

# Commonsense



## THOUGHTS...

This is just an experiment. The information you will find in this newsletter are just a reflection on a wide variety of subjects related to healthy living, food, and nutrition.

## COMMONSENSE

Is a precious weapon that allows us to make better choices. Most of the time, or too often, commonsense is underestimated or not taken in consideration as a valuable source to guide our daily decisions on health and nutrition.

In this posts I ask myself questions that I want to share with you. The aim is to open an helpful dialogue between us.

## Poison...?

By Anna Piva

Last week I went to the opening of the exhibition *The Power of Poison* at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The show explores poison's role in human nature, myth, and human health. The show is a must see, because it is not only interesting and informative but also because it arouses curiosities you might not expect. At least, that happened to me!

As you enter the exhibition, the visitor is presented with two commonly ingested substances: salt and chocolate. The first panel states: "Salt is vital to life; your nerves can't function without it. But a dose this size [there is a cup full of salt just underneath the panel] is another story. It could unbalance body chemistry enough to kill." The second panel, presented alongside a pretty box of chocolates, states: "This treat is deadly for your pet. Why? The ingredient that gives us a pleasant boost – theobromine- causes seizures in dogs." Two common foods/ nutritional elements can be



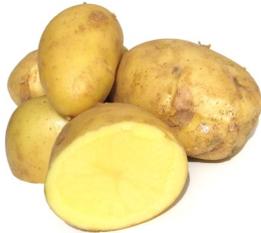
lethal for us and our pets. What about the rest? Do we really know if a food can cause side effects to our bodies? I am not talking about eaten in quantity. By now we know that excess is dangerous no matter what you eat. I am questioning whether food has "hidden" properties that can affect our body functions. I know for sure that carrots make your skin yellow. I remember when a young cousin of mine was hospitalized, the doctor had to write on her clinical board that her skin was yellowish because she ate so many carrots. I remember that episode because as a child myself, I thought it was hilarious. Today I understand that this actually unveils the power of food on our system.

In the Western world we tend to organize food in terms of proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals. But this system of classification may not be sufficient to protect us entirely. My mentor, a Vietnamese doctor I have been learning from for many years, recently told me: "Do not eat

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potatoes!” I had, in fact, to have surgery on my shoulder and a big incision with fifty stitches was left to heal. Apparently potatoes feed the formation of pus. So, if you have a big incision and you eat potatoes, you expose yourself to the danger of infection. Is that right? Oriental medicine sees food through a different lens than we Westerners do. Each food interacts with different organs. Food can either support an organ or be harmful to it. It does not matter if you “believe” in these two different medical philosophies. The fact is that certain foods can cause certain reactions in your body. My doctor also told me to avoid shrimp. He said

that shrimp will make my skin grow in excess. So if you want your skin healing properly and flat, you should avoid eating shrimp. I followed his suggestion without even asking questions since I trust him blindly. Yet I did connect this information to my father who is a big shrimp eater (they are part of his daily diet). He actually has awful scars. They are all bumpy and huge. I haven’t explored yet why shrimp affect the skin, but I will definitely do more research, and pass along what I find out. Right now, I am reminded about how much we have yet to learn about food and the body.

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