Illinois Wesleyan University
WELLNESS

HEALTH Wise

FEBRUARY 2006

WELLNESS WORKSHOPS

Knit Happens...

This "ain't" your grandmother's knitting circle!

Whether you knit or knot, you are welcome to join the IWU knitting circle that meets each Friday over the noon hour in the Hansen Student Center. Knit happens and this group is sheeper than therapy! All IWU faculty, staff, and students are welcome to attend, regardless of skill level. Our resident knitting guru Susan Anderson-Freed will be on hand to assist beginners and inspire projects. Participants are encouraged to bring their own projects and supplies. Knitting is not required – participants can bring any kind of stitchery or just come and enjoy the conversation! *Questions? Please call the Wellness Center at x3334.*

Coming Late Feb. **Spanish Cooking Class with Chef Chad Sanders**… watch for more details!

"Random Acts of Kindness are those little sweet or grand lovely things we do for no reason except that, momentarily, the best of our humanity has sprung, exquisitely, into full bloom."

Random Acts of Kindness

If you would like to bestow a random act of kindness on a colleague, please, send a sheet with the names, office location, phone number and number of roses you would like to gift along with $1.50 per organic rose ordered to Wellness. Questions, please call Wellness at x3334 or email us at wellness@iwu.edu.

www.iwu.edu/~wellness

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Keeping Unwanted Inflammation at Bay

The body's primary healing process is known as the inflammatory response. It doesn't matter if you are healing from a cut finger or an infection, your body will deploy an army of white blood cells to destroy the invaders and repair tissue.

When injured or ill, things such as redness, swelling, soreness and warmth will remain localized until the injury or infection is healed. But there are times when the immune system does not shut off, instead it releases a stream of inflammation-promoting compounds that spread throughout the body, damaging cells and tissues.

There is some compelling research which shows that unchecked inflammation in the body can contribute to a wide range of ailments such as: heart disease, asthma, cancer, and degenerative diseases such as arthritis and lupus.

It is thought that repeated or prolonged ailments, such as sinus or bladder infection, gingivitis and stomach ulcers, can trigger chronic inflammation, as can food allergens and pesticides.

People often don't know they have chronic inflammation unless it is accompanied by symptoms such as pain in muscles and joints, as in diseases like lupus or rheumatoid arthritis. A test known as C-reactive protein (CRP) is used to detect silent inflammation. If this substance is found in the blood, typically further testing is done to determine what is triggering the inflammation and prescribe appropriate treatment.

According to Mark Hyman, M.D., editor in chief of *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*, there is data to support very ordinary ways you can control inflammation. He states, that diet, exercise, and stress-reduction play a role.

Eat an Anti-Inflammatory Diet

Learning about which foods intensify the inflammatory response and which foods inhibit it, can be a very effective way to affect inflammation.

Inflammation is regulated by a group of hormones known as prostaglandins. Certain types of foods such as polyunsaturated, partially hydrogenated fats, and refined carbohydrates prompt the body to produce inflammatory prostaglandins. Reducing or eliminating these types of fats, and foods that rapidly raise blood-sugar, (like white bread and white rice) will aid in reducing this inflammatory production.

Instead of polyunsaturated oils (such as corn and soybean), rely on olive oil and increase your intake of omega-3 fatty acids by eating salmon, sardines, walnuts, and freshly ground flax seeds or flax seed oil. The omega-3s increase production of inhibitory prostaglandins.

Eating whole foods, such as unprocessed fruits and vegetables aids in inflammation reduction as well. Emphasize foods known for their high anti-oxidant content, such as, blueberries, carrots, broccoli and squash. These foods sweep up free radicals, unstable oxygen molecules linked to a host of chronic illnesses, which cause oxidative stress in the body that can lead to inflammation.

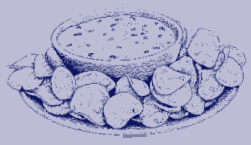
— CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

NUTRITION BITES
Recipe of the Month

The Fabulous Avocado

A lot of attention given to this creamy fruit comes from that fact that they are rich in monounsaturated fats, the heart-healthy kind. Yet scientists are now more interested in the active compounds in avocados that might help prevent cancer. Avocados are loaded with phytonutrients, like cholesterol-lowering beta-sitosterol and caner protective glutathione, along with vitamin E, folate, vitamin B6 and fiber. Ounce for ounce they contain more blood-pressure-lowering potassium than bananas.

Avocado-Tomatillo Dip with Cumin Pita Chips



Chips:

3 (6-inch) pitas, split in half horizontally
Cooking Spray
1 teaspoon cumin seeds, crushed
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

Dip:

1/2 pound tomatillos (about 5 large)
1/2 cup chopped onion
2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
1 teaspoon finely chopped seeded jalapeño pepper
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup sour cream
2 ripe peeled avocados, seeded and coarsely chopped

1. Preheat oven to 375°
2. To prepare chips, coat rough side of each pita half with cooking spray; sprinkle pita halves evenly with cumin seeds, oregano, and 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt. Cut each pita half into 8 wedges; arrange wedges in a single layer on baking sheets. Bake at 375° for 15 minutes or until golden brown.
3. To prepare dip, discard husks and stems from tomatillos. Place tomatillos in a small saucepan; cover with water. Bring to a boil; cook 5 minutes or until tender. Cool to room temperature. Place tomatillos, onion, cilantro, jalapeno, and 1/2 teaspoon salt in a blender or food processor, and process until smooth. Add sour cream and avocado; process until smooth. Serve with chips. Yield 12 servings.

Source: *Cooking Light*, Jan/Feb 2006

OFF THE BEATEN PATH — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Find What Really Moves You

It doesn't matter how you move, it matters if you do. There is a smorgasbord of data linking consistent activity to a dramatic reduction of developing heart disease. Hyman states, "heart disease is a condition we now know to be a disease of inflammation." Elevated CRP levels are associated with an over fourfold increased risk of heart attack.

A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* showed that after just six months of exercising for an average of 2.5 hours a week, people with a known risk of heart disease had a 35 percent reduction in CRP levels.

Time, lack of pleasure and doing too much too soon can get in the way of remaining consistently active.

Creating time to move, means getting it on your calendar as a part of your day, in the same way you write down a meeting or lunch date. It's too important to skip. Staying active actually gives you more energy to keep up with life demands. Ironically, it is the first thing to go when life gets busy.

Finding pleasure in movement means you want to participate in activities you like to do. If you dislike it from the start, it will be hard to sustain. So try on different ways of moving until you find something you like, maybe even look forward to doing again.

Finally, patience is required for enhancing your level of fitness. If you try to do too much too soon you may unintentionally elevate inflammation in the body rather than reduce it. A good rule of thumb is to go slow and progressively challenge the body with each bout of activity. This will minimize muscle soreness and improve your chances of staying active.

Practice Relaxation

Stress is essential to life. However, unrelenting stress challenges the body's normal immune function and contributes to an increase in inflammation. Just as movement plays an important role in inhibiting inflammation, so does relaxation.

Practices that quiet the mind, such as meditation and prayer, have been linked to lowered CRP levels. Active mind/body practices like tai chi, yoga, and chi gong may also help to keep inflammation at bay.

Breathing deeply stimulates the relaxation response in the body. Take a few moments each day to be mindful of slow deep breaths. Breathe in through your nose, feel your breath fill your belly and than rising to fill your chest. Pause, exhale slowly but audibly through your mouth. Repeat five times.

Resources: *Body & Soul*, February 2006
www.drweil.com
http://nutrition.about.com/od/dietsformedicaldisorsders/a/antiinflamfood.htm

THE SAFER PATH

Diet and Autism: Is there a Connection?

By Laurine Brown PhD

Bread and milk are daily staples in an American child's diet. But there is growing evidence that these seemingly wholesome foods may harm the developing brains of *some* autistic children. For decades, parents of many autistic children have reported improvements in their children's symptoms when *gluten* and *casein* (proteins in certain grains and dairy) are eliminated–better eye contact, language, sociability, sleep, and fewer bowel problems and aggression. Recently, scientific studies have begun to validate these numerous anecdotal reports.

Why does the gluten-free/casein-free (GFCF) diet help some children? We don't completely know. The most popular theory, the *opioid hypothesis*, suggests that many of these children are unable to properly break down certain proteins. This is not the same as an allergy (although many autistic children *also* have food allergies). Rather, faulty digestion of gluten (protein in wheat, oats, rye and barley) and casein (protein in milk/dairy products) leads to a buildup of *opioid-type molecules* that have a narcotic effect on the brain, like opium or morphine. Most people have intestinal *enzymes* that help them digest or break down gluten and casein into smaller protein pieces called *peptides*, and then into even smaller pieces called *amino acids*. But when these enzymes are defective, the large molecules of incompletely digested gluten and casein peptides (with an opioid structure) can "leak" from an over-permeable gut into the bloodstream. Some of the opioid peptides are carried to the brain where they can mimic neurotransmitters, resulting in a scrambling of brain inputs and outputs. Interestingly, children with autism exhibit many of the addictive behaviors of animals drugged with opioids, akin to being on a morphine drip. Also consistent with this theory, studies show that 50% of people with autism have elevated levels of opioid-type peptides in their urine.

We know that digestive problems, including chronic diarrhea or constipation, may affect at least half of all children with autism. Some theories for the faulty enzyme production and leaky gut syndrome in some autistic children include intestinal inflammation or damage from viral infections (e.g., measles), yeast infections (overgrowth of candida albicans) and possibly a weakening of the membranes in the intestinal tract from heavy metals (like mercury from thimerisol-containing vaccines). This poor digestion can also result in nutritional deficiencies of basic vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, which further aggravates the nerves and gut in these children.

How do you know if the diet will work? Some urine tests are available to detect "leaky gut" and the presence of opioid peptides in urine. But reliability can be a problem. Lisa Lewis PhD and Karen Seroussi, both parents of autistic children who have researched and written extensively about the GFCF diet, suggest a three to six month trial of strict adherence to the experimental diet is best. Working with the child's physician and a nutritionist is important to ensure proper nutrition. Lewis Mehl-Madrona MD PhD, a Stanford trained physician now practicing in Saskatoon Canada, finds that at least half of his autistic patients improve significantly within a month of starting the GFCF diet. If unsure after this period, he suggests challenging the child with a grilled cheese sandwich on whole wheat bread. Sensitive children will become clearly worse. Because nutrient deficiencies resulting from faulty digestion and a self-limiting diet are common, a basic multivitamin may help re-nourish the child's nerves and gut, including *B-vitamins* and *minerals* like *magnesium* and *zinc* (which aid the nervous system) and antioxidants like *selenium* and *vitamins A, E, C* (which protect from cellular damage of inflammation), and other nutritional supplements like anti-inflammatory *omega 3 and 6 oils* from flaxseed, evening primrose, or fish oil.

While we continue to sort out the root causes of the sharp rise in autism in our children, diet modifications may offer another pathway of hope and healing to the families of these unique children. Experience shows that younger children often respond better than older children. It is important not to go "cold turkey" with the diet since the children can have withdrawal symptoms, i.e., a worsening of condition. Interestingly, children can be addicted to the narcotic effect of the opioids, explaining why they may crave breads and dairy. Especially in children under age 5 years, eliminate offending foods gradually over about 2 weeks. It is often easier to eliminate dairy first, followed by gluten foods, which can be more challenging. Fortunately many resources are available (see below). The diet must be strict and can be difficult to follow, complicated by the fact that many autistic children self restrict foods. But when carefully planned to substitute missing nutrients (like calcium and vitamin D), side effects are few, and many children improve.

Casein: Foods to Avoid

Casein is a protein in dairy. Avoid all bovine (cow, sheep, goat) dairy products, including ALL milk, butter, cheese, cottage cheese, cream cheese, sour cream, yogurt, ice cream, etc. Read labels & avoid *casein*, *caseinate*, and even *whey* found in many soy cheeses, tuna, margarine, artificial flavorings, medicines and more. NOTE: When dairy is eliminated it is vital to add calcium and vitamin D (with fortified milk substitutes or acceptable vitamin/mineral supplements).

Gluten: Foods to Avoid

Gluten is a protein in common grains: *wheat (durum, semolina, kamut, spelt), rye, barley, triticale*, and possibly *oats*. Read labels scrupulously. Many processed foods contain ingredients with gluten including malt (from barley), grain starches, hydrolyzed vegetable/plant proteins, textured vegetable proteins, grain vinegars, soy sauce, grain alcohol, flavorings and fillers in vitamins and medications. ALLOWED grains: rice, corn, soy, potato, tapioca, beans, sorghum quinoa, milled, buckwheat, arrowroot, amaranth, and nut flours.

Practical Resources for GFCF diet:

Popular websites offering support to families implementing gluten and casein-free diets:

- *ANDI: Autism Network for Dietary Intervention* — http://www.autismNDI.com
- *Gluten Free/Casein Free (GFCF) Support Group* — http://www.gfcfdiet.com/

Popular books and articles by physicians or parents of children with autism:

- *Special Diets for Special Kids* by Lisa Lewis, PhD 1998, 251 pages.
- *Unraveling the Mystery of Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorder: A Mother's Story of Research & Recovery* by Karyn Seroussi, 2002, 304 pages.
- *Frequently Asked Questions About Dietary Intervention for the Treatment of Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities.* By Karen Seroussi, co-founder, Autism Network for Dietary Intervention — http://www.enabling.org/ia/celiac/doc/autgffaq.rtf
- *Autism: An Overview.* By Lewis Mehl-Madrona MD, PhD. Article reprinted from Autism/Aspergers Digest Magazine 2000 @ http://healing-arts.org/children/.

More references available at: www.iwu.edu/~wellness

SPRING HEALTH SCREENING

Cholesterol, Blood Lipids, Iron & PSA Screening

Thursday, April 13, 7:30-9:00 AM
Davidson Room, Memorial Center

The following screenings will be available for employees of Illinois Wesleyan who are participants in the health insurance plan.

If you would like to participate in the screening, you will need to **reserve a space** by calling the Wellness office at **556-3334**, no later than Tuesday, April 11.

Participants of the IWU health plan are covered for these services. If you or an immediate family member are not insured by IWU and wish to participate in the screening, payment is required at the time of the service.

Chemistry Testing Panel

A 12-hour fast is required prior to the Chemistry Testing Panel, nothing to eat or drink, except water.

Prostatic Specific Antigen (PSA)

Blood Pressure Screening: If you have not had your blood pressure checked recently, please take a moment to update yourself on this information. You can do it in less time than it takes to call a friend for lunch.

Note: The results of all screenings are strictly confidential and may be sent directly to your physician, if requested at the time of the service.

HEALTH MATTERS

People who exercised at least twice a week in middle age were 60% less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease when they got older. That's what researchers at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden found when they looked for signs of dementia in nearly 1,500 people after an average of 21 years. Walking and cycling were the most popular exercises. The people who benefited most had a genetic predisposition for Alzheimer's. Exercise may decrease risk by improving blood flow to the brain and transmission of brain signals, suggest the researchers.

Source: The Lancet Neurology, October 2005

If you have back pain, it's more important to do general physical activity, such as brisk walking or swimming, than specific exercises for your back, according to a recent study by researchers from UCLA. It found that people with back pain who did the equivalent of three hours of brisk walking a week did much better than those who did back exercises, which actually tended to make matters worse. One problem with back exercises, the researchers said, is that people often do them incorrectly — or that the exercises may not be the right ones for their specific back problems.

Source: *University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter*, January 2006