

## Debunking FAKE health NEWS - by Dr. Zoltan Rona

This list of nutritional medicine myths hasn't changed much in nearly 40 years. I hear one or more of them every day in my private office practice. The people making the erroneous assertions are very dogmatic about their views. The source of these misleading facts is most often practicing medical doctors untrained in nutritional medicine or who are just plain out of date. Most have endured for decades and will likely persist for many more. Like the myths about professional athletes all being steroid-free, these are the most popular concepts in natural medicine that die hard. Although there are a few others not listed here, what follows is my current top ten:

### **FALSE NEWS #1: Vitamin C Causes Kidney Stones**

This is a classic because, if you ask anyone out there, they have definitely heard about it. The truth is that vitamin C is generally well-tolerated by most healthy individuals. There is, however, a wide range of tolerance when mega doses are supplemented. Large doses (500 mg. or more) can cause diarrhea but this appears to be the only significant side effect and only occurs if taken orally (as opposed to intravenously). Interestingly enough, the sicker one is (respiratory tract infections, the flu, etc.), the more vitamin C one can tolerate without getting loose bowel movements. Alternative health care practitioners often recommend taking high doses of vitamin C to bowel tolerance when one is ill in any way. So, some people will need 20,000 mg or more before diarrhea occurs. As one recovers from illness, the dose required to cause diarrhea becomes less and less.

It has often been falsely reported that vitamin C supplementation causes kidney stones in dosages above 6000 mg. daily. There is no clear proof of this claim since numerous studies conclude the exact opposite - that vitamin C supplementation prevents kidney stones.

There have been studies done on patients who receive as much as 100,000 mg IV of vitamin C several times a week as a cancer suppressive therapy with no report or evidence of a greater incidence of kidney stones.

It has long been gospel that women who take high doses of vitamin C during their pregnancy risk rebound scurvy in their infants if they suddenly discontinue vitamin C. Although this is theoretically possible, no one has ever been able to prove this as a fact in any scientific study.

The kidney stone and scurvy myths are not the only common myths about vitamin C supplements. The source of much of this false news was one Dr. Victor Herbert but he is no longer alive so someone else can come forward to debate me. Here's a list of other lies, half-truths and myths about the very popular vitamin.

- destroys vitamin B<sub>12</sub>
- causes DNA damage (leading to cancer)
- protects cancer cells from being destroyed by chemotherapy
- causes or exacerbates gastric ulcers
- causes thrombosis (abnormal internal blood clotting)
- causes diabetes
- causes rashes, nausea or other gastric upset, abdominal cramps, headaches and fatigue
- interferes with the metabolism of other nutrients (e.g. sodium and iron) causing either overload or depletion
- is only a vitamin (micronutrient); typical daily diets supply "enough" ascorbate
- US RDA of 60 mg ascorbate/day is adequate
- "Natural Vitamin C" is more effective than the cheaper synthetic forms
- is worthless against the common cold
- is worthless against cancer

There are probably other vitamin C myths so send me anything I may have left out.

### **FALSE NEWS #2 Herbs, Vitamins and Minerals can be toxic and people have died taking them**

First of all, whole herbs are plants and NOT drugs. If you extract one ingredient from any herb and concentrate it, patent it, then, yes, it's a drug. Drug companies are famous for using herbs as a source for new drugs. For example, some companies have extracted THC from marijuana, concentrated it and patented it as a drug. The fact that it doesn't work anywhere as well as the whole plant is of no concern to drug companies. Adverse drug reactions are the fourth leading cause of death in North America. None of these fatal adverse reactions involve commonly used herbs or other nutritional supplements. Conventional medical doctors and their prescription drugs kill more patients in one day than any natural therapy ever does. This is not to say that herbs are free of side effects, just that there is no evidence that they come anywhere close to the danger posed by prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Poison control center statistics from the USA have shown a grand total of zero deaths in the past 30 years from any vitamin, mineral, herb, amino acid

or nutritional supplement of any kind. The myth of nutritional supplement toxicity is unwarranted and continues to die hard. Some herbal remedies like St. John's wort can interact with numerous drugs but, once again, reports of toxicity are non-existent and greatly exaggerated by mainstream pharma and medical sources. As many have now stated, "Where are the dead bodies?"

A few years ago, there was much concern about the mildly relaxing herb known as kava kava. In fact, it was taken off the market in Canada due to concerns about liver toxicity. These reports were later shown to be unproven so kava was put back on the market and you can get it now from any health food store.

At one time beta carotene supplements were accused of causing lung cancer. The study that made this ridiculous argument was later debunked because cigarette smokers were used to make this erroneous conclusion. There have also been false reports of the absurd belief that folic acid can increase cancer risk. All these myths are completely without evidence.

I frequently recommend 10,000 IU of vitamin D to adults who have low blood levels, fail to get enough sun exposure, use sunscreen on a daily basis due to cancer fears and who have been advised by doctors to stay out of the sun. Often, these people go back to their family doctors who quickly scare them about vitamin D causing liver toxicity, kidney stones and all other horrible side effects at doses over 1000 IU taken daily. The person then returns to my office and we recheck the blood levels of vitamin D and, of course, they are still too low, below the acceptable reference range. There is zero evidence that vitamin D or any fat-soluble vitamin is toxic at the 10,000 IU therapeutic dose. If one is on blood thinners and a long list of drugs, there are indeed drug-nutrient interactions, mostly evidenced by a depletion of nutrients by the drugs and not the other way around. For example, statin drugs used to lower cholesterol will deplete vitamin D and coenzyme Q10. For more information on this see the March 2017 issue of *Vitality* (<http://vitalitymagazine.com/article/how-to-survive-western-medicine/>).

Yet another piece of false news is that vitamin E causes high blood pressure. When subjected to scientific scrutiny, this turns out to be completely false. In fact, one study (*Archives of Neurology* 2000;57:1503-1509) concluded that the reverse was true: taking vitamin E if you have high blood pressure reduces the risk of stroke and that, if your blood pressure is normal, vitamin E has no effect on it or your risk of developing a stroke.

By the way, almost anything, even water can be toxic if you consume too much of it. For example, drinking too much water can kill you. There are several reports of healthy individuals who drank so much water that they diluted sodium and other minerals and died. Health Canada, to date, has made no attempt to take water off the market. They appear to be too focused of late arresting people selling marijuana.

### **FALSE NEWS #3 Only Dairy Products Can Provide Adequate Calcium Intake**

It is true that cow's milk has the highest calcium content but many studies demonstrate that absorption is inferior to that seen with calcium from plant sources. Dark green leafy vegetables have relatively high calcium concentrations. With the exception of spinach, due to the high oxalate content, the calcium from greens is very well absorbed. Kale and other members of the same food family such as broccoli, turnip greens, Brussels sprouts, collard greens and mustard greens are also excellent sources of magnesium, a trace mineral that is important for calcium utilization and which is found in only small amounts in cow's milk.

A large number of excellent whole food supplements high in both calcium and magnesium are available in health food stores and in supermarkets. These include wheat grass, spirulina, chlorella, barley green, green kamut, blue green algae and several others. These all make ideal supplements for children because they are easy to mix with juices, are highly bioavailable, easily absorbed and have a very healthy balance of dozens of trace minerals, antioxidants, vitamins, amino acids and essential fatty acids.

Other natural sources of calcium include cooked beans and peas, seaweeds, soy products like tofu and soy milk, most of which are now fortified with calcium and other minerals, sprouts (e.g. alfalfa), seeds and nuts like sesame, pumpkin and hazelnuts as well as whole grains (e.g. corn tortillas, quinoa).

The big issue about getting enough calcium has to do with prevention of osteoporosis. It's not how much calcium you get in the diet as how much of that calcium you keep in your bones that's important and that all depends on magnesium, vitamin D, vitamin K and numerous other factors like exercise and drug intake. In one study of Japanese women who consumed no dairy products and had low calcium intakes, it was found that they had the lowest incidence of osteoporosis when compared to their American counterparts. North American women on a high dairy product diet who also supplement with calcium have a significantly higher incidence of osteoporosis than Japanese women consuming their native diet.

#### **FALSE NEWS #4 Sugar, In Moderation, Is Safe & Does Not Cause Any Disease**

About two decades ago, a very well-known Canadian Complementary Medicine doctor lost her medical license for appearing on TV and stating that sugar was the cause of dozens of different diseases. Times have, fortunately, changed and the only people saying that sugar is harmless are those involved in or somehow affiliated with the sugar industry. For example, the makers of Coca Cola are still blaming the obesity epidemic on lazy people who do not exercise. Despite a great deal of evidence to the contrary, spokespersons for Coke say that sugar has nothing to do with obesity. This is clearly false news.

Study after study demonstrates that sugar consumption is directly or indirectly associated with poor health. Simple sugars feed harmful intestinal yeasts, fungi, toxic organisms, and all forms of cancer. The volume of supporting literature for this is staggering. A partial list of health conditions associated with high sugar consumption follows:

- obesity
- eating disorders
- cardiovascular disease
- atherosclerosis
- high blood pressure
- increased platelet stickiness
- adult onset diabetes mellitus
- gastrointestinal disease - diverticulosis, irritable bowel syndrome, etc.
- gallstones
- dental caries
- immune suppression
- recurrent infections
- reactive hypoglycemia
- candida syndrome
- depression
- anxiety
- chronic pain syndromes
- ADHD in children & adults
- learning disabilities

#### **FALSE NEWS #5 Eating Foods High in Cholesterol is Bad for You**

Over 85% of the cholesterol in anyone's blood does not come from the diet but from manufacture by the body in the liver. If cholesterol is so terrible, why is it found in every normal cell in the body? Cholesterol is protective and part of all the body's cell membranes, bile acids and steroid hormones. Deficiency or low cholesterol has been associated with a higher risk of cancer and immune disorders including AIDS. You need cholesterol to make all your steroid hormones (estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, etc.). Your body also manufactures vitamin D under your skin from cholesterol. So, if you suppress cholesterol with statin drugs like Lipitor and Crestor, you also suppress your vital steroid hormones and vitamin D.

The real role of cholesterol in the body is to serve as a defense against free radicals. The more free radicals (peroxides, petrochemicals, tobacco smoke chemicals, fungal mycotoxins etc.) in the body, the more the liver will manufacture cholesterol to help neutralize the toxins. It is these free radical toxins, not the cholesterol, that produces the arterial damage resulting in hardening of the arteries and heart disease. High blood cholesterol levels should therefore be regarded as a red flag indicating the presence of high levels of free radicals, oxidant damage and infestation of the body with fungi or other pathogenic microorganisms (bacteria, parasites, etc.). High cholesterol blood levels should, at most, be considered a risk factor for heart disease and not the real cause. High carbohydrate diets are more likely a cause for high cholesterol than a high fat intake. For more correct information on cholesterol see one of my earlier articles on the subject in Vitality (<http://vitalitymagazine.com/article/ask-the-doctor-reader-concerned-about-cholesterol-medication> and <http://vitalitymagazine.com/article/challenging-the-statin-drug-dogma/>).

#### **FALSE NEWS #6 Eating Yeast is Bad for You**

Although it is true that people truly allergic to yeast should avoid it as much as possible, this is generally not true for the vast majority of health-conscious people. Carlton Fredericks, Adelle Davis and Paavo Airola, health movement gurus of the 1960's and 70s, all advocated yeast supplements for their rich content of B vitamins, chromium, selenium, other trace minerals, amino acids, enzymes, essential fatty acids, nucleic acids and anti-stress, hormone-like polypeptides.

Brewer's yeast and other yeast derived products are effective remedies for menopausal hot flashes, weakened immunity, neurasthenia, anxiety and diabetes. They help replace nutrients destroyed by prescription antibiotics and other drugs.

Harmless yeasts, including candida albicans, are everywhere - in our oral cavity, gastrointestinal tract, skin and hair. This is a normal fact of life. They can be found growing on practically all ripened fruits, vegetables, breads, baked goods, seeds, nuts, herbs and anywhere mold grows, including yeast-free bread. They cannot be eliminated entirely and even those who take prescription antifungals can never claim to completely eradicate all the yeast ubiquitous in our environment as well as our bodies.

#### **FALSE NEWS #7 Echinacea Should Not Be Taken Longer Than Two Weeks**

There is no evidence to suggest that Echinacea cannot be used longer than 2 weeks. This myth originates from an old German study which was mistranslated, leading one to believe that Echinacea's effects plateaued after five days. Echinacea can be safely and effectively used for years on end. There is no evidence that Echinacea cannot be taken on a continuous basis or that it cannot be used by people suffering from autoimmune diseases like lupus and AIDS. Long term Echinacea use, in fact, improves immunity on a gradual basis. Echinacea can be safely used in autoimmune diseases contrary to popular belief. It's an immune modulator, not just an immune stimulant and there isn't a single study that proves Echinacea to be harmful in autoimmune disease.

#### **FALSE NEWS #8: Taking Antioxidant Vitamins and Minerals Does Not Mix Well with Cancer Chemotherapy or Radiation Treatments**

Toronto area cancer specialists (oncologists) are a rather dogmatic bunch and that's putting it kindly. In the past two years, the advice they have been providing about nutritional supplements is nothing short of scary. One of my cancer patients told me that his oncologist would refuse to treat him with chemotherapy if he took any antioxidants, especially high dose vitamin C. Another provided a 6-page hospital endorsed instruction booklet strongly censuring the use of any vitamin, mineral, herbal or antioxidant supplement for any patient receiving chemotherapy. The rationale for this advice was that antioxidants "protected cancer cells" and caused their spread. Yet a third oncologist stated that intravenous vitamin C would offset the benefits of chemotherapy or radiation therapy because the latter treatments are oxidizing while the former are anti-oxidizing. This despite numerous published articles proving that high dose intravenous vitamin C kills cancer cells while leaving healthy cells alone.

Oncologists are quick to support their arguments by referring to a much criticized and poorly done study by the American Cancer Society's Dr. Gabriella D'Andrea (Use of Antioxidants During Chemotherapy and Radiotherapy Should Be Avoided. CA Cancer J Clin 2005; 55:319-321). In Ralph W. Moss's books and recently published journal articles, the numerous factual distortions and unproven assertions made in the American Cancer Society's position on the use of antioxidants are exposed as nothing more than superstition.

Without exception, the negative statements about antioxidants are myths based on faulty theoretical beliefs. In fact, recent scientific evidence published in peer reviewed cancer journals concludes that the opposite is true. Antioxidants not only reduce the side effects of radiation and chemotherapy but they also make these mutilating treatments work much better in terms of enhanced patient survival.

One recent example of this is the landmark study in the May, 2007 issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Cancer Treatment Reviews* that concluded that there is no evidence that antioxidant supplements (vitamins A, C, E, selenium, zinc, coenzyme Q10 and others) interfere with the therapeutic effects of chemotherapy agents. Rather, they may actually help increase survival rates, tumor response, and the patient's ability to tolerate treatment.

The study by Dr. Keith Block, Dr. Robert Newman and their research group evaluated 845 articles of clinical trials from five scientific databases that examined the effects of taking natural antioxidant supplements concurrent with chemotherapy.

According to Dr. Keith I. Block lead author of the study and Medical Director of the Block Center for Integrative Cancer Treatment:

*"This review demonstrates that there is no scientific support for the blanket objection to using antioxidants during chemotherapy. In addition, it also appears that these supplements may help mitigate the side effects of chemotherapy, this is significant because it increases the likelihood that patients will be able to complete their treatment."*

Further, co-author Dr. Robert Newman, Professor of Cancer Medicine at M. D. Anderson Cancer Center said:

*"This study, along with the evolving understanding of antioxidant-chemotherapy interactions, suggests that the previously held beliefs about interference do not pertain to clinical treatment."*

Antioxidants are substances that are thought to protect healthy cells from being damaged by toxins. While it is true that antioxidants protect healthy cells from being damaged by drugs like those used in standard chemotherapy, they seem to attack or further damage the DNA of cancer cells. There is no evidence whatsoever that they protect cancer cells from being killed off by radiation or chemotherapy. The truth is that they support the cancer killing properties of these mainstream treatments while preserving the integrity of healthy cells.

According to the September 10, 2007 issue of The New Scotsman, Dr. Chi Dang, a professor of medicine and oncology at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, antioxidants appear to be working in a way that undermines a tumor's ability to grow under certain conditions. The higher the dose of the antioxidant, the less the tumor thrives. The specific mechanism of how this works is debatable. Proponents of high dose intravenous vitamin C therapy for cancer believe that the mechanism operating here is vitamin C's stimulation of the production of hydrogen peroxide, a substance lethal to cancer cells but harmless to normal healthy cells.

Antioxidants play a very positive role in destroying diseased cells such as the ones that occur in cancer. As is now very obvious from peer reviewed scientific studies, antioxidants are a must for any cancer victim, especially for those who are being treated with either radiation or chemotherapy.

#### **FALSE NEWS #9: Mercury in Dental Fillings and Vaccines is Safe**

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and the famous actor and father of an autistic child, Robert De Niro, recently made scientists an offer they shouldn't refuse. The offer was \$100,000 for anyone that can find proof of the safety of mercury in vaccines. See: <http://globalnews.ca/news/3253840/robert-de-niro-robert-f-kennedy-jr-offer-100g-to-anyone-who-can-provide-proof-vaccines-are-safe/>. Unfortunately, to date, the RFK Jr. and De Niro challenge has brought no one forth with evidence of vaccine safety. There is no stampede of scientists bringing the proof needed to collect the \$100,000. Looks bad for the drug companies so far. Maybe we have to wait a bit longer.

Of course, mercury is not the only toxin in vaccines. We also have aluminum, formaldehyde, glyphosate (pesticide), antibiotics, aborted fetal cells and foreign genetic material in many of our vaccines. The safety of mercury in the body is controversial at best. The EPA and the WHO offer different values of the amounts for mercury that can safely be ingested or injected. What is certain is that mercury is both an immunity suppressor and neurotoxin. Many in the dental profession still use mercury but the trend is a movement away from using mercury dental amalgams.

#### **FALSE NEWS #10 Fluoride in Prescription Drugs and Dental Treatments is Safe**

Fluoride appears to be everywhere from our drinking water to toothpastes, dental offices and a large number of prescription drugs. Prozac and other psychiatric medications contain fluoride. Fluoride can also be found in commonly prescribed antibiotics like the fluoroquinolones (e.g. Cipro, Levaquin). Many steroid creams used to treat eczema and other rashes contain fluoride. Most people assume fluoride is safe but fluoride excess has been linked in the scientific literature with arthritis, bone fractures, brain damage, cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, endocrine disorders (thyroid especially where it displaces iodine in the body), kidney disease, male infertility and gastrointestinal diseases of numerous types. Fluoride has been demonstrated to lower IQ by a Harvard study. This is a huge subject with a lot of controversy. Many disagree with any hint of fluoride toxicity.

Well, there you have the current list. If real evidence comes forward to prove me wrong about any of these false news items I'm perfectly willing to adjust my thinking. In the meanwhile, eat cholesterol, don't be chicken of the egg and avoid mercury, fluoride and sugar.

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