**Foods & Drinks That May Increase Anxiety**

If you suffer from anxiety, you may blame certain triggers in your environment for bringing on the anxious feelings. But what you eat and drink can have a profound effect on your body's chemistry. Some foods and drinks may actually worsen your anxiety.

Here are some of the culprits.

**Drinks**

*-Coffee*

As you might have expected, the caffeine in coffee can make anxiety worse. It causes constriction of blood vessels and that feeling of the "jitters." It can also cause or worsen insomnia. In addition, coffee inhibits the absorption of Vitamin C, an important nutrient for optimal mind and body function.

-*Soft Drinks and Colas*

Even if you choose caffeine-free, sugar-free soft drinks, you are still drinking a beverage that can worsen your anxiety. The high-acid content of dark colas produces an acidic environment in the body. In order to alleviate this acidity, calcium and magnesium are leached from your bones.

Both of these minerals are crucial to proper brain and muscle function. In fact, muscles can not relax properly without calcium and magnesium. The tense muscles associated with anxiety are therefore exacerbated.

So if you choose a clear, caffeine-free, sugar-free soft drink, it won’t worsen your anxiety, right? Wrong! The artificial sweetener in these drinks, aspartame, may have significant cognitive effects. It may indeed worsen the psychological aspect of anxiety.

*-Alcohol*

At first, this seems like the opposite of caffeine, and therefore a good idea for anxiety sufferers. But actually, alcohol consumption (beyond a small glass of wine a few times a week) can worsen depression and inhibit absorption of key nutrients.

**Foods**

*-Chocolate*

While chocolate is often considered the "feel-good" food, it contains significant caffeine and large amounts of sugar. As discussed above, caffeine has the opposite effect that an anxious person wants and needs. The sugar is another problem, and is discussed below.

*-Excessive Sugar*

By "excessive," some nutritionists mean anything over 5 tablespoons of refined sugar daily. While you may think that would be easy, it's not. Sugar is in everything, and 5 tablespoons is just 1 tablespoon more than 1/4 cup.

If you drink several large glasses of sweet iced tea, you have probably drunk close to 1/4 cup of sugar. And that does not take into account the sugar in your foods, either hidden (such as in frozen foods) or obvious (such as "frosted" cereals).

So why is sugar a problem? For one thing, the body uses Vitamin B6, which is crucial to mood and proper hormone function, to metabolize sugar. In other words, sugar depletes your body of this and other important nutrients. It can also create highs and lows in mood, and bring on a post-sugar "crash," or low blood sugar.

*-Refined Flour*

Refined flour acts much like sugar in the body. And it has none of the essential fatty acids, fiber, and other nutrients that whole grains do.

*-Highly Processed Foods*

Many processed foods are full of preservatives, dough "conditioners" (in the case of store-bought bread products), artificial flavors, and artificial colors. Some of these can pass through the blood-brain barrier, affecting cognitive function.

Tartarazine (FD&C yellow #5), commonly found in candy, gum, margarine, and many other processed foods can disrupt the hormone balance in the body.