

PPG TALK 8<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2016  
“IS IT SOMETHING I’VE EATEN”

This talk was given by Joan Manning (our Vice Chair) who is a Registered Public Health Nutritionist – and has spent the past 30 years working with experts in the field of Food Allergy and Intolerance. As well as running and attending clinics she has been involved in setting up clinical trials, both here and abroad.

We first learned the difference between the terms “Dietician” and “Nutritionist”. The former is a protected name and can only be used by those graduating with a degree in dietetics and have the initials BDA after their names. The latter can be used by anyone – even someone who has never studied nutrition. Because of this a Register was set up which includes only those with formal (degree) qualifications in nutritional sciences – and the initials R.Nutr (with the speciality) can be used after their names. Dieticians specialise in health and disease; nutritionists cover everything and anything to do with food and nutrition.

We learned that every part of our body, every cell, every bone, is made from the food and drink that we consume. Our bodies are amazing. Our food is broken down into its tiniest component parts and then almost magically absorbed, stored, transported and reassembled into other structures. The energy needed to run this “factory” is derived from our food. All the “workers” (hormones, enzymes, immune system etc) is derived from our food. In fact, We Are Our Food!

Most of us know about carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, water etc. and we were given a brief overview.

We learned how diet and lifestyle may be related to clinical problems including obesity, underweight, diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

The fact that many common symptoms may be caused by food – or lack of it – was then covered, including:

Headaches may be caused by natural chemicals (amines) in some foods, by skipping meals (low blood sugar), dehydration (not drinking enough) or maybe drinking too much alcohol.

A sore mouth and/or tongue may be caused by a lack of some vitamins, or iron.

Strong bones need calcium (good source is dairy foods) plus vitamin D. (remember this for the house-bound as most of our Vitamin D comes from sunshine and a lack may also cause depression).

Gut problems may be from – too much fibre – too little fibre – milk or wheat intolerance – too much alcohol - fizzy drinks – even eating too quickly etc.

Tiredness may be caused by poor diet or carbohydrate overload (especially at lunch-time.)

A number of skin problems may be diet related.

And many others.

Elimination diets were discussed, and how if used correctly and with supervision, they may help to alleviate some chronic health problems.

Finally we were advised that if we do suffer non-acute symptoms which never seem to go away, keep a diet and symptom diary whilst you are waiting for your doctor's or nurse's appointment. It may well hold some clues.

Some questions asked included:

- A diabetic's use of sugar (very limited please) and is yoghurt OK (yes – but read the label as to what else is in the yoghurt pot).
- How do you tell if you have a yeast intolerance? (look at symptoms – there may be an intolerance or they may be the result of antibiotic use or poor diet: symptoms may include thrush, tiredness, weight gain etc. Try a three-week diet cutting out yeasts and sugars and keep a diary.)
- Does margarine help to reduce heart disease? (Some margarines may help to reduce cholesterol because they include plant sterols. The jury is still out regarding the link between cholesterol levels and deaths from heart disease. The battle rages as we speak!)
- Do probiotics do any good? (Well, they don't do any harm. Some people find them useful and they have made a number of yoghurt companies a lot of money).

We all have an individual gut flora which is influenced by the foods that we eat plus any medicines that we take. This is the source of a huge amount of research at present. The use of probiotics is just one way of influencing the growth of some of the bacteria that grow in our guts – hopefully the good ones!

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