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Food Quality

How do we know the quality of food that we are eating is good for our bodies? We don't, well at least most of us don't. Most people argue that the food we eat is healthy for us and gives us superior nutrition for our bodies, I used to be one of them, but now I disagree. Most people now know that buying fast food has been proven bad for us, causing weight gain and other health problems but what about the foods we find on the supermarket shelves? Most people are also intelligent enough to know that eating potato chips and loads of candy are not good for our bodies but what they do not know is the additives, preservatives, and chemicals that are also found in all the other foods that are being stocked in the grocery stores as well. This is because the food industry is not required to put all of their ingredients on the labels of the foods that we eat. Don't get me wrong, they do put ingredients on their labels but most of us do not know what half of the items truly are or what they do to our bodies, they also use simple terms such as "natural flavoring" to make us think what is in the food is actually "natural" therefore being good for us, right? Wrong. There are too many additives, preservatives, and chemicals being put into our food and this is causing health risks to our bodies and minds.

Food distribution has become a problem because food produced in farms need to be distributed to people that are far from the place of production so they are altering the foods with additives and preservatives to keep food unspoiled for shelf life yet most of us do not know exactly what these chemicals can do to our bodies. Radha Gopalan who wrote an article for Economic and Political Weekly said, "World politics and governance is increasingly being

challenged by one major issue, the capacity to provide safe and adequate food to its population- food security” (pg. 1207). There continues to be economic pressure to produce a lot of food but there aren't a lot of resources to do so therefore the farmers and food producers use insecticides, insect repellants, fungicides, herbicides, defoliants, plant growth regulants, animal growth stimulants, crop protectants, and fumigants which all have complex and sometimes unknown chemical identities. The easiest and cheapest way for the food industry to insure food security is by putting these chemicals, additives, and preservatives in, on, and around our foods. Over the last century some three million chemicals have been produced in labs and are added to foods intentionally and unintentionally. Preservatives, colors, and flavors are used to produce the food, bleaches are used to modify and inhibit the food, cleaning products are used to clean the equipment to process the foods, and the actual packaging with plastics, coatings, and films all get into our food supply. There is a substantial amount of these chemicals in our foods yet most of us are oblivious to it.

Until the food industry is mandated to put every single ingredient on their labels we will continue to put chemicals in our bodies that can potentially harm us without even knowing it. Regulations governing the labeling requirements of both food and non-food items are inconsistent therefore labels frequently have information that is incomplete or misleading. Mae-Wan Ho, professor for the biology department at Open University, Milton Keynes, UK, expressed that, "The predominant philosophy behind current regulation can be summarized by the 'No need - don't look - don't see' futile cycle" (lines 1-2) which means that the food companies feel that if the consumers do not see all of the ingredients on the labels then we won't know it is there damaging our bodies. The food industry is not required to put all ingredients on their labels so long as it could potentially cause economic harm to their business by releasing

their practices and making it easy for other companies to duplicate. Companies can simply put the term “natural flavoring” or “artificial flavoring” to disguise the actual ingredient that is in their product. The term natural sounds healthy or at least ok for our bodies but it is far from healthy or natural. Natural flavoring does not have to mean natural at all and after doing some research I found that it actually is usually additives and there is nothing natural about it. In my eyes this is so wrong in so many different ways. I think that we all have a right to know every single chemical and substance that we put in our bodies so we can educate ourselves to what damage it may be doing to our bodies. Until we know for sure what “natural and artificial” flavorings the companies are using we may not know exactly what damage it is doing to our bodies.

There is now a large amount of GMO (genetically modified organism) food that is causing us health problems because genetic components that are put into the food can alter the cellular metabolism and can cause unintended and unanticipated ways which can cause allergens and toxins produced in the food. Food producers use GMO foods because it helps them produce food much larger and faster than they would grow on their own. This makes much more money for the food industry so we can see just why they do this. My biggest question is if they really know the damages that can be done to our bodies because of it or if they even really care anyways. Molecular biologist, Dr. John B. Fagan Ph.D. states, “The ways that the food is genetically altered causes allergens and toxins that are put into our bodies,” also, “genetically modifying the food reduces the nutritional value of the food as well [sic]” (lines 57-63). Many people do not even know about GMO food and I was one of them that didn’t know about it until very recently. The most common genetically enhanced or modified foods are corn and soy but there are also tomato, cantaloupe, and wheat that have joined the growing list of GMO foods. It is

estimated that up to two thirds of all the foods that are found in stores are somehow genetically modified. One of the only ways to avoid genetically modified foods is to buy only organic or foods that are labeled non-GMO. One of the biggest culprits that most people would not even think accusing of being genetically modified is high fructose corn syrup but it is made directly from corn and corn is on the top of the list for genetically modified foods.

High fructose corn syrup is found in most items at the supermarket but yet it is harder for our body to digest, makes us consume more, and is made from genetically modified corn in which all damage our bodies in some way. Dr. Mark Hyman M.D. is a doctor who is dedicated to identifying the causes of chronic illnesses and he clearly states that, “High doses of fructose [sic] have been proven to literally punch holes in the intestinal lining allowing nasty byproducts of toxic gut bacteria and partially digested food proteins to enter your blood stream and trigger the inflammation that we know is at the root of obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, dementia, and accelerated aging. Naturally occurring fructose in fruit is part of a complex of nutrients and fiber that doesn’t exhibit the same biological effects as the free high fructose doses found in corn syrup” (lines 76-80). Yet many foods contain glucose, dextrose, and corn sugar/syrup.

Commercial glucose is calories with no nutrients and it also raises our blood sugar levels very quickly and then it dangerously drops after. Sugar in blood is in the form of glucose already and if you consume glucose the body is left with no work but to let the sugar diffuse fast through the intestines. Also glucose actually may have arsenic in it as well which is present in the acid used in its preparation. High fructose corn syrup is a form of glucose and like stated above is used in almost any food that you pick up in stores now. High fructose corn syrup is found in juice, cereals, soda, yogurt, salad dressings, breads, nutrition bars, canned fruit, crackers, and more. The one that stuck out to me the most is nutrition bars, if they are nutritious then why do they

contain items that are so damaging to our bodies? Despite what may seem like a bounty of delicious, healthy foods, supermarkets are stocked with scores of chemical-laden products.

Eating foods with a lot of chemicals and preservatives interferes with the body's natural processes and its defense mechanisms which causes our immune systems to weaken. Dr. Jesse Hanely, M.D. states that, "Pesticides kill pests by damaging their cellular function" and also that "We have enough in common with insects that we are damaged too" (lines 1-3). When our body's immune system weakens we are more prone to diseases and much of these chemicals that are in our foods also contain carcinogens which are known to cause cancer therefore causing a double threat to our bodies because with a weakened immune system how are our bodies going to fight off the cancer that some of the chemicals cause? The preservatives BHA, BHT, and TBHQ all cause cancer in mice so I think it is absolutely absurd that the food industry and the FDA think it is ok to put them in our bodies. Some of the food producers seem to think that "a little bit can't hurt" when they are putting the chemicals, additives, and preservatives in their foods. This blows me away because now these products along with other chemicals and additives are all being combined in our bodies with no known effect that they have when combined with each other. Some other additives and preservatives that are being used such as saccharin, red dye 40, mono-glycerides, di-glycerides, and caramel flavoring can all cause cancer and or birth defects. Benzoates can trigger asthma and skin rashes. Bromates destroy nutrients in our food. Butylates can cause bad liver and kidney function. Sodium chloride leads to high blood pressure, stroke and heart attack. These are just a few items that I found the scientific background on but as stated before there are some three million chemicals that have been produced in labs and are added to foods intentionally and unintentionally.

Hormones and antibiotics are being fed and injected into the animals that we get our meats and milk from and the chemicals get into the food which also goes into our bodies and they are causing more bacterial infections and increases risk of diseases in our bodies. A famous quote said by American activist and PETA president Ingrid Newkirk states that we need to, “Recognize meat for what it really is: The antibiotic- and pesticide-laden corpse of a tortured animal” (lines 1-3). This quote opened my eyes to how many chemicals reside in the meats that we eat which made me want to research further. Have you ever heard that when you cook meat at a high heat it causes carcinogens which cause cancers? I had no idea until now and most people don't have any idea either. Recommendations are to only eat grilled meat once a week because of the carcinogens that are released when cooking them at a high heat which is caused by grilling. This is just one of the effects that are caused by all of the antibiotics, hormones, arsenic, and metals that are found in the meat of the animals that we eat. One of the hormones that are injected into cows so they produce more milk is called rBGH and is said to be one of the causes for early puberty in young girls. Also rBGH has recently been linked to breast, colon, and prostate cancers. Because there are not a lot of sufficient testing in the United States on the feed or even the actual meat itself and human health effects data are not linked to this information makes it difficult to conduct studies and assessments that can identify the extent of the health risks for humans. There are other options to make sure that these hormones, antibiotics and chemicals are not entering our bodies but the only way to be sure to get meat or milk that is untainted is by purchasing 100% organic meats, milks, and cheeses.

ADHD and Aggression and Disruptive behaviors are linked to all of the additives and preservatives that we eat. In 1985 Dr. Stephen Schoenthaler published a series of studies on

twelve juvenile correction facilities on 8,076 young offenders where they changed the diets of the young offenders by taking all additives and preservatives out. The study showed that all of the young offender's aggressiveness fell by 47% and even 20% made drastic recovery. Dr. Feingold who was certified in pediatrics and pediatric allergy, and also wrote books on children and hyperactivity stated that, "eating organic food as often as possible makes a measurable difference" (Lu 2006 pg. 8). There is a growing epidemic of children that are diagnosed with ADHD and I believe that additives and preservatives are mainly to blame. I also believe that genetics do play a factor in the children developing the disease but if you at least eliminate all of the additives and preservatives you will see a change in the children and we might see a decline of the disease and also a decline in the use of medicines for ADHD.

In conclusion, there are too many additives, preservatives, and chemicals being added to our food intentionally and unintentionally causing diseases in our bodies and minds. It seems that we cannot escape these chemicals because if a food doesn't contain one chemical then it probably contains another. If this scares you because of the dangers it is putting on you, your family, and everyone surrounding you then you are not alone. I was also scared, frustrated, and furious when I realized that the food industry has been betraying us by putting all of these bad ingredients in our foods. Don't worry, there is hope. First thing to do is pay close attention to the labels of the food you buy and try to eliminate most of the additives and preservatives that I have mentioned above. The best thing to do is eat organic and if you have a whole foods store near you then try to do most of your shopping there because they have a long list of additives and preservatives that are not allowed in the foods that they sell. By doing this we can win the fight against the food industry and all of the diseases they are causing us because of the secret ingredients that they know most of us are not aware of.

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