said something was wrong. I should not have to infuse my body with chemicals to breathe. That should be a natural birthright.

I sent that message to my body, stopped the allergy shots and began slowly weaning myself off the pills. (I am not suggesting that those of you who truly need medications should do the same.) My doctor was leery, but agreed to work with me if I promised to carry an inhaler as a backup. And the cat died, which noticeably helped.

Then came the request to write about Dr. Peter J. D'Adamo's upcoming visit to Hockessin, where he would be speaking about his book, "Eat Right 4 Your Type." The type referred to is your blood type. I attended his lecture. He encouraged us to try the plan for two weeks to see how we would feel.

Twelve days later, I woke up breathing all the way deep down and back without any wheezing, and there was no morning mucous to cough up. It felt wonderful.

The two food groups I gave up that affected my breathing are wheat and dairy products. As both are mucous-causing, it simply made sense. We eat a wheat-laden diet: breads, rolls, biscuits, muffins, cereals, pancakes, waffles, pasta, pizza, gravy, cakes, pies, cookies, bars, crackers, pretzels, doughnuts, and on and on. It even lurks unsuspected in processed foods. The obesity in this nation is a visual direct link.

Anyone with kitchen experience knows that combining flour with liquid makes paste. That happens in your digestive tract as well, "gunking up" the walls of your intestines, and prohibiting much of the good nutrition from being assimilated into the body. That's why we need fiber to scrape off the mess, or we'd become totally blocked.

Dairy products tend to act as glue and do their own clogging, affecting breathing and blood flow. Our choir director always warned against any dairy items before singing. And I can't help but wonder if my dear uncle's congestive heart failure was attributed to the fact that he owned a cheese shop and ate huge quantities of cheese.

Lest you are concerned about needing calcium to avoid osteoporosis, studies have indicated that countries with the highest dairy consumption (Scandinavia, Holland, Canada and the USA) also have the highest incidence of osteoporosis.

We are the only mammals who drink the milk of other mammals intended for their young. The dairy industry and lobby are strong and have led us to believe we need it. There are many other natural sources of calcium in a good diet, plus supplements.

D'Adamo's book indicates that yogurt and fresh cheeses, like ricotta, mozzarella, feta and goat cheese, are not culprits like aged cheeses, milk, cream and ice cream.

So, how do I do it? There are oodles of non-wheat cereals out there. Health food stores and Trader Joe's sell wheat-free breads, and Alvarado Street Bakery offers a great selection of organic breads found at Acme markets. (Wheat berries are not a problem.) Wheat-free crackers, corn chips, popcorn and nuts are available for snacks.

Plenty of flours exist besides wheat for baking. Experiment, or use books written for those who are gluten intolerant (celiacs). Rice noodles are on market shelves to replace pasta. And some things you just give up altogether. Many of them have few redeeming nutritional qualities, and after a while, rarely tempt.

Dried fruit satisfies my sweet tooth. Have you ever tried a mission figlet? Yum! Dates are super sweet. Dried cranberries can be tucked into your purse or pocket. These have the added benefits of no fat, no cholesterol, and plenty of fiber and minerals.

As for the dairy, it was not difficult to switch to rice, almond and soy milks, and they all offer calcium. Blue Diamond chocolate almond is the best! I enjoy those fresh cheeses and yogurt, and sorbets with fruit juice can satisfy a desire for ice cream.

It has been over eight years since I adopted this lifestyle. I breathe freely and take no prescription medications. Not bad for someone who carries a Medicare card! A recent routine visit to my doctor earned me accolades for totally clear lungs, and my dental hygienist said that since making these dietary changes, I have far less plaque.

Yes, I cheat now and then. I just had to taste a slice of Pizza by Elizabeths, and sometimes a good homemade oatmeal raisin cookie seems to be calling my name. But these nibbles help me to stay 99 percent focused.

So if you are sneezing, wheezing and coughing, why not try this for two weeks? Eating wisely feels great, like breathing freely. Plus a trimmer body and heightened energy are side effects that are easy to live with.

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