

# HEALTH HAZARDS IN A CHEMICALIZED SOCIETY

By Betty Magruder

Food fresh from the farm is a feature of bygone days.

Production of today's food is Big Business. The challenge is to meet the urban demand for more and more food which must be transported long distances and stored without spoilage.

Chemical spraying and dusting of crops as well as refining, processing and preserving of food make this task viable and spell dollar signs for the commercial food producers.

But what this "manipulation" of our food source means to our bodies' health is a prime concern of many of today's noted nutritionists.

Among these is a local practitioner, Dr. Granville Knight, who treats allergies, fatigue, stress and degenerative disease through nutrition.

Vitaly concerned with nutrition since graduation from Columbia Medical School in 1930, he has specialized in allergy and nutrition, originally in New York and later in Santa Barbara. Prior to opening his practice at the Pomerado Medical/Dental Center last spring, he spent fifteen years in private practice in Santa Barbara.

Currently he is a Fellow of the American College of Allergists and Nutritionists and president of the Price-Pottenger Foundation, a San Diego non-profit corporation devoted to spreading the knowledge of good nutrition.



Because of his expertise in nutrition Dr. Knight has been featured on several television talk shows, has lectured throughout the country, has written prolifically on the subject, and through the Price-Pottenger Foundation has helped produce two movies.

## Good Nutrition-More Than Basic Four

Eating well for health's sake is a complex chore in today's artificial and chemicalized society, maintains the doctor.

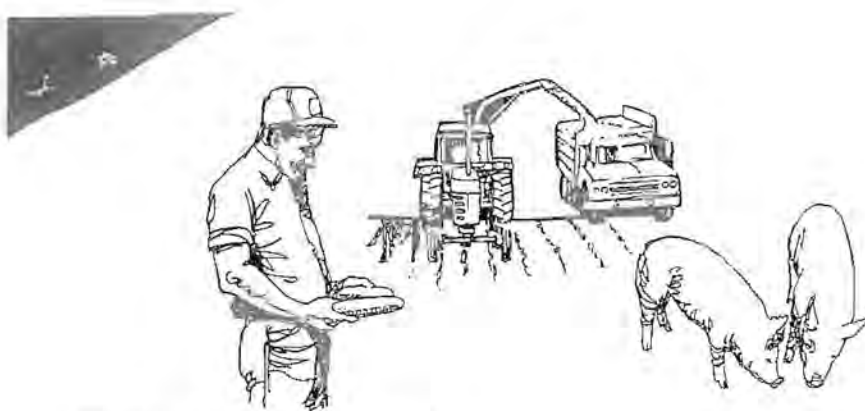
A balanced diet depends on much more than what foods we put into our bodies, he suggests. Paramount to optimum nutrient value is the food source, how it is treated and how it is prepared.

"The same food may vary widely in nutrient content, depending upon soil fertility, mineral balance, processing, preparation, cooking and other factors," explains Dr. Knight.

Citing an example, he notes an egg is not just an egg. The fresh, fertilized egg, once readily available, has been replaced, to a great extent, by the unfertilized egg.

Dr. Knight claims the advantage of fertilized eggs is that they come from ground-scratching chickens, who pick up unknown minerals from the soil rather than from hens confined to nesting pens as in the large commercial chicken ranches.

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Unfortunately, says the doctor, this is only one factor of supply and demand where quantity is often valued over quality. The courting of countless careless steps in the profit game of mass food production, he notes, has led to the necessity of strong action in soil conservation, ocean harvest, chemical pollution control and dietary changes.

"We must rebuild our depleted topsoil...(which is) now destroyed or wasted by being burned, buried or dumped into our rivers and into the ocean," contends the doctor. He notes one method of soil conservation which has proven economically feasible is the composting of city wastes into fertilizer.

### **Pest Control Not Needed With Superior Soil**

Besides upgrading inferior soil and halting waste of rich topsoil, there continues to be a need to further curb the use of pesticides, (chemicals for killing of insects, weeds and other pests) argues the expert.

Findings of toxic or allergic reactions were a catalyst in removing DDT and chlordane from the market. However, the doctor is not satisfied and advocates a nation-wide banning of all other chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides except in controlled circumstances.

He refers to Mayo Clinic studies which reveal that "hundreds of patients with leukemia and aplastic anemia showed a repeated exposure to pesticide sprays or solvents prior to the development of serious illness."

Public ignorance, until recently, has created little demand for improvement, notes the nutritionist. However, he is pleased with the incipience of a modern method of integrated pest control.

Rather than spraying routinely, crops are monitored for a build-up of pests, including insects, and then sprayed only when necessary, explains the doctor. He lauds this method as resulting in the reduction of use of toxic sprays.

The doctor advocates a nation-wide use of this method until the soil is relatively decontaminated. Interestingly, he notes that studies have disclosed a tendency for pests to avoid healthier soil and crops while they attack nearby weaker and inferior growth in less nutrient-rich soil.

But a controlled use of pesticides is not the only urgency, notes Dr. Knight, who counts the use of insecticides (chemicals used only to kill insects) as another

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deterrent on the road to higher quality food production.

Even growing food in backyard gardens must be done with precautions, warns the nutritionist, who argues against the use of any insecticide except rotenones and pyrethrins in sesame oil.

Insecticides and pesticides sprayed on our food is one thing, chemicals pumped into our food is yet another. "All too little is known about the long term and potentially synergistic effects of the hundreds of chemicals now contaminating our processed foods.

"Extenders, bleaches, coloring agents, sweeteners, preservatives, antioxidants, anti-caking and anti-foaming agents, clarifiers and a host of other permitted additives of no nutritional value increase the hazards of such foods," warns Dr. Knight.

Chemical contamination of our foods coupled with the increasing demand for convenience foods, high in empty calories, has led to a nation of nutritional cripples, laments the doctor.

He notes government statistics reveal a definite and alarming increase in the evidence of degenerative diseases (cancer, cardio-vascular diseases, arthritis, osteoporosis and allergy among primary examples) in civilized countries particularly in the past fifty years.

### **Primitive Tribes Maintain Better Diets**

Concurrently, independent studies have shown a suboptimal intake of protein, vitamins and minerals in most segments of the population.

And at the same time, primitive societies, unexposed to chemical pollution or our refined, processed foods, tend to have superior diets and little or no incidents of degenerative diseases.

Noteworthy are the findings of world-wide investigations by Weston A. Price, D.D.S., who analyzed the varied diets of natives in 14 primitive tribes who were resistant to dental decay and degenerative disease.

He found, for instance, the intake of calcium and phosphorus varied from 2.1 to 8.2 times the Minimum Daily Requirements suggested by the National Research Council, while magnesium varied from 1.3 to 28.5 times the M.D.R.

In the words of Dr. Price, "Almost all primitive diets studied contained at least four times the minimum (daily) requirements, whereas (more civilized diets) consisting largely of white flour products, sugar, polished rice, jams, canned goods and vegetable fats have invariably failed to provide even the minimum requirements."

Dr. Knight is convinced there is a relationship between inadequate or unbalanced diets, and a resulting tendency toward allergies and other degenerative diseases.

And while he admits a nutritional approach alone seldom cures allergy, the doctor maintains it can bring about marked improvement both in symptoms and in general health.

**(Editor's note: Next week's article will focus on Dr. Knight's prescription for a nutritious diet.)**