

Diabetes Epidemic: Evolutionary Adaptation to Food Crimes

By Simon Yu, MD

We are a nation of perpetual war: War on Crimes, War on Poverty, War on Cancer and War on Terrorism. At the same time, for the last 30 years, America has been intoxicated with excessive sugar products and gradually became an obese nation with epidemic incidence of diabetes. I am waiting for our government to declare a War on Obesity and Diabetes any time soon. But, who is our enemy for our nation's struggle with obesity and diabetes? Sugar is only a part of the problem.

Diabetes reflects more than a blood sugar problem. It is a systemic disease affecting our immune system, cardio-vascular system, nerve system and a degenerative disease of all organs. Even if you can control your blood sugar level with insulin and diabetic medications, systemic disease continues to progress, albeit more gradually.

Diabetes is a disease of food and nutrition. Diabetes is a manifestation of evolutionary adaptation to a new environment. "Food Crimes" are caused by 1) chemical farming causing depletion of the health of the soil and the nutrient quality of the crops, 2) by processing food on a massive industrial scale with chemicals that cause depletion of nutrients and 3) by adding massive amounts of inexpensive sugar, especially corn derived fructose, and carbohydrates to foods. These "Food Crimes" are reflected in the fast food industry. The typical American consumes large amounts of chemically altered proteins, hydrogenated oil and 150-180 pounds of sugar per year.

We have also been exposed to a large amount of food additives, environmental chemicals and artificial sweeteners which confuse the body's normal cellular communications. We also have no idea of the potential problems caused by genetically modified foods. These are experiments unlike any other in the human history of food. Since, as it has been reported, more than half of all corn and soybeans grown in the U.S. are genetically modified, everyone is a test subject.

Blood sugar level is mainly regulated by insulin and glucagons produced by your pancreas and liver. Adult on-set type II diabetes often has high blood sugar, high insulin level and insulin resistance. High insulin levels are associated with heart disease, obesity, stroke, and hypertension.

Blood sugar levels are controlled by insulin and glucagons which are strongly influenced by the dietary composition of carbohydrates, protein and fat in our diet. In addition, blood sugar is regulated by a hormone called Leptin. Leptin, produced by fat cells, gives signals to the brain that indicate you're hungry, controls your appetite, regulates food and energy distribution to cells for repair and regulates hormones.

Eating a high complex carbohydrate, low saturated fat diet for health and longevity as endorsed by our government and mainstream medical organizations has proven to be wrong. This is indicated by the evidence based epidemics of obesity and diabetes for an entire generation of Americans including children and younger populations.

It takes more than controlling your blood sugar level by taking insulin and diabetic medications to prevent the progression of systemic disease. You have to bring your insulin level down by starting with a diet of low carbohydrates, high fat and adequate protein. This low carbohydrate diet will help your body burn fat and break the vicious cycle of high blood sugar, high insulin and insulin resistance.

Insulin resistance is a hall mark of Syndrome X. Syndrome X is a main predictor of cardio-vascular problems, pre-diabetes and obesity. Over 60 million Americans have Syndrome X according to Dr. Gerald Reaven who described the Syndrome X phenomenon. Syndrome X is determined by meeting three or more of the following criteria:

1. Waist circumference greater than 40 inches in men or 35 inches in women.
2. Serum triglycerides 150 mg/dl or higher
3. HDL cholesterol levels less than 40 mg/dl for men or 50 mg/dl for women
4. Blood pressure 130/85 or higher
5. Fasting blood glucose 110 mg/dl or higher

The epidemic of diabetes we are witnessing in America is a reflection of what went severely wrong with our food policy as (mis)guided by the FDA's food pyramid and giant commercial agricultural and food industries. I am not interested in blaming any particular organizations or food industries but to recognize the reason why we are becoming the nation of diabetes. The current dietary experiments and recommendations have failed.

I suggest a diet low in carbohydrates, high in fiber from vegetable, high in omega-3 fatty acids from nuts and fish oil, adequate amounts of proteins from animals and fish. I have been recommending the Zone diet by Barry Sears, Ph.D. (see my web site in-depth article on the "Peak Performance Diet"). Some diabetic patients may have to cut down even more on carbohydrates to below 20% and increase their fat intake to over 50% of calories to control their blood sugar and insulin level.

Nutritional supplements should include a full spectrum of vitamins and minerals from "A to Z", and especially chromium and vanadium. Herbal remedies include Gymnema Sylvestre, Cinnamon, Policosanol, and Fenugreek. Look for hidden sugars under the name of natural fructose. Exercise in moderation to increase your insulin sensitivity and don't forget to take digestive enzymes.

You may eat 50% of your food in a raw, uncooked state. Colon and liver cleansing, heavy metal detoxifications, a food allergy rotation diet, parasite cleansing and proper dental care are also part of the management of diabetes. It is never too late to prevent the onset of diabetes or reverse the process of diabetes if you already have it. One's diet needs to be individualized and one person's food can be another person's poison. The first step of getting well is knowing what kind of foods are best for you. Let food be your medicine.

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