LIVE LONGER - READ THE LABEL

Author : Peter Wright, NTP, CGP

In this crazy, fast, and sometimes mixed up world, we don't take the time to first, know what's good for us to eat and second, put only healthy and nutritious foods into our mouths. Every time you drive into McDonald's, I'd challenge you to ask yourself, "What could I have eaten instead of this that would be healthy for me to eat?" I'd also challenge you to ask for the ingredients in one food you buy there each time you go. Start to read the label or ask for the ingredients in or on everything you eat. By doing this, you will extend your life.

Additives and preservative are in most every food that we eat. According to the website www.sustainabletable.org/issues/additives "Almost all of these processed foods contain additives, substances intended to change the food in some way before it is sold to consumers. Additives include flavorings that change a food's taste, preservatives that extend its shelf life, colorings that change the way it looks, and dietary additives, such as vitamins, minerals, fatty acids and other supplements. Packaging is considered an indirect food additive and, in fact, many kinds of packaging actually add substances to the food they enclose."?

If we were having a casual conversation and I asked you, "Would you eat something that contained dipotassium phosphate, partially hydrogenated soybean oil, sodium silicoaluminate, sodium tripolyphosphate, and diacetyl tartaric acid esters of mono diglycerides?" You'd probably say no. Well, I have to tell you that these ingredients are found in some powdered coffee creamers, in fact, the ingredients I just listed came off the label of a non-dairy coffee creamer. Before you put this in your coffee each morning, I'd suggest that you read the label to see what's in the creamer and then look up each of the ingredients to see what they are.

It's important to know what you are putting into your body. Here is a breakdown of the ingredients listed above:

Dipostassium phosphate – additive used to prevent coagulation, used in powdered creamers (Wikopedia.com)?

Partially Hydrogenated Soybean Oil – Hydrogenated oil is actually rancid oil; the oil turns rancid after it's heated to a very high temperature. These oils preserve food – or increase food's shelf like. It is thought to be one of the major causes in heart disease. Virtually every fast food restaurant fries their foods in hydrogenated oil these days. Notice how this type of oil always stays liquid. It doesn't change as the temperature changes. It is also used to preserve food and give it a greater shelf life.

Sodium Silicoaluminate – additive to prevent caking in the powder (Wikopedia.com)? Sodium Tripolyphosphate- It is produced on a large scale as a component of many domestic and industrial products, especially detergents. (Wikopedia.com) It is also a preservative that helps powders retain moisture. On the Wikopedia? site, it says, "generally recognized as safe" by the FDA. Generally?

Deacetyl Tartaric Acid Esters of Mono Diglycerides – an emulsifier used to strengthen the gluten in dough and coffee whiteners. (Wikopedia.com)? Coffee whiteners? Doesn't sound much like milk!

Why would anyone want to drink any of this in a cup of coffee? The answer? Use real cream! There are creamers on the market that are made from cows that are not fed growth hormones or given antibiotics and that are grass fed. You would be much better off putting a bit of cream in your coffee than using these powdered creamer substitutes! Even some liquid creamers contain many additives and preservatives. Be sure to read the label and make healthy food choices in all that you eat.

Now, if we move to snack crackers, here is a typical list of ingredients:
Enriched flour (wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine, mononitrate (vitamin B1), riboflavin (vitamin B2), folic acid, partially hydrogenated soybean oil and or cottonseed oil and or liquid soybean oil, sugar, high fructose corn syrup, salt, leavening (baking soda, calcium phosphate), soy lechithin (emulsifier), malted barley flour. (Taken from a box if Ritz crackers, 2011)

Partially hydrogenated oils – See above and click on the link for more information. My advice would be to eliminate hydrogenated oils from your diet. They are associated with high cholesterol and heart disease. What should you look for? Expeller pressed oils, namely coconut oil and olive oil. Real oil changes consistency when the temperature changes. Extra virgin, expeller-pressed coconut oil is more solid when it's cold and changes to a liquid when it's warm.

High Fructose Corn Syrup – Notice that this label lists sugar and then high fructose corn syrup. That is because the crackers contain both – a double dose of sugar. High fructose corn syrup is 1.) made from corn that is often sprayed with pesticides and given doses of GMO's – genetically modified ingredients and 2.) it's been labeled a "toxic industrial sweetener." High fructose corn syrup is beyond sweet; it will set your body up to crave sugar. Instead? Use organic sugar when you must or stevia, a natural sweetener.

Soy Lechithin – This emulsifier or lubricant is typically extracted from soybeans with hexane, a gasoline derivative. It is quick and cheap to make and also stacking up claims of allergies in children. Most soy is GMO driven (genetically modified) and is usually hydrolyzed where the fatty acids are removed, similar to hydrogenated oil. What to do? Look for products that do not contain soy. If you want to eat soy, stick with fermented soy in it's original state.

How in the world will you eat without eating snack crackers? It's not easy! When my husband and I started to clean up our diet a few years ago, we were shocked at the number of crackers on the market that contained high fructose corn syrup and hydrogenated oils. Our solution was that we had to stop eating them and we did. Instead, we snack on healthier chips that contain expeller pressed oils and non-GMO corn. We also snack on more organic fruits and vegetable, yogurt, and nuts.

If you start to read labels, you'll notice these ingredients (listed above) on many of them. My advice would be to pick one ingredient that you can remove from your diet and take it out. Look

tirelessly at labels and if you notice this ingredient on the label, just don't eat the food. Replace it with something healthier. If you have diabetic tendencies, I'd suggest you work on high fructose corn syrup first. If you have high cholesterol, I'd suggest you take hydrogenated oils out of your diet first. As you get one ingredient out of your diet, move on to the next. It may take a few months to remove each ingredient. As you do this, you will also be investigating different places to grocery shop. Good places to shop are health food stores and farmer's markets. You will begin to cook more of your own food rather than stop for fast food which is a much healthier alternative. You will begin to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your diet, which makes sense. You will lose weight and get healthier. It's a natural conclusion to eating healthier.

To eat healthier successfully, you will need to begin to learn more about food and food ingredients. At the grocery store, spend most of your time in the produce section. Incorporate as many of these foods into your diet as possible. If you can, buy organic fruits and vegetables. Spend less time in the prepared foods section of your grocery store. Most of these foods contain many additives and preservatives that are not good for your overall health.

Your health is everything. I hope that you are able to make small changes, one at a time, to affect your overall health and well being. Read the label; your life may depend on it!

This post is part of Fight Back Friday and Monday Mania .

1 http://www.wikopedia.com
2 http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/additives