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Ask the Naturopath: Cool Your Nerves Naturally

Have you ever “eaten’ down the house” while making dinner? You have great plans... healthy vegetables, a side salad, then before you know it, you’re stuffing your mouth with corn chips or potato chips! Most likely, you missed drinking your water today and maybe, even skipped out on lunch, or at best, you ate your lunch in 15 minutes or less. So, yes, you’re hungry and a little wound up, and what you are really trying to do is COOL YOUR NERVES.

Carbohydrates, as a food type, have a natural cooling effect on overheated nerves. That’s why we crave them! In a society of busy and stressed people, it’s easy to observe the carbohydrate cravings: everything from french fries to cookies, chocolates, breads, and oh yes, PASTA! Unfortunately, it’s also easy to observe the overabundance of unhealthy carbohydrate consumption.

Foods and herbs can be categorized by their ability to speed up or slow down the body, as well as their ability to warm or cool the body.

For example: fruits are cooling and speeding (cleansing) to the overall body functions, while onions, garlic, and other great spices are heating and speeding (cleansing) to the body. Meats and other proteins, like beans, nut butter, and eggs, have a warming, slowing, and toning (building/repairing) effect, and carbohydrates have a slowing and cooling (building/repairing) effect, which makes them perfect for stressed hot nerves at the end of the day!

Now, let’s talk about minerals for a minute. Many of us know how important calcium is to the bones, teeth, muscles, nerves, heart, and the many other organs that rely on this essential mineral. Calcium is present in every part of our body that contracts. Each heartbeat, lung contraction, digestive process, and essentially, every body movement happens because calcium allows a muscle to contract. We call calcium the ‘Builder.’ Yet, its counterpart, magnesium, is often overlooked. For each calcium muscle contraction, magnesium is the ‘relaxer’ of that movement. The heart contracts with calcium and relaxes with magnesium. The nerves are built by the presence of calcium and cooled by the presence of magnesium. Your ability to relax is directly related to your magnesium supply!

When we use carbohydrates to “cool our nerves at the end of the day,” we need to realize an important mineral is most likely missing. What our hot, stressed nerves, muscles, and body organs may really be calling for is magnesium. In Naturopathy, we affectionately call PMS, ‘Persons with Magnesium Shortage,’ as we have discovered that the lower the magnesium supply is in a woman’s body, the more likely she is to suffer from pre-menstrual syndrome. Now, she may not even feel like she can control those hot, frayed, and tired nerves, and symptoms will be intense when magnesium is low. Even chocolate cravings can be curbed by using a good magnesium supplement!

This important mineral can be found abundantly in our food supply when you eat foods high in magnesium! A few simple guidelines will help you: magnesium foods are naturally yellow, so organic corn, yellow peppers, summer squash, grapes, apples, pears, and other natural yellow foods are a good start. Yellow pigments can also be found in all green vegetables; therefore, all the leafy green lettuces, broccoli, onions, celery, green beans, and peppers are also great sources of magnesium. We would happily recommend 3 bowls of these great fruits and vegetables per day!

Children are great examples of 'Persons with Magnesium Deficiency.' These little PMDeers are suffering from hot nerves, internalized stress, muscle cramps, mood swings (related to their processed food diets), and exhaustion. On several occasions, we have educated parents about the wonders of 1 tsp. of liquid magnesium a day for 3 months and are delighted to get phone calls when their real children have arrived to replace the PMDeer who had taken their place. As a side note, the children who attend our free educational classes have equally pointed out that their 'PMDeer' caretakers could use 1 tablespoon or 2 capsules of magnesium complex per day as well. By the way, PMDeer, from a child's point of view, is a Parent with Major Dysfunction!

So, no matter whether you suffer from PMS, PMDeers, or PMDeer, consider that the cooling of nerves is best accomplished with foods and supplements containing the overlooked miracles of magnesium. May your summer days and evenings be cool!