

Grains are NOT all they're cracked up to be!

This month's news might come as a surprise: TOO MANY GRAINS, IN ANY FORM, ARE NOT VERY GOOD FOR YOU! Yes, this means you—everyone. And yes, this means ALL grains—even the “healthiest” organically grown whole grains.

Does this mean that grains are unhealthy, or even “poison”? No, but the overall balance, or ratio, of omega-6 (O-6) fats to omega-3 (O-3) fats in our diets is affected by the amount of certain foods we eat: grains (wheat, rice, oats, corn), seeds (or most of them, anyway), and legumes (beans, soy, lentils, peas, even peanuts). All grains, all legumes, and most seeds have a high ratio of O-6 to O-3.

The problem? Foods with higher O-6 content or a higher O-6:O-3 ratio will eventually cause inflammation in our bodies, no matter what! That's just the way it works. Will it happen today, tomorrow, or next year? We don't really know, but it's a matter of *when*, not *if*.

HOW CAN GRAINS BE BAD?

Biochemically, the way our bodies work to break down food and use the nutrients inside is determined by the proportions of the different foods we eat. The typical American diet includes lots of processed grains, seeds, and legumes, as well as substances derived from them (high-fructose corn syrup, soybean oil, canola oil, wheat gluten), and not enough foods that contain O-3 fats (wild-caught salmon, high quality concentrated fish oil, flax seed oil, chia seeds).

When we throw off the balance of O-3 and O-6, our bodies naturally produce more inflammation. Inflammation is kind of like a fire on the inside of our bodies—you generally want to put out fires, even slow, smoldering fires, right? The O-3 is like having your house lined with fire-extinguishers; the O-6 is like pouring diesel fuel all over the walls—eventually when you do have a problem or injury, the diesel fuel will be waiting for that spark to burst into flames and keep burning as long as you keep feeding it! Since we keep using O-6 in our houses, most people are already smoldering and many more are going to start bursting into flame (not literally) in a few years!

The Web site www.deflame.com contains extensive information on the O-3-inflammation connection (the site also sells supplements and offers e-newsletters):

“Why the fuss about grains? We have all been conditioned to think that grains are a needed staple in the diet. However, we do not have good evidence to support the strong advertisements about the seemingly amazing health prowess of grains. Accordingly, when we are told to avoid grains, we naturally have an emotional reaction in support of grains.

As you know, we rarely eat grains without added calories. Either we add sugar or fat to the grain product, or the manufacturer already did this for us. Most Americans need to lose weight ... and thus, avoiding any food that has added calories is a wise idea.”

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Confusing, I know: The base of the newest food pyramid, the foods we're supposed to eat the most of, is grains and starches. Unfortunately, the FOOD PYRAMID IS WRONG!

Do you have aches or pains or osteoarthritis? What about diabetes or allergies? How about digestive problems, irritable bowel, colitis...? You may need to change your diet, because your food is most likely contributing to your health problems.

Diet is only one factor, of course, but it's such an important factor that we can't ignore it. Everyone's genetic makeup is different. The environments we inhabit throughout our lives are all different. The only factor that is consistent from person to person? We all eat—and most of us eat plenty of grains and seeds and legumes.

LEARN MORE

I am happy to discuss how all this relates to you and your diet (and your family's diet). A 30-minute one-on-one talk is ideal, so please allow enough time when you call to schedule.

Selected references:

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Also check out the Diet Page at deflame.com, which lists several articles about grains. You'll learn that they're not the healthiest source of fiber—it is much better to eat a substantial amount of fruits and vegetables.

Yours in health,

Dr. Tom Hyland Robertson