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help all such groups and promote the strong teachings in every religion that point to vegetarianism as the ideal diet today. Speakers and publications will be available to explain why a shift toward plant-centered diets is both a spiritual and a societal imperative. SERV has prepared a bibliography that includes vegetarian writings from all the major faiths and will use it to further its goals.

UK VEGETARIANS GET CHEAPER INSURANCE

A vegetarian diet is so much healthier that a British insurance company is offering vegetarians a lower premium. The policy, which is being offered by Animal Friends Insurance (AFI) and underwritten by the Victoria Life Company, offers a 25% discount on monthly premiums for the first year. The company claims that the rest of the industry has failed to take into account the fact that vegetarians are a far better insurance risk. AFI gives all of its profits to animal welfare groups.

The Week, 30 June, 2001

SOYA LINKED TO LESS RISK OF BREAST CANCER

At least three dietary studies, including one from Australia, confirm a substantial reduction in breast cancer risk in women with a high phytoestrogen intake. Furthermore, a study in China found that women with breast cancer had lower levels of phytoestrogens in their urine compared with women who did not have breast cancer. In particular, significant research shows that phytoestrogens combined with other compounds found naturally in soya products, can balance rather than block oestrogens in the body, alleviate menopause and some menstrual symptoms, lower cholesterol, lower triglycerides, make arteries more elastic and help improve intestinal health.

Vitasoy Australia media release, 29 May, 2001

TOP UP ON TOFU

Okinawans appear to hold the secret of good health and longevity. Illness is rare and life expectancy is the highest in the world. One important dietary factor is a home-made concoction called 'immortal paté'. Like most of the Okinawan's diet, it is plant-based, a blend of tofu, mushrooms, garlic, lemon juice and other bits and pieces.

VivaLife, 19, Autumn/Winter 2001.

MILK WOES

Milk has been linked to an increased risk of prostate cancer in men by Harvard University. It is also suspected of playing a part in the rapidly increasing number of people suffering from intestinal disorders such as Crohn's disease.

Professor John Hermon-Taylor of St George's Hospital, has identified an organism in milk called MAP and says that the link is overwhelming. The organism is widespread in livestock in both Europe and the US.

VivaLife, 19, Autumn/Winter 2001

MILK LINKED TO MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND DIABETES

Dr Michael Dosch and colleagues at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Canada, have discovered remarkable similarities between juvenile diabetes and multiple sclerosis patients in the way their immune systems respond to cow's milk, essentially by attacking the patients own tissues.

In both diseases, scientists believe that there are silent years in which the immune system is doing damage before symptoms appear and that, in the test tube, it is difficult to differentiate the diseases.

Children who are genetically predisposed to diabetes are at greater risk of developing the disease if given cow's milk during infancy. An international trial will soon be underway to determine whether early intervention can help prevent both diseases.

Good Medicine, Autumn 2001

BOOST FOR WOMEN'S LIBIDO

New research by the renowned Jean Hailes Foundation has shown that the simple application of testosterone cream can have a major positive impact on the mood, well-being and libido of pre-menopausal women.

The research involved a placebo-controlled cross-over study of women aged between 30 and 45, each applying a low-level testosterone cream over a 12-week period. There were no negative side-effects reported by any of the participants.

Fifth Australasian Menopause Society media release, 26 October, 2001

PASSIVE SMOKING GREATER DANGER TO NON-SMOKERS' HEARTS

Passive smoking can cause more harm to the heart of a non-smoker than to that of the smoker, according to new Japanese research.

Using ultrasound, doctors were able to observe the coronary flow velocity reserve (CFVR) to measure the health of cells lining the heart's cavities and blood vessels in young and apparently healthy smokers and non-smokers.

It was found that exposure to second-hand cigarette smoke for just 30 minutes reduced the performance of a non-smoker's heart more than it affected the 'healthy' smoker's heart. The temporary passive smoking abruptly reduced the CFVR in non-smokers but did not affect it in active smokers. In fact, passive smoking brought the CFVR levels in non-smokers down to those in smokers.

The researchers believe that this study provides direct evidence of a harmful effect of passive smoking on the coronary circulation in non-smokers. Previous population studies have shown that passive smoking increases the risk of heart disease by about one-third.

Journal of the American Medical Association, 25 July 2001

VEGETABLE WRAP?

Soon you may be able to eat your sandwich without even bothering to unwrap it. Not only that, the new food wrappers could count as a serving of fruits or vegetables.

Researchers from the USDA in California are creating new wraps by pureeing fruits and vegetables, then thinly spreading the liquid on a Teflon surface to dry.

The fruit and vegetable wraps work as well as plastic ones to prevent oxygen, a leading cause of food spoilage, from reaching food.

The wraps are colourful (they take up the colour from the food used to make them), edible and nutritious. They have an estimated shelf life of about six months. They also provide a good use for the fruits and vegetables that are less than perfect and have a low market value.

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