

CANCER 20.08.2012

Recently I attended a fantastic interstate conference on Cancer and although I've been to a few over the years, this was the best. There were a variety of speakers from various countries and from a range of genres i.e. doctors, oncologists, scientists, naturopaths and more. In this column I'd like to talk about some of the ways you could improve your health and minimise your risks of getting cancer or if you have already had cancer help you minimise the risk of it returning. I'm going to write on a basic level, with the goal of giving you some simple but important tips about how you can help yourselves and the ones you love.

Statistics indicate that one in two people by the age of eighty five will have had cancer? It is estimated by 2030 levels may rise by up to 70%. I'm sure most of us know someone who has or has had cancer at some point in their lives. So I think the time has come for us to take a bit more responsibility caring for our bodies, after all, your body belongs to you, so you need to take good care of it. You can make a difference just by making a few changes to your everyday life.

Some of the areas that need nurturing are the immune system, hormone balance, inflammatory levels, insulin resistance/sugar balance, digestion, detoxification and stress levels. Let's start with inflammation, I've talked about this in previous columns. When you think of inflammation there can be many causes, such as an injury, a poor diet, smoking, stress, alcohol, environmental toxins etc. On a very simplistic level we could describe cancer as an unhealed wound and normally when we have a wound, certain chemicals are pulled to the area, this inflammatory response brings blood and nutrients to the area to repair tissue, it decreases cell death and causes the cells to divide at a faster rate and creates more blood flow. We don't want cancer cells to divide, increase in numbers, stay healthy and survive, so we need to decrease inflammatory levels in the body. What can we do to help reduce inflammatory levels? Well as I mentioned in one of my previous columns one of the major components to be aware of is the consumption of vegetable oils, which have crept into our diets over the last 40 years or so, these oils such as safflower

oils, corn oils and soy oil etc. are a cheap form of calories and taste good, however, they are high in omega 6 which is inflammatory. We need to increase our consumption of omega 3 fatty acids, to 'put out the fire' so to speak, these are found in oily fish such as salmon, tuna, sardines, trout and mackerel, cod liver oil is also good or there are omega 3 supplements. There are a multitude of beautiful herbs which dampen down inflammation in the body, my favourite is Turmeric, it is also a powerful anti-oxidant and Boswellia is also very good. Anti-oxidants are very efficient at reducing chronic inflammation because oxidation and inflammation go hand in hand, they are also very important in maintaining the immune system and are found in many fruits, berries and vegetables "think of colourful fruit and veg, they are full of nutritional compounds to help prevent cancer!" vitamin C, selenium, garlic, CoQ10, and herbs such as Grape seed extract, Turmeric and St Marys Thistle can also help.

Prolonged stress, can be caused from a multitude of avenues such as lack of nutrition, lack of rest, emotional stressors, alcohol, drugs abuse, infection, illness etc. and one of the effects stress can have on the body is an increase in the production of the hormone cortisol, which is inflammatory, acidic and can lower immunity. How we manage stress is different for every individual, yoga, meditation, music, Chi Kung, walking in nature are all beneficial but if you need support find someone caring to help you to look at your life situation and find some strategies to manage it. There are also many lovely herbs to help nourish the nervous system along with Bach flowers which I find extremely helpful. Laughter is also fantastic, my mum has a laughing bear that she turns on every day, his laugh is so infectious that you can't help but laugh, or you could watch some funny movies etc.

Hormonal balance is important and therefore sufficient sleep is a must. Chronically sleep deprived individuals over time develop elevated levels of stress hormones which increase anxiety and depression, cripples the immune function, harms our digestion and

detoxification pathways, impedes memory, impairs blood sugar control, can raise blood pressure and delay wound healing. Lack of sleep may alter thyroid hormone levels, estrogen and testosterone secretion and many other hormones involved in regulation of cellular activity. If you are experiencing difficulties with sleep you should really seek help from a qualified practitioner because getting enough sleep is critical to your health.

Sugar balance is important because all cells in the body rely on sugar to make energy. Cancer cells are very efficient at metabolizing sugar into energy for growth and proliferation, so it's really important to reduce simple sugars such as desserts, lollies, pastries etc. you can still have fruit and vegetables they contain naturally occurring sugars and their beneficial compounds to fight cancer outweigh any harm from their sugar.

Exercise has been stated as the number one prevention of cancer, it raises oxygen levels in the body and cancer cells don't thrive in an oxygenated environment. The consensus is that we need at least 30 minutes of exercise six days a week but even a little everyday is better than none and if you can do some deep breathing to oxygenate the tissues this is a huge help, most of us tend to be shallow breathers these days.

Tips: Cut down your sugar levels, if you have a sweet tooth, because cancer cells love sugar, increase your fresh veggies to get your body into a more alkaline state, remember, Rome wasn't built in a day, so chip away and make some gradual changes so you can sustain it. If you make massive radical changes people tend to find it too hard and drift back to their old ways. "Remember!" It's your body, so you need to take charge and change your internal terrain.

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