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Enzymes: The Difference Between Raw and Cooked Foods

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Enzymes: The tiny and enormous difference between raw and cooked foods. Virtually all chronic degenerative diseases are caused or aggravated by digestive problems. After the most extensive study on nutrition ever undertaken by the government, the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs concluded in its 1978 report entitled "Diet and Killer Diseases," that the average American diet is responsible for the development of chronic degenerative diseases such as heart disease, arteriosclerosis, cancer, diabetes, stroke, etc. Many of the most common health complaints revolve around a 20-foot, mucus-lined tube that directly interfaces us with our environment. This is no mystery: This is the gastro-intestinal tract, affectionately abbreviated "GI." The job of the GI is to alchemically transmute the food we eat into our flesh, blood, actions, thoughts and feelings... with a little help from our friends the salivary glands, the pancreas, the liver, and most importantly RAW FOOD --all of which provide (now we're getting to the point) ENZYMES.

Enzymes are delicate dynamos. Delicate because they are destroyed by temperatures over 118 degrees (some by as little as 105 degrees), which means that they may not survive even light steaming. Dynamos because they are powerful biochemical catalysts; they speed burning or building reactions in the body according to need. They are specialized proteins, often with long complicated names ending in -ase.

The three primary digestive enzymes are protease, lipase and amylase which >digest, respectively, protein, fat (lipids), and carbohydrates (which includes sugars). Amylase comes from the salivary glands: carbohydrates start digesting right in our mouth. Have you ever chewed a piece of bread or potato for an extra moment before swallowing, and tasted how sweet it is? (It is a good idea to chew our foods thoroughly; literally making juice in our mouths before swallowing.) Lipase is synthesized principally in the liver and protease comes from the pancreas.

Although the enzyme-producing organs continue to function over the entire course of a healthy life, they eventually wear down, especially with the "standard American diet" (which, in the naturopathic community, we call SAD.) Dr. Francis M. Pottenger's nutritional studies have shown that a regular diet of cooked or canned foods causes the development of chronic degenerative diseases and premature mortality. Professor Jackson of the Dept. of Anatomy, University of Minnesota, has shown that rats fed for 135 days on an 80 percent cooked food diet resulted in an increase pancreatic weight of 20 to 30 percent. What this means is that the pancreas is forced to work harder with a cooked food diet. "Although the body can manufacture enzymes, the more you use your enzyme potential, the faster it is going to run out..." wrote Dr. Edward Howell, who pioneered research in the benefits of food enzymes. A youth of 18 may produce amylase levels 30 times greater than those of an 85 year old person.

Enzymes are what make seeds sprout. Sprouts are, in fact, one of the

richest sources of enzymes. Other excellent sources are papaya, pineapple and the aspergillus plant. Science cannot duplicate enzymes, because they are the stuff of life itself. Only raw food has functional "live" enzymes. Therefore the liver, pancreas, stomach and intestines must come to the rescue and furnish the requisite digestive enzymes to the individual nourished solely on a cooked food diet.

This extra activity can be detrimental to health and longevity because it continually taxes the reserve energy of our organs. Furthermore, cooked food passes through the digestive tract more slowly than raw food, tends to ferment, and throws poisons back into the body. Colon cancer is second only to lung cancer as a killer in America and is related, in various ways, to eating enzyme-deficient cooked food.

Prolonged intestinal toxemia may manifest the following symptoms:

Fatigue, nervousness, gastro-intestinal discomfort, recurrent infections, skin eruptions, hormonal disturbances, headaches, arthritis, sciatica, low back pain, allergies, asthma, eye, ear, nose and throat disorders, cardiac irregularities, pathological changes in the breasts, and so forth. All of these conditions have been shown to respond to therapy directed to correcting the bowel toxemia. Of course, it is important to have fiber in the diet to scrub the colon walls clean, but even more important are the enzymes which will allow proper digestion and assimilation of vital nutrients. Cooked food often passes into the bloodstream as unsplit molecules that are deposited, as waste, in various parts of the body. If it is a fat molecule we know it as cholesterol plaque; if calcium, arthritis; if sugar, diabetes. White blood cell count rises dramatically after ingesting a meal of canned or cooked foods ("digestive leukocytosis"). Elevated WBCs are correlated to bacterial infection, inflammation and depressed immunity. Raw foods do not produce this reaction. All raw foods contain exactly the right enzymes required to split every last molecule into the basic building blocks of metabolism: Amino acids (from protein), glucose (from complex carbohydrates) and essential fatty acids (from unsaturated vegetable fats).

You are what you ate: Eat living foods (at least once daily!).