



Don't get too excited!

Excitotoxins is a word that has come into our vocabulary of more recent years, but not with too great a reputation. While we make reference to it in this edition of Healthbites, we will not be able to do full justice to it because of space restraints. But enough to give some understanding.

Glutamate, as monosodium glutamate (MSG) is now added to many foods. It has become popular over the last 50 odd years, but known of for a much longer time. In 1908, a Japanese scientist discovered that it is the active ingredient in the sea vegetable kombu. It excites the taste buds and can make rather uninteresting food taste pretty scrumptious!

It has since risen in popularity, and is now used in most soups, chips, fast foods, frozen foods, ready-made dinners and canned foods and comes in disguised forms such as hydrolysed vegetable protein, vegetable protein, natural flavourings and spices – each may contain from 12 percent up to 40 percent MSG.

Because it enhances the taste of what we eat, we tend to get plenty of it, which in turn excites the brain to the point of possibly causing neurons to die. Many biochemicals can act as neurotransmitters in the brain—some excite our neurons; others calm them. In particular, glutamate, aspartate, and cysteine are three amino acids that excite our neurons and can be called "excitotoxins." - ref. Nutrition Digest, volume 37, no. 3

A little more information on its identity is that excitotoxicity is the pathological process by which nerve cells are damaged or killed by excessive stimulation by neurotransmitters such as glutamate and similar substances. This occurs when receptors for the excitatory neurotransmitter glutamate receptors, are over-activated by a glutamate storm. While it is interesting to read of the science of it all, there is definitely a need to be aware of this additive so freely included in our foods.

Here is a list of possible effects. Excitotoxicity may be involved in spinal cord injury, stroke, traumatic brain injury, hearing loss (through noise overexposure), in neurodegenerative diseases of the central nervous system, such as multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (neurological disease), Parkinson's, alcoholism, or alcohol withdrawal, rapid benzodiazepine (mild tranquilliser) withdrawal and Huntington's disease. Another common condition that causes excessive glutamate concentrations around neurons is hypoglycemia. Avoid dehydration as it allows concentrations of glutamate in the inter-synaptic cleft of the brain. With a line up of ailments such as this, it would do us all well to avoid such additives and learn to enjoy our food prepared in a simple manner.

*"In order to
maintain
health, a
sufficient
supply of
good, nour-
ishing food
is needed."*

E G White

Ministry of Healing p.299

healthbites

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This newsletter is produced by:

 **AutumnLeaves**
New Zealand Limited

PO Box 654, Rangiora, 7440
New Zealand
health@autumnleaves.co.nz
ph 03 313 7762 fax 03 313 7769
www.lifestyleworks.nz

Light From Smart-phones and Tablets May Lower Sleep Hormone in Children

HealthDay News, 2 September 2015

New research offers a compelling reason for parents to ban smart-phones, tablets and laptops in their children's bedrooms at night. The bright light of these devices may lower levels of melatonin, a hormone that prompts sleep.

The effect was most pronounced for children just entering puberty, with night-time melatonin levels suppressed by up to 37 percent in some cases, investigators found.

Purple Potatoes Could Fight Colon Cancer

EmaxHealth, 2 September 2015

Baked purple potatoes have been found to contain substances that could help in the fight against colon cancer.

The study was conducted under direction of Jairam K.P. Vanamala, associate professor of food sciences at Penn State and faculty member at the Penn State Hershey Cancer Institute. He and his colleagues chose to use baked potatoes because that is the form in which potatoes are most often consumed around the world, and they wanted to be sure any cancer-fighting properties remained after the potatoes were cooked.



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How Much Longer Do Fruit and Vegetable Eaters Live?

Probably the least controversial advice in all of nutrition is to eat more fruits and vegetables, which is to say, eat more plants, since the term vegetable basically means all parts of the plant that aren't fruit. We've known that eating more fruits and vegetables helps us live longer, but a new study helped us see exactly how much longer.



Researchers in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* followed people and their diets over time to create a dose-response curve between fruit and vegetable consumption and mortality. Subjects who consumed five fruits and vegetables a day lived an extra *three years* compared to their non-plant-eating counterparts.

Compared to those eating five servings of fruits and veggies a day, those who ate four lost a month off their lifespan. Those who ate three servings lost three months. Then the curve started going off the cliff. At two servings a day, subjects lived seven months shorter, and at one serving a day, practically a year and a half, at half a serving a day, subjects lived nearly two years less, and at zero servings subjects lost three years.

This study mostly looked at people in their 50's and 60's. Is it too late by our 70's? No. Women in their 70's with the most carotenoid phyto-nutrients in their bloodstream were twice as likely to survive five years than those with the lowest. This means doubling one's likelihood of survival merely by eating some more fruits and vegetables.

In a study out of Taiwan, researchers concluded that spending just 50 cents a day on fruits or vegetables could buy people about a 10% drop in mortality. That's quite a bargain. Imagine if there was a drug that—without side-effects—could lower our risk of death 10%. How much do you think drug companies would charge? Probably more than 50 cents!

—Michael Gregor M.D. Sept. 17, 2015



Recipe - Black Bean Soup

2 c dry black beans
8 c water for cooking
2 c onion chopped
2 c green capsicum chopped
2-3 garlic cloves crushed
3T olive oil

3T water
2 bay leaves
1T salt
1T onion powder
1t cumin (opt)
3T lemon juice

Soak beans overnight in a bowl with enough water so it well covers the beans. In morning, **rinse** and **drain**. **Put** in a pot with the 8 cups of fresh water. **Bring** to boil, **reduce** heat. **Cover** with lid and **simmer** until beans are tender. This should take about 2-3 hours. **Saute** onion, capsicum and garlic in oil and water. **Add** sauteed vegetables to the beans when tender. **Add** remaining ingredients except lemon juice. **Simmer** 30 min more to blend flavours. **Add** lemon juice last, at point of serving.

As a variation, may be served with rice as a stew.