

Integrative Medicine Approach to Obesity and Diabetes

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One of the most perplexing problems in health care is the rise in obesity over the past two decades. CDC statistics show that the prevalence of obesity has risen each year in the U.S.,¹ and there is no end in sight. Along with obesity comes other health problems such as coronary heart disease and diabetes. While solutions to these health problems have eluded modern medical approaches, ancient traditional systems have

had simple and effective solutions that have been ignored for decades and only recently are coming to light. To obtain the best results for our patients, we must integrate what is best from modern medicine and ancient medicine and come up with something even better.

When I studied nutrition years ago, I also studied oriental medicine. My oriental medicine teacher had many wise things to share about the principles and practice of this ancient art. Only now, after being in practice for a number of years and being involved in research do I truly see the depth of the truth of these ancient teachings. For example, we were taught that the key to illness is not some germ or virus or cholesterol. In ancient oriental teachings, "arrogance" is the key to illness—arrogance that we can ignore the laws of nature and not have health consequences—arrogance to think that we can alter our food supply and come up with something healthier than what nature developed over millions of years—arrogance that we can with an arsenal of modern high tech chemical "magic bullets" that we can destroy all disease. The sad truth that we must face is that we are reaching the end of our ability to solve problems artificially and we must return to humble ourselves to learn the universal laws of nature embodied in the ancient wisdom of our ancestors.

How does this apply to the problem of obesity and diabetes? It is simple. If we would just take time to understand nature and life the way the ancient healers did, and take some advice from our ancient predecessors, we would understand what is causing obesity and diabetes. Once we understand the cause, the solution becomes obvious. For thousands of years, humans ate foods that were centered on grains, vegetables, legumes and fruit. Animal products were optional and small in quantity if eaten at all. The human digestive tract, teeth, jaws, fingernails, all point to the fact that we are herbivores or near-herbivores. The plant material that humans consumed was whole and unrefined.

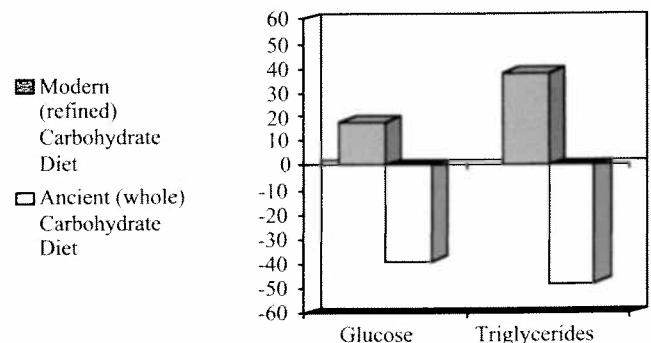
Today, our food supply is grossly different from what humans

have eaten over the millennia. This is the simple traditional answer to the seemingly baffling problem of nutrition-related diseases such as diabetes and obesity. Today we eat far more animal products, far more animal fat, and far more refined carbohydrates than ever before.² Meanwhile, the simple staple food of most of humanity—whole grain represents only 2% of our total grain intake. The rest of it is refined in the form of white flour and cereal products and our intake of added sugar is a staggering 42 teaspoons per person per day. This unnatural diet that we consume in America is the cause of many of our ills today.

The solution can be found in our ancient ways. An old traditional American shaman's advice to regain health is to "return to the arms of mother corn." The ancient staple of the Americas since the dawn of civilization has been corn. The simple advice means to return to the traditional diet centered on whole grains. We took this principle and applied ancient Hawaiian principles and created the "Waianae Diet" which is based on ancient traditional Hawaiian food. The results showed that high blood sugar, and obesity could be reversed with this approach.³ One woman on 80 units of insulin no longer required insulin after 10 days on this type of diet. Using this same ancient wisdom, we created the "Hawaii Diet" which is based on traditional foods of the many cultures in Hawaii and demonstrated similar results.

Modern science suggests that high carbohydrate diets cause a rise in blood sugar and a rise in triglycerides. A study done at Stanford

Blood Sugar and Fat Response to Different High Carbohydrate Diets



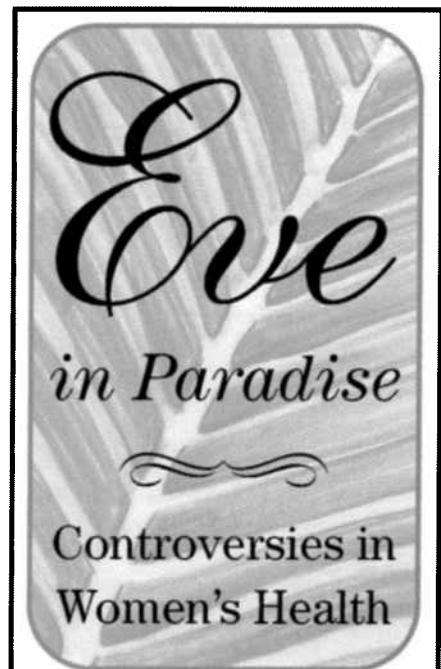
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University on the effect of a high carbohydrate diet was based on modern American carbohydrate sources and demonstrated a rise in both blood sugar and triglycerides compared to a lower carbohydrate diet.⁴ By contrast, both the Waianae Diet and Hawaii Diet are high in carbohydrates (over 70% of calories) and low in fat (7 to 12% of calories). Yet they both cause just the opposite effect from that which other studies predicted. Our studies showed a reduction in blood sugar and triglycerides. Why is there such a difference in outcome? The basic difference is that our diets were based on ancient principles and thus the carbohydrate sources were generally whole unrefined carbohydrate sources. Most of the high carbohydrate diets being studied in this country are based largely on refined carbohydrates.

This is one simple example of how the application of ancient traditional wisdom can enhance the results of an approach to a health problem. Ancient traditional principles and practices are a treasure trove of healing wisdom. If modern medical practice is to become the best it can be for patients, we must open our minds to the wisdom of the ancient traditional healing arts and examine what we can gain from them. By integrating the best of the ancient and modern worlds of the healing arts, we may arrive at the best possible approach to dealing with the problems of obesity, diabetes, and other diseases that afflict most people in modern times.

References

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