

Illnesses of the western diet essay sample



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Firstly there is Diabetes. Diabetes Mellitus is a condition in which the body is not able to convert, or becomes less efficient at converting, glucose in the blood into energy. As a result, the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood starts to rise. About 1.4 millions people in the UK are known to have diabetes, so it is a fairly common health condition. Glucose is obtained from the digestion of carbohydrates. Blood glucose levels rise after a meal and insulin is released into the blood. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas.

It controls the level of glucose in the blood and stops it rising too high. When someone has diabetes, the pancreas does not make, or release enough insulin into the bloodstream to convert the glucose into energy. As a result, the amount of glucose in the blood starts to build up. The body starts to use its fat stores to provide energy and so people with untreated diabetes often lose weight. They also may feel very tired. People with undiagnosed or untreated diabetes often pass a lot of urine and are very thirsty. People with diabetes do not need to follow a special diet.

They can follow the dietary guidelines for healthy eating which are recommended for everyone. So their diet should be high in starchy, fibre-rich foods and low in sugar and fat. A variety of foods, including biscuits, jam and chocolates, are produced specially for diabetics. They use a sugar alcohol, sorbitol, instead of sucrose and glucose. Sorbitol is absorbed slowly and converted to fructose in the liver, which prevents a rapid rise in blood sugar levels. The British Diabetic Association (BDA) gives advice to diabetics, and keeps them informed about developments in treating the condition.

It currently advises diabetics to eat regular, healthy meals including a variety of different foods. More high fibre, starchy carbohydrate foods. e. g.

Wholemeal bread, pasta, jacket potatoes, pulses, brown rice and beans. Less sugar and sweet foods, and to choose reduced sugar or artificially sweetened alternatives. Less high fat and dried foods. Less salt, to help reduce the risk of high blood pressure. Secondly, another illness is anaemia. Anaemia is caused by lack of iron in the diet, it is one of the most common nutritional problems world wide.

Women and children are at greatest risk of developing iron deficiency anaemia. Following a healthy diet, eating plenty of iron rich foods, can prevent most cases of anaemia. Supplements are not recommended unless iron deficiency anaemia actually occurs. Evidence suggests that if iron supplements are given to young children who have adequate iron stores, growth may be delayed. Iron is needed to form part of haemoglobin, which gives red blood cells their colour. These cells carry oxygen in the blood to body cells. Iron deficiency anaemia is caused by a shortage of iron.

Inadequate amounts of haemoglobin are formed and so the blood is unable to carry sufficient oxygen to the cells and the body becomes easily tired. The best sources of iron are found in offal such as liver and kidney. Other good sources of iron include red meat, oily fish, poultry and game. Fortified bread, green leafy vegetables such as broccoli and spinach, pulses such as beans and lentils, dried fruit and fortified breakfast cereals. In the UK some foods, such as breakfast cereals and bread are fortified with iron. Vitamin C can help absorption of iron from a non-haem source.

Thirdly, yet another illness is Diverticulosis. Diverticular disease is the extra strain put on the muscular walls of the intestine through constipation which may lead to this disease. This may develop if the faeces are small and hard, (due to a lack of NSP and insufficient water), and the muscular walls of the intestine have to work harder to move them along. This causes increased pressure in the intestine and leads to pouches of the bowel lining being forced out through the intestine wall. If the pouches (called diverticula) become inflamed, this causes discomfort.

Part of the treatment for this is to put the patient on a high fibre diet. Everyone should eat plenty of NSP to avoid constipation and its accompanying disorders. The regular consumption of wholegrain cereals, wholemeal bread, fruit and vegetables and an increase in exercise should prevent such problems. A reduction in the amount of refined foods eaten is also advisable, although they need not be avoided all together. COMA recommends an average fibre intake of 18g a day. The average person eats about 12g a day so this means increasing intake by 50%.

Fourthly, another additional illness are psychological such as bulimia. Bulimia Nervosa is a serious eating disorder in which the sufferer binges and then vomits, often repeatedly, in order to lose control weight. People suffering from bulimia nervosa are often slightly overweight and they often eat large quantities of food before making themselves sick. Treatment looks at the whole lifestyle of the person. People suffering from bulimia need special support from doctors, psychiatrists and dieticians. Occasionally a patient is so weak that they are put into hospital against their will in order to try to save them.

They have to stay in bed and are given food regularly in the hope that they will gradually put on weight. Much patience and understanding is needed if the treatment is to have any chances of success. The other psychological illness is Anorexia. Anorexia nervosa is sometimes known as the slimming disease. A person suffering from this disease uses food as a way of expressing unhappiness. This is a serious disease which mainly affects teenage girls, although the problem is spreading to younger and older women and to men. Someone suffering for anorexia nervosa becomes obsessional about body size.

After a time, they become very thin, their lifestyle suffers and in women the periods stop. People suffering from anorexia often become depressed and may develop other health problems as a result of under nutrition. Sufferers require long term specialist help from psychiatrists and dieticians, as well as support from their family and friends. A person with anorexia refuses to eat enough to maintain their body weight for their age and height. Believes and sees their body to be much bigger than it really is and has a real and great fear of becoming fat. In addition another illness are dental caries, (tooth decay).

Tooth decay and gum disease affect many people worldwide, especially in countries where people often eat foods containing added sugar. When food is eaten, a white, sticky substance called plaque builds up on the surface of the teeth, especially next to the gum. Plaque is mostly microorganisms, plus some water and polysaccharides. When sugar is eaten it is absorbed into the plaque, broken down by the microorganisms and turned into acid. Eating a

lot of sugary foods makes teeth more likely to decay. This is because the plaque pH stays low, as acid forms every time sugar is in the mouth.

This is why it is sensible to avoid eating sugary foods between meals. We should cut down on the amount of sugary foods, snacks and drinks. Cut down on snacking on sugary foods and drinks in between meals the frequency of eating sugary foods is linked to the incidence of tooth decay. Brush the teeth at least twice a day using fluoride toothpaste and visit the dentist regularly. Additionally, obesity is another illness. Obesity is excessive weight gain. It is a very common and increasing nutritional disorder in affluent countries. It can be caused by hormonal disorders, but the major cause is eating more food than the body needs.

The excess is stored as fat in the body. Obesity is considered very unhealthy because, obese people are more prone to heart disease, chest infections, varicose veins, hernias, high blood pressure, diabetes, gall stones, osteoarthritis of the back, knees and hips, and skin infections. Extra body fat can cause complications during operations. Unhappiness about being obese, and comments made by other people, may make an obese person turn to food for comfort making their condition worse. High blood pressure and strokes are twice as likely in obese people. The onset of diabetes in adults is five times more common in overweight people.

As well as physical problems, there are psychological problems associated with obesity. A person who is trying to lose weight should seek advice from a doctor or dietician to agree a weight-reducing diet that suits them. Weight loss takes time and requires changes to a person's eating habits and way of

life, e. g. taking more exercise. Exercising more uses more energy, which promotes weight loss, tones the muscles, and generally helps to make a person feel better. Obese people should cut down on the amount of food eaten each day, cut down on fatty and sugary foods.

Take more exercise, eat starchier, fibre-rich foods and fruits and vegetables which are low in calories and are good sources of fibre, vitamins and minerals. These foods will help to fill you up. Coronary Heart disease (CHD) is a major cause of death in the UK and accounted for about a quarter of deaths in England in 1991. The reduction of the risk of Coronary heart disease was a key issue in the report, " The health of the nation. " Smoking, raised blood pressure and raised levels of blood cholesterol all contribute to Coronary heart disease.

A change in lifestyle and eating habits can help to reduce the risk of death from heart disease and strokes. The major risk factors which increase the chances of developing coronary heart disease are, cigarette smoking, raised blood cholesterol levels, high fat diet, high blood pressure, lack of physical exercise, obesity, a family history of heart disease, stress, being a male and increasing age. One important way for anyone to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease is to improve their diet by reducing the amount of fatty foods they eat and increasing the amount of fibre-rich starchy foods they eat.

Some tips for reducing the fat in the diet are pies, sausages and chips are high in fat. Eat them infrequently. Choose a lower fat cheese to reduce the fat content. Remove fat from meat before cooking. Choose a low fat spread or use less of a full fat spread and snack foods can be high in fat-eat them in

moderation. Lastly, Osteoporosis which is mainly a deficiency in calcium. It means the bones become weak, brittle and break easily. Women are most at risk from osteoporosis, but it can also affect men. Vitamin D will also help aid absorption of calcium.

Evidence seems to show that a diet with a good supply of calcium, particularly during childhood and teenage years, together with regular exercise may help protect against osteoporosis. Avoiding smoking and drinking excessive amounts of alcohol are important. Good sources of calcium are cereals, which contain substance called phytates and spinach which contains substances called oxalates. If they are present in the diet in large quantities both these substances can hinder the absorption of calcium from foods. Elderly people are advised to avoid eating raw bran as the phytate present in the bran can block important mineral absorption.

Phytates and oxalates can also hinder the absorption of other nutrients such as zinc. Also other good sources are milk, nuts, yoghurt, dried fruits, white bread and green leafy vegetables. The RNI for calcium is 700mg a day for adults. Teenagers need more- 1000mg a day for boys and for girls 800mg. Women who are breast feeding need almost twice as much calcium in their diet to help with their milk supply for their baby. Overall, I think this shows clearly how to prevent these illnesses and for any one that is worried about their health they should seek medical advice.