

NYT Nutrition Expert Denounces Health Myths

By JANICE M. WARD
Science in New England
News Service

At first, New York Times health and science writer Jane Brody sounded like a health heretic.

At a speech Sunday, Nov. 8, as part of the Belmont Friends of the Library Distinguished Discourses, Brody proclaimed that pasta and bread are not fattening, pizza is not junk food and vitamin supplements are unnecessary for good health.

Brody made frequent references to her book, "Jane Brody's Nutrition Book," in explaining her views.

Pasta, bread and potatoes are complex carbohydrates that have been "given a bad press," she said. "They are



Jane Brody

the only kind of food that has not been linked to a serious disease."

One baked potato contains 110 calories, or with two pats of butter 170 calories. A five ounce steak contains 550 calories, yet a comparable amount of pasta contains only 210, she reported.

"Complex carbohydrates that come from the earth (not manufactured with additives) are the only source of fiber in our diets," according to the 5-foot, 100-pound Brody, who points out that fiber helps in weight control.

Meat-eaters who resist change should look to Brody's husband, "a real meat and potatoes man," who lost 26 pounds by shifting his emphasis from meat to potatoes.

Brody also put vitamin supplements and mineral additives in perspective.

"It is not wise to buy vitamins and nutrient supplements, because you don't know what happens to them in your body," she said. "Most people do not need any vitamin supplements if they eat fresh foods and whole grains. "Vitamin C doesn't prevent colds; it diminishes symptoms," she continued. "Frozen orange juice concentrate contains more vitamin C than fresh-squeezed orange juice, because fresh oranges are picked green and shipped north, but frozen orange juice is made from ripened oranges."

At second glance most of Brody's advice seems to be often-heard common sense. For example, her two most important dietary requirements are to eat regularly and exercise daily.

"In 50 percent of American households, one or more persons skips breakfast, the most important meal of the day," she said. "Also 80 million Americans are 20 or more pounds overweight."

Regular exercise — 30 minutes a day — could alleviate this, Brody said. She pointed out that regular strenuous exercise not only increases the number of calories burned in your body but improves sleep and diminishes appetite, tension, anxiety and depression.

"Try to eliminate sugar and salt in your diet," Brody said. "Sugar contributes to tooth decay, and honey is even worse for your teeth than sugar because it sticks. The average American consumes 128 pounds of sugar a year, a waste of 600 calories a day. More than two-thirds is from processed foods and one-quarter from soft drinks (sweetened water.)"

"Although sodium in salt is an essential nutrient, the average American eats 10 to 20 times more sodium than necessary, more than one-half hidden in processed foods," she continued.

One bowl of soup contains, 1,000 milligrams of sodium, one-half the daily adult requirement, she cited. Ten ounces of cornflakes contain more sodium than six potato chips, and one-half cup of cottage cheese contains more sodium than 32 potato chips.

"Reduce your table salt by one-half, then in a few weeks reduce by one-half again, and continue this process," she recommended. "Eventually, you need never use your salt shaker again. For flavor, use spices, such as garlic, onions,

basil, peppers, thyme, etc."

In the margarine versus butter controversy, both high in sodium, margarine wins, according to Brody. Margarine is derived from oil, unlike butter, which is made from animal fats. Oils and fats have equal amounts of calories, but saturated fats (containing more hydrogen) like butter are generally worse than partially hydrogenated oils like margarine, she said.

During a question and answer period,

Brody advised the following tips on nutrition.

Beware of herbal teas; some contain alkaloids and may have drug effects.

Instead of carbonated soda, mix equal amounts of fruit juice and seltzer water.

Calcium in the diet is important. Good sources include milk, unflavored yogurt, sardines and salmon.

Vegetarian diets have been given "bad press" and are healthier, if well-balanced, than meat diets.



MELODRAMATIC MOMENT — Stars of the Belmont High senior class play, "Gold in the Hills," were (from left) Rob Harper, who played Jack Dalton, the hero; Sharon Syniuta, who played Nellie Stanicy, the heroine; and Richard Murgatroyd, who played Tom Linfield, the villain.

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