

Weighing In: October 2013

Have you ever wondered why just one small bite causes you a problem? In this month's newsletter we will look at why just one bite doesn't work. Typically, people eat junk food because it is available, legal, cheap, and very socially accepted. Therefore, it becomes the drug of choice for many people's emotional eating. Some of the characteristics of addiction are:

- 1.) Compulsive use of a substance despite negative health and social consequences.
- 2.) Tolerance over time - progressively greater amounts of the substance is needed to reach and maintain the "high."
- 3.) Withdrawal symptoms. "Toxic hunger" when the substance is discontinued.
- 4.) The activation of the reward pathway, which includes the dopamine system of the brain.

Most of us have experienced a taste of junk food or dessert. The feeling is a tense demand for more of the same. The brain basically is asking you for more reward. These feelings originate from the dopamine reward system – dopamine is a neurological chemical that regulates motivation, pleasure, and reinforcement related to certain stimuli, such as food.

The amount of pleasure we derive from eating a food correlates with the amount of dopamine released in the brain. Obese individuals are known to have fewer dopamine receptors called "D2 receptors" compared to lean individuals. Their reward response from food is not as sensitive and it is thought that this is compensated for by overeating. Overeating blunts the dopamine reward response encouraging more people to overeat.

In narcotic abuse and other substance abuse over time, the brain adapts to the down regulating of the dopamine receptors. In 2010, a study revealed that women who gained a significant amount of weight over a six-month time period reduced their dopamine response to palatable foods over the same period of time. Similar reductions in the reward response to palatal foods have been reported in women with bulimia nervosa. These results suggest that overeating diminishes the reward from palatable foods driving further overeating and future weight gain in an individual's life. Although the dopamine reward center is diminished in obese individuals compared to their counterparts, the dopamine release in response to pictures of palatal food actually enhanced it. We are susceptible to addictive behaviors. Most of it varies by genetic predisposition or our emotional state. "Just one bite" doesn't work because that single bite activates the dopamine reward system causing our brains to demand more of the same.

Your willpower, logic, and common sense are no match for the addictive drives that come from your brain. As with other addictions, recovery requires abstaining from addictive substances. If our alcohol and drug abuse friends have just one drink, one pill, or one shot, they will relapse. The same is true for carbohydrate addicts and sugar addicts. Junk food is purposely engineered to excite our reward system. Eating correctly provides enjoyment of taste without activating addictive drives. So as we approach the holiday season, stick to the foods that you know will nourish you and make you not crave. Do not lose control over a Snickers bar, pumpkin pie, an Eskimo pie, chocolate malt balls, pizza, Coke, cookies, etc. You have come too far to allow yourself to be destroyed by a food group.

"No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from Me, declares the LORD." (Isaiah 54:17).

It's Just One Small Bite!

Is Your Food Making You Sick?

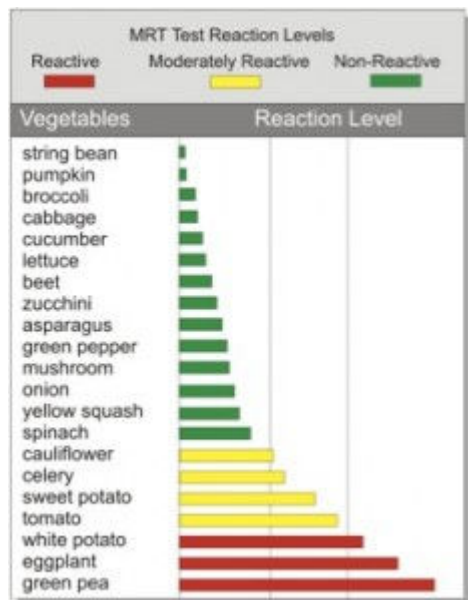
Do you suffer from migraines or other headaches, IBS, chronic diarrhea, heartburn, arthritis, joint or muscle pain, weight imbalances, chronic fatigue, insomnia, skin eruptions or ADD? It could be the food you are eating! Even healthy foods like broccoli can be culprits. After following the Weigh Station program for a few weeks you should start feeling better if you are not suffering from sensitivities, however if these symptoms are still plaguing you it may be time to consider food sensitivities as a possible culprit.

The Weigh Station will soon be offering a new service called LEAP or “Lifestyle Eating and Performance”. This service includes Mediator Release Testing or “MRT” as well as counseling designed to heal your gut and improve your symptoms. MRT is a blood test that identifies 150 foods and chemicals that your body may have sensitivities to. It is the gold standard for food sensitivity testing and has 94.5% sensitivity and 91.8% specificity which means it is quite accurate.

Once your MRT results are back, the LEAP therapist will meet with you one on one to design a meal plan that will help alleviate your symptoms. Like the Weigh Station program, this meal plan will start off restrictive and overtime be liberalized. Together a diet based on your MRT results will be implemented. You will eat lowest reactive foods for 7 days or so, during this time you should notice a significant reduction in your symptoms. Then you will be able to add in slightly more reactive foods for another week. By the third phase, if there is continued improvement in health we add in more foods. You will then move onto a rotation diet and better health.

This program is NOT a weight loss program but many times patients lose weight due to decreased inflammation. The program will be available starting the last week in October.

What your test results will look like and why MRT is helpful:



Food sensitivities make a person feel sick because there is a release of chemicals called mediators (such as histamines, prostaglandins, cytokines etc) from white blood cells. The release of mediators is typically triggered by an immune response, however it is the release of the mediators that makes us feel bad, not the immune response itself. The thing that makes food sensitivities complicated is that there are various ways the immune system can respond to hypersensitivity. In addition, the food or foods causing the problems are very hard to identify without MRT testing because they can be dose dependent and or have a delayed onset of symptoms (up to 3 days). MRT is like the GPS of food sensitivities. There is little room for guessing since it tests for so many foods. Of course it's extremely important to also have a therapist to also interpret your results, past history and other possible cofactors to obtain best results which is where LEAP counseling comes in. To schedule an appointment or inquire about the services please email Tricia Foley our Registered Dietitian at: tfoley@weighstation.net.