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Curing Tooth Decay

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Introduction

Dental health is associated with overall bodily health. Gum disease increased risk of coronary heart disease by 25% in one study. A man under 50 with gum disease had almost a two-fold increased risk of coronary heart disease. The risk of death from all causes was even higher than the risk of heart disease.

Gum disease is a precursor to metabolic syndrome, a prediabetic condition. Excess insulin and metabolic syndrome in turn are associated with not only increased risk of heart disease, but also a wide variety of problems including acne, early menarche, increased stature, myopia, skin tags, and a number of other problems.

Tooth decay is associated with its own problems. Dentists have traditionally filled decayed teeth with toxic mercury compounds, encouraged the use of potentially toxic fluoride, and treated decay with root canals of questionable safety.

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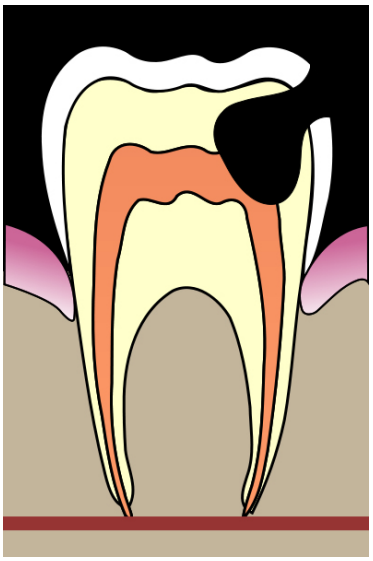
Weston Price

Weston Price (1870-1948) was a different kind of dentist. Price founded what became the research section of the American Dental Association. Price published his classic work *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration* in 1939.

Earnest Hooton, a famous physical anthropologist, wrote of Price's research, "Since we have known for a long time that savages have excellent teeth and that civilized men have terrible teeth, it seems to me that we have been extraordinarily stupid in concentrating all of our attention upon the task of finding out why our teeth are so poor, without ever bothering to learn why savage teeth are good. Dr. Weston Price seems to be the only person who possesses the scientific horse sense to supplement his knowledge of the probable causes of dental disease with a study of the dietary regimens which are associated with dental health."



Price maintained that plant foods were insufficient for maintaining optimal health. At one point he wrote, "As yet I have not found a single group of primitive racial stock which was building and maintaining excellent bodies by living entirely on plant foods."

At one point Price developed and tested a diet which eliminated over 90% of tooth decay among disadvantaged children. This was accomplished by feeding the children one meal a day. The meal consisted of the following:

- Four ounces of tomato juice or orange juice.
- Natural cod liver oil
- High vitamin butter.
- A pint of very rich vegetable and meat stew made largely from bone marrow and fine cuts of tender meat. The stew always contained large quantities of very yellow carrots.
- Cooked fruit.
- Freshly ground whole wheat rolls spread with high vitamin butter.
- Two glasses of fresh, whole milk. This was probably raw milk.
- The meat stew was sometimes

substituted with fish chowder or organs of animals.

Price (pictured below) emphasized that the health building properties of these foods were dependent upon the nutritional quality of the diet of the animals and plants. For example, rapidly growing grasses promoted the most nutrient rich milk and butter.

The diet not only promoted reduction in tooth decay, but also improved intellectual performance of at least one student. Two different teachers came to Price to ask what he had done to change one of the poorest students in the class into one of the best.

Price's study of primitive peoples showed him that those with healthy teeth and healthy bodies consumed four times the minerals and ten times the fat soluble vitamins being consumed by the average American at the time.

Sir Robert McCarrison was a Major General in the Indian Health Service when the nation was governed by Britain. He developed a diet which provided optimal health for his laboratory rats by feeding them the diet of the Hunza people.

The diet of the animals fed the northern Indian diet consisted of chapittis lightly smeared with butter, sprouted pulse, raw, fresh vegetables (carrots and cabbage), milk, hard crusts of bread, and a small ration of meat once a week.

This diet produced such healthy animals that McCarrison made it the basic diet of his stock rats. He wrote, "During the five years prior to my leaving India there was in this stock no case of illness, no death from natural causes, no maternal mortality, no infantile mortality….the same care was bestowed during these years on several thousand deficiently-fed rats, which developed a wide variety of ailments…"

The diet of northern India was protective only so long as it was consumed in its entirety. Restriction of the milk and vegetable components broke the chain of adequate nutrition. McCarrison wrote, "I have repeatedly made these restrictions with the result that respiratory diseases, gastro-intestinal diseases and maladies consequent on degenerative changes in mucous membranes and other structures of the body become frequent."

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Donald Pickett Story

One other story appropriate here is that of Donald Pickett, founder of the NeoLife Company in 1958. Mr. Pickett (pictured above) injured his lower back in 1946. The back gradually deteriorated in spite of extended treatment by chiropracters, osteopaths, and MD's. He finally consulted the outstanding orthopedic specialist in northern California who determined that the cartilage or discs in the back had totally deteriorated and recommended fusion of the spine.

Mr. Pickett asked if there were any alternatives and was told that a large steel corset-like arrangement called a "chair brace" might help support the weakened lower back area. He chose that alternative to surgery and wore the contraption every day for approximately six years.

At this point Mr. Pickett met Dr. Dean Conrad of Urbana, Ohio. Dr. Conrad felt the brace on Mr. Pickett's back and asked if he would like to get rid of it. Pickett wrote, "My answer was a strong and emphatic — YES!"

Dr. Conrad's answer was cod liver oil with warm milk. Mr. Pickett met the suggestion with skepticism, but Dr. Conrad told him he had nothing to lose but the cost of the oil.

The rest of the story is best told in Donald Pickett's own words, "Within ten days from the time I began taking cod liver oil regularly, I woke one morning with no lower back pain. I still did not, however, have courage enough to leave my back brace off, so I continued to wear it for another week. Each morning on arising, I felt better and had no pain in my lower back. Finally, I worked up the courage to leave the brace off. I've never put it back on since! That was over 15 years ago and I've had no recurrance of any back problems since!"

Mr. Picket then goes on to explain that his medical friends scoffed at the cod liver oil until he was able to return to playing golf and tennis. The most skeptical doctor became a strong advocate and user of cod liver oil himself.

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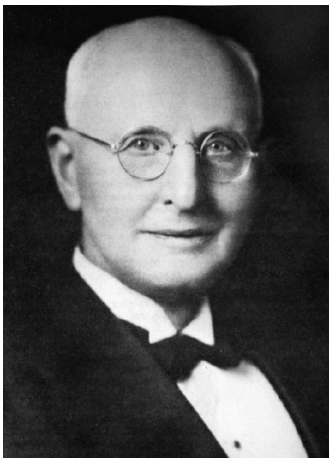

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Missing Nutrients

There are a great many similarities between the McCarrison and Price diets. Both diets provide adequate protein and minerals from milk, freshly prepared whole wheat, and animal products. Both diets also include fruits and vegetables. Both diets also incorporate fat in the form of butter.

It should be noted that the quality of these foods were comparable to some of the highest quality foods available today. There were no pesticides or artifical fertilizers available when these men lived and did their work.

The wheat products used were not refined. They provided not only quality protein, but also a reliable source of minerals and phospholipids and phytosterols in the germ which is commonly removed from wheat products today.

The fruits and vegetables provided vitamin C. In early studies with guinea pigs it was noted that the earliest manifestations of mild vitamin C deficiency show up in the teeth of the animals. The researchers wrote, "These studies show clearly that the tooth is a good biological indicator of the nutritional status of the guinea pig in respect to vitamin C. The use of the teeth in guinea pigs is a much more accurate and sensitive means of detecting early scurvy symptoms than the usual methods."

Vitamin C is so important for the teeth of humans that one of the common historical manifestations of scurvy was the loss of the teeth.

Fruits and vegetables also provide a rich source of antioxidants like vitamin E and carotenoids. These are important for the protection of essential fats and fat soluble nutrients from oxidation.

While the healthy diets of McCarrison and Price were much richer in nutrients that the average diet today, the story of Mr. Pickett suggests the importance of three key nutrients for healthy teeth and bones.

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The Big Three

Whole milk from cows eating grass and cod liver oil are rich in three nutrients commonly missing in diets today. These nutrients are vitamins A, D_3, and K_2. These nutrients are key for building healthy teeth and bones and they work together. They are found in animal fats if the animals are out in the open exposed to sunlight and eating fresh green grass.

Vitamin A is one of the most important and least understood of nutrients. Most people think carrots contain vitamin A and many supplements list vitamin A in the ingredient list even though the actual ingredient is carotenoids. It is true that carotenoids can be converted to vitamin A. The conversion, however, is not always very efficient. It can take anywhere from 6 to 48 beta-carotene molecules to manufacture one molecule of vitamin A. Preformed vitamin A is an animal product found in butter, eggs, and liver.

Bacteria in the digestive tract make a significant contribution to vitamin K_2. Vitamin K2 deficiencies can develop with use of antibiotics and with diets low in fats containing the nutrient. Glyphosate, the active ingredient in the weed killer Roundup, also inhibits synthesis of vitamin K.

Vitamin D is very important for calcium absorption. Dr. Michael Holick has noted that every year 20-40% of the skeleton is renewed. A person with low vitamin D intake will absorb only one-third to one-half the calcium into the bone of someone with healthy vitamin D status.

Vitamin A carries out a delicate biochemical dance with vitamins D and K_2. It is this interrelationship that is partly responsible for the reputation vitamin A has for toxicity. Vitamin A causes excessive bone loss when vitamin D levels are inadequate. Vitamin A can reduce the risk of vitamin D toxicity just as vitamin D reduces the risk of vitamin A toxicity.

The main protein involved in the deposition of calcium into teeth and bones is called osteocalcin. Vitamin D and vitamin A stimulate the production of osteocalcin. Osteocalcin, however, remains useless until it is activated by vitamin K_2.

We think of bone as a static tissue, but it is actually quite dynamic. Cells called osteoclasts are always busy removing old or damaged bone, while another set of cells called osteoblasts build new bone.

Vitamins D_3 and K_2 inhibit the production of osteoclast cells decreasing the tendency to lose bone. Vitamin K2 also supports the cellular program involved in death of osteoclasts when it is time for them to die. This is called apoptosis.

Vitamin K_2 has been shown to both inhibit the work of osteoclasts in removing bone and to stimulate the work of osteoblasts which build new bone. This is accomplished through inhibition of a molecule called NF-kB

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which not only contributes to bone loss but is also implicated in inflammatory and autoimmune diseases and cancer.

The key to the health of the teeth and the bones is a balanced intake of the fat soluble vitamins including vitamins A, D_3 and K_2. Fats from healthy animals play a major role in meeting this need. This includes meat, butter and cheese from animals eating grass and cod liver oil.

To put matters simply, vitamin D improves calcium absorption. Vitamin K2 removes calcium from soft tissues and moves calcium into the bones and teeth. Vitamin A moves the calcium extracted from the soft tissues such as the arteries out of the body.

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CAN TEETH HEAL?

Most people would not dream that teeth could heal. Ramiel Nagel is a dentist who has written a book on tooth decay. He writes the following:

"If healing teeth seems confusing, just think of bones healing. Healing teeth is similar to healing bones. When your diet reaches a certain threshold of minerals and fat-soluble vitamins, your soft teeth will turn hard and even glassy. Cracks can seal together, and your tooth ligaments will strengthen. Inside the tooth your body will build new secondary dentin to protect the inner tooth pulp. As with bone, if there is a hole in your tooth, the hole will not usually fill in. The areas around the hole will get strong and extremely hard...the enamel will become hard and protect your pulp from infection."

This newsletter has focused on the importance of the fat soluble nutrients for healthy teeth, but remember as a takeaway that the only reason these nutrients are important is because they enable the body to properly use minerals, a topic for a future letter..

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