Good News

Bird Flu Worries?
Go Vegetarian

In response to the growing concern over a potential worldwide outbreak of the avian flu, the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) is offering a free 16-page Vegetarian Starter Kit for worried carnivores.

Avian influenza develops on poultry farms, where routine confinement, overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions create the perfect reservoir for viruses and other diseases to incubate and spread. Once a pathogen emerges, it is easily carried by migrating birds or commercial livestock transport. But a meatless diet helps eliminate the farms that breed infectious disease.

Vegetarian eating habits also eliminate animal fat and cholesterol, which have been linked to heart disease. “The fat, cholesterol and cancer-causing agents in chicken, turkey and other poultry meats are damaging America’s health,” says PCRM nutritionist Tim Radak. “Switching to a vegetarian diet would dramatically decrease obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease and other diet-related illnesses. And meatless eating habits could also help reduce the risk of a bird-flu pandemic.”

PCRM’s Vegetarian Starter Kit offers a three-step plan for moving to a healthier diet and is packed with recipes, nutrition information and cooking tips. To request a copy contact PCRM at 202-686-2210, ext. 306 or visit www.pcrm.org.

GLA Versus Cancer

Gamma-linolenic acid (GLA), an essential fatty acid (EFA) in the Omega-6 family, inhibits action of a cancer gene responsible for almost 30 percent of all breast cancers, according to researchers at Northwestern University in Chicago, Illinois.

“Breast cancer patients with Her-2/neu-positive tumors have an aggressive form of the disease and a poor prognosis,” says Ruth Lupu, director of Evanston Northwestern Healthcare Breast Cancer Translational Research Program, who led the study.

Lupu and co-investigator Javier Menendez showed that treating cancer cells that overexpressed the Her-2/neu gene with GLA not only suppressed protein levels of the oncogene, but also caused a 30- to 40-fold increased response in breast cancer cells to the drug Herpetin (trastuzumab), which is used for the treatment of many women with breast cancer.

Lupu says that treating the cancer cell lines with both GLA and Herpetin led to a synergistic increase in cell death and reduced cancer growth.

EFAs cannot be made in the body and must be obtained from food. GLA is found in the seed oils of evening primrose, black currant, borage, hemp and spirulina (often called blue-green algae).

The research was supported by the Susan G. Komen Foundation and the Breast Cancer Program of the U.S. Department of Defense, and published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.

Friendly Bacteria at Work

Workers who take a daily dose of probiotics or so-called “friendly bacteria” are less likely to be off work with common illnesses, such as colds and gastroenteritis, than workers who don’t. A Swedish study published in the journal Environmental Health shows that workers who took a daily dose of the probiotic bacteria Lactobacillus reuteri were 2.5 times less likely to take sick leave than workers who took a placebo.

A group of 181 workers at a Tetra Pak factory in Lund, Sweden were randomly assigned to receive a drink with or without L. reuteri, every day for a period of 80 days.

Twenty-three of the 87 workers in the group that took a placebo reported taking sick days during the 80-day-long study. In contrast, only 10 of the 94 workers that took L. reuteri reported taking any sick days during the study. The effect of L. reuteri was most significant in shift workers.
Copyright of Natural Life is the property of Alternate Press. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.