

# The whole food truth

by Heidi du Preez

Heidi du Preez holds a Masters degree in Food Science. She specialised in Natural Health while living in the UK for 3 years. Heidi uses a holistic, naturopathic approach aimed at supporting the immune system and detoxification. Her focus is on the prevention and cure of chronic, metabolic and degenerative diseases. Heidi is also the author of the recipe book *Naturally Nutritious* (a 2nd edition has recently been published). Email: heidi@naturalnutrition.co.za and website: [www.naturalnutrition.co.za](http://www.naturalnutrition.co.za)

For thousands of years healers have known about the benefits of eating natural, unprocessed, live foods. With the advent of the industrial revolution and the birth of modern medicine, much ancient wisdom about the healing properties of living foods and herbs was ignored. Yet today, it is scientists who are rediscovering many components in living foods that have a major impact on our body systems, helping to promote health and prevent disease. These are the phytochemicals (*phyto* means 'plant' in Greek). Phytochemicals are biologically active compounds in food. They play a vital role in the body's biochemistry in ways that impact on our health as significantly as vitamins and minerals. In this sense they are best thought of as essential nutrients.

## Food and the human body

The human body is extremely complex. In natural whole food we find the most remarkable combinations of elements that suit every requirement of the human system. All the elements to balance body chemistry and overcome disease are present in whole food. Every time you eat a combination of living foods, e.g. seeds, nuts, fruits and vegetables, you are giving yourself a cocktail of essential vitamins, minerals, amino acids, antioxidants, enzymes and phytochemicals that work together synergistically to promote your health. The idea of separating each nutrient out and then treating it like a drug to cure a specific illness is not only impractical, it's also nonsensical. We are missing the finer forces in nature that brought this whole food to us, and it can bring us the whole health we need.

It is known that whole fruit, vegetables, grains and legumes play an important role in the prevention of heart disease and cancer. Since these foods contain several known antioxidants, namely vitamins C, E and beta-carotene, it was only natural that scientists and the drug industry would assume that these vitamins alone would do the trick – 'the magic bullet theory'. After years of scientific research, startling results claimed that none of the antioxidants, taken as a supplement, helped to prevent cancer or heart disease. So now we're back to what we've known for decades – it takes whole foods to strengthen our immune systems and impede the development of degenerative disease. Mother Nature can't be tricked by the magic bullet theory.

Recent evidence from both laboratory and human studies strongly suggests that carotenoids may be most powerful when working as a team, perhaps in combination with phytochemicals. 'Beta-carotene may just be an indicator nutrient for other substances in fruits and vegetables that are beneficial in warding off disease', said Dr Dexter Morris, a heart researcher at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine. 'Though most scientific studies have looked at beta-carotene, other carotenoids may be just as important or more important. Or it may not be carotenoids at all that are important, but something else in vegetables and fruits that happen to have carotenoids.'

## What is whole food?

The concept 'whole food' literally means the whole food. We should consume whole food, as opposed to refined processed food. This means that we should eat everything eatable of a specific food as it appears in its natural form. This is the way our Creator created food and it's the way it is intended to be consumed. We are supposed to eat the flesh, skin, seeds and pits (inside kernel) of fruits. The roots, stalks and leaves of vegetables should not end up as compost in the garden. This includes the leaves of celery and the stalks and leaves of beetroot (the stalks and leaves of beetroot are more nutrient-dense than the beetroot itself). The hull or husk of grains form part of the whole grain that is usually lost during the refining of flour. Most of the nutritional value of a food is contained in or directly beneath its skin or peel – in the seeds in the case of fruits and vegetables, and in the hull or husk in the case of cereals.

## The seedless generation

We mistakenly believe that the pips of apples and the inside kernel of apricots, peaches and other stoned fruit are 'poisonous', because they contain 'cyanide'. However, cyanide, as it appears in its natural organic form in a molecular complex in food in the form of nitrosile, is actually vital to our health. Nitrosile or vitamin B<sub>17</sub>, as it is also known, occurs naturally in seeds of apricots, peaches, apples, prunes, plums, cherries, nectarines and cereal such as millet and buckwheat. Macadamia nuts, mung beans, butter beans and certain strains of garden peas all contain this essential nutrient. The nitrosile compound containing the cyanide has the ability to destroy cancer cells, without doing any harm to healthy cells.<sup>1</sup> Cyanide also occurs naturally in vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, which is not seen as a 'deadly agent', but rather a vitamin vital to our health (vitamin B<sub>12</sub> is known as cyanocobalamin).

In view of the nutritional value of seeds, we ought to consider chewing the seeds of fruits. We'll rather pay large amounts of money to buy grape seed extract in capsule form, rather than chewing the pips of grapes. People from many older cultures, including traditions famous for health and long life ate seed as normal practice such as found in Hunza, Northern Pakistan and in parts of Russia. In India, papaya seeds are eaten for both their nutritional value and their tonic effect on nerves. People living in the Hunza valley ate the inner seed of the apricot. They sold and traded it on the streets. It was part of their food supply, and this community was free of disease, had no cancer, hospitals, mental hospitals, doctors or nurses – not even a jail!

Most seeds and foods that contain seeds are good to eat. Originally, an orange had about a hundred seeds in its original state when it was almost the size of a berry, but it was such a nuisance eating something with so many seeds! So the seeds were removed through hybridisation, and with that action, so were the properties that provide the proper nutrients necessary for regeneration of life. They can grow oranges with extra pulp and juice, but without their seeds the human body lacks essential nutrients and the balance of these minerals. We are becoming a 'seedless generation', as markets are now carrying hybrid fruits, oranges, tangerines and even watermelons that contain no seeds. Whole foods, consumed with their seeds, leaves, skin, peel, hull or husk are one of the missing links in our diet today.

### **Demand and supply**

The bulk of our Western diet consists of processed food that is depleted of essential nutrients. Refined flour, rice and sugar lose more than 77% of zinc, chromium and manganese during processing. The Department of Health implemented a National Food Fortification Programme in the hope to address micronutrient deficiencies. The foods that are being enriched are refined maize and wheat flour. However, wouldn't it make more sense to encourage the population of South Africa to eat whole food, rather than stripping all the nutrients through processing and then adding them artificially? Who is really benefiting from this programme, the food processing industry and chemical companies supplying the artificial nutrients, or the malnourished population?

On the other hand, consumers are also to be blamed, because their preferences dictate which foods are being manufactured. Where there is a demand, there is a supply! If we demand organic and more whole food products, surely the industry will follow suit.

### **Reference**

1. Day P. B17 *Metabolic Therapy in the Prevention and Control of Cancer – a Technical Manual*. Kent, England: Credence Publications, 2002.