Diet And Cancer… What Is The Link? Essay, Research Paper

Diet and Cancer… What is the Link?

Today we know that too much of a certain type of foods can have harmful

effects on our health and well-being and we are learning that diseases such as

cancer are caused in part by our dietary choices.

In the 1950’s scientists discovered relationship between diet and

coronary heart disease, the nations number one killer. In the last 15 year a

link between cancer and diet has been discovered by scientists.

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS), an organization of the nation’s

foremost scientists found evidence so persuasive that in their landmark report

Diet, Nutrition and Cancer of 1982 they insisted Americans to begin changing

their diets to reduce their risk of developing cancer. The results of the study

were supported by later research done by NAS, the Surgeon General, Department of

Agriculture and Health and Human Services, and the National Institute of Health.

Based mainly on the study by NAS done in 1982, the American Institute

for Cancer Research (AICR) devised a guideline with four parts to help lower

people’s risk of developing cancer. The guidelines have been updated since then

to reflect recent research on the link.

The AICR guidelines are:

1. Reduce the intake of total dietary fat to a level of no more than 30%

of total calories and, in particular, reduce the intake of saturated fat to less

than 10% of total calories.

2. Increase the consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

3. Consume salt-cured, salt-pickled and smoked foods only in moderation.

4. Drink alcoholic beverages only in moderation, if at all.\*

Most cancers start when the body is exposed to a carcinogen, a cancer-

causing substance that is found everywhere in our environment for example in

sunlight. When the body is exposed to this substance it can usually destroy the

carcinogen without malignant effects. If any of the substance eludes the body’s

defense system it can alter a cell’s genes to make it become a cancerous cell.

Cancer doesn’t suddenly appear, it develops through gradual stages of

which the initial stages can be reversed. The foods we eat can either increase

the rate of which these stages advance or help fight and prevent it from

spreading. Salt-cured and salt-pickled foods don’t contain carcinogen however

they do contain another ingredient which is changed to carcinogens while being

digested. Smoked foods are a little different, they have the carcinogen in them.

Fruits, vegetables, and whole grains should be eaten to help prevent

cancer or fight against cancer advancing through the body. Foods high in fat

which include marbled meats, baked goods such as cookies and pastries and high-

fat dairy products must be avoided. They help a cancer cell grow, multiply and

spread.

By following these guidelines will not guarantee that one will not get

cancer however, it will lower chances. Cancer is still somewhat of an unknown

disease but we do know that the foods one eats can have powerful effects on the

development of cancer. This is good news because it provides people an

opportunity to stop or prevent cancer.