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INTRODUCTION

When it comes to our health we know instinctively that people who pay attention to health and wellness measures in their lifestyle enjoy better health and longevity compared to those who are less rigorous about optimal lifestyle habits. These days there is undoubtedly a greater public awareness of what constitutes healthy lifestyle factors (i.e. sensible diet, pure water, clean air, exercise, emotional harmony, adequate sleep, etc). However, our fast-paced modern lifestyles have taken us off the right track with fast foods, excessive alcohol consumption, smoking and other drug dependencies, a polluted environment and high stress levels. These unhealthy lifestyle habits, which have developed over many years, can be very difficult to change. And so rather than making the effort to take the necessary steps well in advance of a health problem occurring we, like the proverbial ostrich who sticks its head in the sand tend to ignore our health status until obvious illness strikes.

Here's a question: Have you ever wondered how sick you actually are at this moment in time? Think about it, it's a tough one to answer. You certainly know when you have back pain, suffer the odd headache or experience seasonal allergies. But are you otherwise healthy? Do you simply view good health as the absence of pain, illness or disease? To help you with these questions, consider The World Health Organisation's definition of health as **"not merely the absence of disease, but instead, a vibrant state of wellbeing and enjoyment of life!"** In 1946 the World Health Organisation (WHO) defined health as: "A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, not just the absence of disease or infirmity".

Judging by the above holistic definition of health, not suffering from any apparent ailments does not necessarily mean that you have a rosy future. Outward appearance and lack of physical illness markers are not reliable barometers of health. Even thin people can have hypertension, high cholesterol, fatty livers, diabetes and heart disease.

Or maybe you're of the belief that your health status is predetermined at birth by the genetic markers that predispose you to certain serious health ailments. If you are genetically marked for cancer, you will likely get cancer. If you are genetically destined for diabetes or Parkinson's disease, you can only do your best to slow down their onset by making good diet and lifestyle choices and hope for the best. This mythical belief that genetics dictate our disease risk, one that has been fostered upon us by the medical establishment may at first sound plausible, but a new emerging field of Epigenetics tears to shreds this old paradigm of genetics being the cause of most health conditions.(1)

Still it seems most people are happy to continue believing this myth. It's easier to blame heredity than it is to take responsibility for your own health. Heart disease is not your fault; it "runs in your family". You're not responsible for your diabetes; sure, didn't your mother and your aunt both have it! You must have inherited a genetic weakness. And it can't be your fault that you're fat, after all, just about everybody in your family is overweight. You must have the same "slow metabolism"!

People who think this way are much more likely to pop a pill when something goes wrong. After all, what's the use in trying to prevent something if you're already destined for it? These people are also more likely to seek the assistance of doctors rather than focus on prevention and taking responsibility for their own health.

However, in the vast majority of cases, it is not our genetics that puts us at risk of health conditions such as obesity, diabetes, heart



Epigenetics

Epigenetics is the study of changes in gene expression, in other words how genes are turned on and off. There are 25,000 genes in your DNA and the scientific premise that these genes control your life has one major flaw: genes cannot turn themselves on and off, they are just blueprints. Instead, something in the environment has to trigger gene activity.

The term epigenetics, meaning "control above genetics", is a new science of how environmental and lifestyle factors can select genes and modify the readout of these genes for better or for worse. In other words, what you eat and drink, whether you smoke, take recreational drugs or medications, what environmental pollutants you encounter and even what beliefs, emotions and attitudes you hold, can all affect gene expression.

This is significant because we can become masters of our genes and their expression because we can actually control our health by our choice of dietary and lifestyle factors including our psychological health.

disease or cancer. It is our poor dietary habits and lifestyle choices. The only reason why heart disease “runs in the family” is because the same “disease-causing habits” run in the family.

Craig Venter, one of the leading scientists behind the sequencing of the human genetic code had this to say about the role of genetics as it relates to our risk for disease: *“Human biology is far more complicated than we imagine. Everybody talks about genes that they received from their mother and father, for this trait or the other. But in reality, those genes have very little impact on the outcomes. Our biology is far too complicated for that and deals with hundreds of thousands of independent factors. Genes are absolutely not our fate”.*

Instead, our modern diet and lifestyle are the main culprits for the explosion of chronic degenerative diseases occurring in our society today. The shame of it is that they are largely preventable. Although diet is only one of many important lifestyle factors implicated in the cause of this group of diseases, countless studies have shown that eating a healthy and adequate diet provides a significant protective role against the development of chronic disease.

Eating a healthy diet also increases our general wellbeing. How many of us on a daily basis complain of things like tiredness and not feeling a hundred percent even when there is nothing drastically wrong? If you settle for what seems to be average health, then you are not as healthy as you could be. Choosing to make positive changes to your diet and lifestyle choices can quickly improve your health status making your life immeasurably better.

Eating the right amounts of the right types of food as well as incorporating other health promoting practices such as regular exercise, stress management, rest and adequate sleep, and avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol consumption can mean the difference between dragging yourself through each day and truly living and getting the most out of life while also preventing the development of any serious disease.

My focus on health through the years from a naturopathic perspective maintains that one’s primary goal should be ‘health creation’ rather than ‘disease eradication’ and that most efforts towards health creation should be self-directed using the building blocks of nature such as a sensible diet, pure water, sunshine, fresh air, regular exercise as well as cultivating a positive mental attitude.

If you think about it, the human body is an amazing system that is designed to strive towards health, not disease. Disease is simply a defensive reaction by the body to poor dietary and lifestyle habits. The symptoms of disease are the remedial efforts of the body attempting a cleansing process in an effort to rid itself of accumulated toxins. As such, the power to cure disease resides only within the patient’s body and that innate healing power cannot fully prevail until wrong living habits stop and the fundamental elements of nature in fitting measure, have been set in place. Properly managed, the disease process is also the road to cure.

Wouldn't it be nice then if one could quickly hone in on exactly what needs to be rectified when the body is struck down by illness? New research findings show that most diseases of affluence have simple explanations and cures once their true cause is known. So what if I told you that all the major health conditions plaguing mankind today share a common underlying trait that more and more researchers now believe to be the ultimate cause of ill health!

There is now a growing mountain of evidence in the medical literature of a shared symptom, a common trait, underlying all chronic degenerative conditions. This common denominator is INFLAMMATION, or more technically 'low-grade chronic inflammation' or 'systemic inflammation'.

Over recent years the role of inflammation as a causative factor in the etiology of many disease conditions has become a huge area of interest in the medical world. There has literally been an explosion of information coming out of the medical literature linking inflammation with a myriad of health conditions. It's associated with nearly every modern disease including many dreaded diseases such as: heart disease, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, cancer, Alzheimer's, dementia, Parkinson's, any condition that ends in "itis", e.g. arthritis, as well as insidious conditions like obesity, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, depression and so on.

Wouldn't it be nice then if one could learn how to eliminate this inflammation from the body, thereby rendering oneself practically free of developing any chronic disease later in life.....

READ ON....