



NUTRITIONALLY SPEAKING

Sugar in catsup

by Dr. Meinig:

Dear Dr. Meinig:

I was told to take alfalfa tablets and sprouts for my rheumatoid arthritis. A friend claims great success with alfalfa and her arthritis. At first I thought I was also better, but recently, it has been becoming much worse. Could it be the alfalfa? I'm afraid to stop for fear my hands will get even worse. Do you have any information about alfalfa tablets and sprouts. G.C.

DEAR G.C.:

On a number of occasions I have heard that alfalfa tablets helped to reduce arthritic symptoms, but have not any first-hand experience with its use in these cases. It is strange that I should receive your letter last Thursday, as on Friday, I received an urgent message

from one of the nutritional publications to which I subscribe, advising that sprouts, and especially alfalfa sprouts, have a tendency to aggravate inflammatory disease conditions such as arthritis and lupus erythematosus. I immediately called the medical library and had them send copies of the three articles on the subject that had been published in the "Postgraduate Medicine Journal, Science," and the "New England Journal of Medicine."

In 1980, Dr. Malinow and his associates, showed no disease in five monkeys fed a standard diet, but three of five additional animals fed a substantial quantity of alfalfa seeds, developed signs like a lupus illness, anemia and some other irregularities. A new study in 1982 confirmed the first findings and in addition, they identified an unusual non-protein amino acid called L-canavarine that they felt might be the critical factor in causing the afflictions. In this study six monkeys were fed the normal diet and six others a diet high in alfalfa sprouts. Two of these showed evidence of autoimmune disease. L-Canavarine is present in relatively high quantities in alfalfa seeds and sprouts, but not in meal, and they found the meal did not produce the adverse effects in monkeys.

In 1983, Dr. Roberts reported that two human patients with lupus had a reactivation of the disease after the ingestion of alfalfa tablets. The first patient, a 40 year old white woman, had

a 26 year history of lupus. Her medical records and blood studies showed she had been normal for four years while taking 15 mg., of prednisone every other day. After the eating of alfalfa tablets, 15 each day for nine months, she began to have feelings of discomfort, of being out of sorts, lethargy, depression, and arthralgic. The second patient, a 50 year old white woman, had a 24 year history of mild lupus and was in remission over an 18 month period on 10 mg. of prednisone per day. She had positive blood studies for active lupus after 2 tablets of alfalfa 4 times a day, and biopsy documentation of a return of tissue breakdown.

Alfalfa is one of a species of legumes such as peas, soybeans, peanuts and stringbeans. Some legumes contain substantial amounts of L-canavarine, while others do not. These animals were eating fairly large amounts. A healthy person eating a few alfalfa sprouts in a sandwich or salad would probably not experience any difficulty. However, someone having Lupus or arthritis would do well to eliminate these foods.

Information such as this, is not meant to scare people away from the use of natural foods. Rather it demonstrates at times how little we know of some parts of the nutrition picture. At present, we have very little information about other sprouts and seeds. The word to the wise is to be aware, if you are experiencing difficulties of any kind; to question even the most inconsequential of eating

habits.

DEAR DR. MEINIG:

Not too long ago I read an article in some paper that said catsup had quite a bit of sugar. In talking about that to a group of friends, they didn't believe there could be much sugar in it. One of them suggested that I write to you and see what you had to say about the sugar in catsup. G.J.

DEAR G.J.:

I'm not sure of the source of that article but your statement about the sugar is correct. Catsup or the similar product called ketchup do contain a high amount of sugar and salt. If the average person uses three tablespoonsful of catsup at a serving, that amount contains 1½ teaspoonsful of sugar and about ¼ teaspoonful of salt (147 mg. of sodium).

If we try and imagine putting 1½ teaspoonsful of sugar into only 3 tablespoonsful of tomato juice, it just doesn't seem as though that small amount of juice could hold it all. Whenever the amount of hidden sweets in a food is mentioned, we visualize the sugar as it appears in its solid form in the sugar bowl, forgetting how readily it dissolves. The ¼ or ½ cup of sugar called for in the recipe seems insignificant because it mixes into the ingredients so easily. The extent to which large amounts of sugar finds its way into our food can quickly be ascertained by taking the ¼ or ½ cup -- whatever the amount called for in your favorite cake, pie or cookie recipe -- and actually

measure how many spoonsful are present, then divide that number by the number of pieces of the cake, pie or cookie. If those of you who make these pastries will do this, I guarantee you will discover the item tastes much sweeter than it needs to be. If you are like most, the next time you bake you will find yourself cutting the amount of sugar called for in half. Even then you will be surprised to find the taste sweeter than necessary.

Three teaspoonsful of catsup also contain 45 calories. This is more than the number in many fresh fruits and vegetables and they contain much more in the way of nutrients.

Whether or not this is an important issue for the person who uses catsup only occasionally, depends on the number of

other foods and vegetables being consumed that are also high in sweeteners and salt. For the individual who uses catsup on everything, a significant detrimental effect will take place. I am always surprised when I see someone put catsup on an expensive steak dinner. He might as well have ordered hamburger as it all tastes like catsup. All of our foods have so many interesting tastes and flavors, it is a shame to cover them up by using condiments loaded with sweeteners and other substances that are harmful to our well-being.

Everyone has a question about nutrition. Send your to Dr. George E. Meinig, C/O Ojai Valley News, Box 277, Ojai, CA 93023]

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