

Ask The Doctor: A six part series on lifestyle recommendations to look after your nervous system.

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PART 1: Carbohydrate Choices.

In my experience, brain and neurological health is one of the most frequent challenges we face. Irrespective of the toxin or the pathogen, in order to achieve some decent treatment outcomes, aiming for a reduction in neuro-inflammation is an absolute must.

The very nature of the brain and nervous system lends it open to a multi-pronged approach in managing its function or limiting its dysfunction. Of course, when talking about neurological health, this encompasses a wide domain of functions in the body -from strength to sensations, thinking to speaking, sleeping to emotions and many unconscious body controls like gut peristalsis and blood pressure. It is therefore no surprise that no single one treatment will 'cure' dysfunctions arising from the nervous system (although there are indeed a number of drugs which can be used to suppress symptoms). This is especially true in a chronic health situation and perhaps minimally so, in an acute single pathogen situation. That said, this series of articles will look at different aspects of natural health approaches to support treatment, whether or not anti-microbial therapies are being undertaken to address chronic infections.

The 'second brain' of the body resides in the intestinal tract. It is for this reason that these articles will look at some important dietary choices. Ingested food and the intestinal microbial environment constitutes the biggest part of the total environment in which our bodies have to

interact with. Hence our food choices are paramount. Let us start with our Carbohydrates.

Dietary carbohydrates are known by many as the starchy foods which provide us energy, such as potatoes, bread, pasta, rice and cereals. Most people eat lots of these foods but actually, the green leafy, colored vegetables and some root vegetables, are the safest and best forms of carbohydrate to eat. I am going to explain why most other types of carbohydrates, the very types that most people on a standard Australian diet (SAD) subsist on, should be totally reconsidered and why a paradigm shift is needed in our daily habits.



There is a great deal that could be said about why our frequent processed carbohydrate intake needs to transform, but I shall focus mainly on insulin and inflammation. However, I will mention now that helping to repopulate a diverse gut microbiome (microbial ecosystem) will balance the immune system. This is a CRUCIAL side effect of a low sugar and starch diet. The term microbiome means not only the types of bugs but their entire genetic and metabolic landscape that exists within us, something that is far greater than our own and frankly, controls us.

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Inflammation is the foundation and cornerstone of all pain, dysfunction, cancer and disability. Research clearly shows that insulin, which is driven up by starchy and cereal foods, modulates the inflammatory response. In other words, the less the insulin, the less the inflammatory drive, the better. It is really important to make all attempts to achieve this. Essentially, at the very least, this means it is best to eliminate all processed food which contains sugar (which is the vast majority of packaged food). To do this, you have to know what goes into your food and all the guises sugar comes in as! I would recommend this excellent documentary on sugar. The Secrets of Sugar, The Fifth Estate

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mzf4KSG6oQ>

Next, you have to know that flour (especially those processed from wheat grains but all grains included), drives the insulin response up quickly. As far as your metabolism goes, eating a piece of bread is the same as having 2-3 teaspoons of sugar. This is due to its immediate glucose and insulin response. Therefore, I would always avoid all processed flour no matter where it comes from. If any grain is to be ingested, it has to be in its least processed form such as rice, quinoa and whole oats. For different reasons that I will discuss in future articles, gluten in grain should be avoided totally.

Essentially, to keep insulin responses low and thus controlling inflammation, it is a very good idea to avoid all processed carbohydrates and to eat them only as whole vegetables.

Last but not least, it is so important to understand what fructose is, how it comes into our diet knowingly and unknowingly and how you have to keep it to an absolute minimum. Here is a detailed lecture on fructose by Dr Robert Lustig – Fat Chance, Fructose 2.0 Lecture

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceFyF9px20Y>

Reducing fructose is important not only for minimising insulin responses, but also for helping your liver, minimising the impacts on an irritable bowel and supporting the gut bacteria.

Finally, after removing all the carbs that are not good for you, remember that you will be helping your body for several reasons -insulin, inflammation, gut bacteria, gut permeability, nutrient density and epigenetics.

Then, what do you do? You stuff the absence of processed starchy carbs with loads and loads of vegetables of all the colours, shapes and sizes they come in! Aim to eat 8- 12 portions of green leafy and coloured vegetables every day. Cook them, roast them, steam them, smoothie them, ferment them, sprout them (seeds and legumes), make soups, make casseroles, make juices: There are tons of things you can do to achieve 8-12 portions a day of veggies. Here's an invitation to veg out!!



In Summary.....

