

# LIVING WITH GLAUCOMA

Volume 28, Number 2

Winter 2014

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## INTEGRATIVE NUTRITION AND WELLNESS

Perhaps nutrition for vision is a misnomer for the eyes are part of the body and a healthy body contributes to healthy eyes. But with our cornucopia of foods and the range of diet options, how do we select what is best for our bodies? There are the vegan, the paleo (eat what early humans ate), whole foods, gluten free, dairy free, no eggs, and so forth. Rather than choice there is often confusion on what to eat. No sooner do we learn that we should not eat certain foods than a study materializes saying we should. Fats eliminated? Not so fast. Some fats are healthy, so food gurus somersault from nay to yea. To help us make sense of how best to choose a diet that suits our way of life, the Group invited Dolores Perri, nutritionist, to help us sort through the choices.

Rightfully, Dolores immediately asked a very important question, that of fatigue, a common problem experienced not only by members of the group but by the community at large. Although you may eat right and force yourself to exercise, it doesn't seem to make a difference. The problem may lie with your adrenal glands that no longer have the output to meet the demands of the stressors in your life. The adrenals mobilize our bodies' responses to stress. Aging is no help for with age along with various physical ailments stressors multiply and the adrenals may not be up to the task of sorting everything out to meet the needs of your body. Unfortunately, the medical community has not yet listed adrenal fatigue as a syndrome and, therefore, your doctor probably listens to your complaints but cannot prescribe treatment. Dolores recommends a holistic doctor who will probably require that you

submit a sample of saliva that will be then sent to a laboratory for analysis. Once your nutritionist or holistic doctor receives the data, he or she can then recommend a protocol of treatment. Dolores cited the case of a young woman suffering from adrenal exhaustion but who was misdiagnosed and slated for shock therapy. Fortunately, further investigation revealed that she had Addison's Disease. (President Kennedy had it also) and needed medication to correct the problem.

We are all familiar by now with the flight or fight syndrome. Danger, excessive stress factors cause a sudden rush of adrenalin that takes six hours to reduce. Factors other than flight or fight also contribute to stress such as care-taking, a death of an important family member, a difficult job, gradual diminishing of sight. You may not even be aware that these factors are causing the fatigue. Many of us consider that we've learned to cope. Experiencing fatigue may be our bodies' way of saying "let's attend to this." Dolores Perri advises that there are supplements that will help, but they should not be taken indiscriminately and if you are experiencing severe fatigue, you should see a professional health consultant.

Your thyroid, too, as you age, often diminishes. Symptoms such as loss of hair, loss of the outer portion of your eyebrows, inability to regulate body temperature in accordance with weather conditions, weight loss, and depression are all symptoms of thyroid dysfunction. Dolores Perri feels that the parameter of blood testing for thyroid function is too wide and may not reveal medical conditions. Most often, however, your doctor evaluating your thyroid function based on the blood assessment and other characteristics mentioned above will prescribe a medication such as Synthroid. Perri does not recommend this medication but prefers to correct the thyroid dysfunction more naturally.

While the above may or may not have an effect on your vision, the relationship of vision to kidney function may well be correlated. We do know that we are advised not to drink an excessive amount of water at one time, that sipping water throughout the day is preferable, it's been a long period for the medical community and the scientific researchers in particular, to associate glaucoma as a neurological disease, but finally there are some interesting findings that have been revealed. An examination of the cerebrospinal fluid of glaucoma patients has revealed that the amount of fluid reaching the optic nerve is diminished especially in low-tension glaucoma patients. The cerebrospinal fluid's task is to provide nutrients and flush out toxins; the kidneys, too, are equipped to flush out toxins. Perri suggests that other systems in the body, the cardiovascular, the pulmonary, etc., should also be evaluated to determine where functioning is inadequate. The problem, of course, with the medical profession, when a system is not functioning adequately, a pharmaceutical medicine is prescribed and no attempt is made to seek out the root cause. But perhaps other steps should be taken first. The Group, therefore, was very pleased to have Dolores Perri's help in determining some possible routes to take.

DETOXIFICATION is recommended both medically and as an alternative treatment to remove toxins from the body. There are a number of medical conditions that may require various forms of detoxification that a physician will remediate. The alternative therapist, however, may feel that the patient will benefit from a detox program and set up a protocol. This is a treatment that flushes toxins from the body. This treatment is usually administered by a holistic doctor who will recommend a series of chelating agents that bind with the heavy metals in the body and flush out.

Food, water and air may be a source of toxins. In western societies food is usually plentiful. The grocery stores are loaded with fresh fruits and vegetables, even out of season. The shelves are stocked with products suitable for breakfast, lunch or dinner. But we pay for this abundance at a price. Food is grown on factory farms where excessive pesticides are used; genetically-engineered foods are entering the food stream; fish swim in polluted waters, and so on. If possible, Perri recommends eating organic foods, especially the berries that have such thin skins that the pesticide penetrates throughout the berry. The GMO's in particular are especially suspect for the manufacturing process requires cross-species, that is a gene from another species is inserted into the seed or egg, something that does not occur in nature. Unfortunately, the United States, unlike European countries that ban these products, welcomes GMO's. But a victory of sorts was recently achieved urging the FDA to require that products made with GMO's be labeled.

**SELF DETOX (Perri's simple system)** Put a spoonful of organic sesame oil in your mouth and chew it, the longer the better –15-20 minutes is good. This is called oil pummeling. Do not swallow. When the oil loses its froth, spit it out for it has extracted the toxins from your body.

Nutrition recommended by Perri includes whole organic foods, 5-6 servings of fruits and vegetables, a protein with each meal. Green juicing is especially good. The variety of colors on your plate should reflect dark green, dark red, bright yellow. If the food is all white, you're not receiving the phytochemicals so important for health. Perri also recommends foods rich in folate, such as Brussels sprouts, strawberries, eggs, spinach and which also contain a powerful antioxidant sopherophane that helps to prevent cancer. While the pharmaceutical

industry is always eager to isolate a substance and package it as a medication, ingesting the natural product is far superior for the vitamins work together to produce the greatest value. Green drinks have become the rage. You can get a green drink from a street vender, from a health food store or you can blend it yourself. Kale is one of the richest sources of phytochemicals and can be juiced along with other natural ingredients to make your own green drink. If you don't have a juicer, you can buy a green powder from a health food store and just add water to reconstitute it. Red powder is also available. This contains your important fruits.

One particular brand of vitamins Standard Process is recommended by Perri. The company uses only naturally grown organic vegetables to manufacture its product. The multivitamin is called Phytolin.

Exercise is another factor for protecting the eyes. While aerobic exercise is not recommended for people with exfoliation glaucoma and pigmentary dispersion syndrome, other glaucoma conditions benefit from vigorous exercise for blood flow is increased. For all glaucoma conditions power walking or simply walking is important. If you can do three miles a day, it's great, but at least try to do one mile daily.

Exercise for the eyes takes several forms. One of the most durable is the system established by Bates in the 1800's. A series of exercises including swaying, very, very brief sunning, palming, focusing on a single object, etc. A number of practitioners still follow this method. People have claimed that their eyes improved enough so that they no longer needed glasses (ed. note: Back when I was in my 20's I worked with an optometrist on the Bates exercises, but sadly, I did not reverse my myopia). Perfect-Sight-Without-Glasses-William Bates (available on Amazon and in bookstores).

A newer therapy researched by Dr. Merrill Allen relies on micro electrical stimulation. It's actually electrical stimulated acupuncture but without the needles. Electrodes are placed about the eyes. If any of you have used a Tens machine to relieve arthritic pain, the theory is comparable. The treatment appears to trigger the regrowth of the retinal and photoreceptor cells in the eye, but such claim would need a double-blind study for verification. The treatment, however, may be beneficial by increasing blood flow. To begin this treatment you would probably need some training by an optometrist or other professional. Of course, your ophthalmologist would probably not sanction the treatment since it has not been approved by the FDA, but Perri suggests that in some cases where benefits may occur, one can go with the research.

**DRY EYES:** As we age and take medications, we may suffer from the dry eye syndrome. In some cases medication taken for other conditions may be the culprit, but since you can't cut out the medications, there are other methods for improving this situation. We've been advised to wash our eyelids with warm water and baby shampoo to cleanse the crusts formed at the roots of the lashes. Perri recommends that foods high in the phytochemicals such as cruciferous vegetables, kale, Brussels sprouts, bok choy, chard, spinach, and the foods richest in lutein and zeaxanthin, the green leafies, and also orange and yellow fruits and vegetables. Minerals such as potassium and magnesium are also important, but if you eat enough of the deep green vegetables, mineral intake should be adequate, especially potassium. You may need a small amount of magnesium supplementation.

Be careful of multi-vitamins because a lot of them don't have enough of each ingredient.

Vitamin D3 has been found to be low in people living in northern climates because they do not get an adequate amount of sunshine. Most

of us do not sunbathe anymore and in the summer when the weather is hot and sticky, prefer to remain indoors with air-conditioning. Winter sun does not do it. There is a disparity about what your physician recommends and what the holistic doctor recommends. Your blood level of Vitamin D3 should register at least 65 or 70. Vitamin D3 is absorbed with fat, so should be taken with food. Dolores takes it when she eats walnuts, which are good for you. You can take it with a small amount of oil. The press today is quite enthusiastic about the benefits of Vitamin D3 as preventing various disease states, especially cancer. Settling on the magic number of how much you need is debatable. Some people include Perri take a huge amount. Whatever amount you take be sure it's D3.

**OILS:** The most beneficial oils are virgin olive oil, coconut oil, flax seed (must be refrigerated)—Dolores suggested placing it in the freezer—It is not to be kept on a shelf at room temperature and do not cook. Grind it and add it to cereals, your green drink, on food after it has been cooked. Dolores related the story of an individual who used 3 tbs of coconut oil in her husband's cereal every morning. He had Alzheimer's disease. Apparently, there was a reversal of symptoms and her husband began to show improvement. We're still in the thrall of the bias against saturated fats and your doctor may advise against using coconut oil. Mainly, the culprit is the trans fats artificially created and now recognized as unhealthy. Coconut oil, one of the natural saturated fats, when studied in populations such as the Polynesians, does not have the cardiovascular effects claimed for saturated fats.

**GLUCOSE AND THE BRAIN:** Coconut oil breaks down the ketone bodies that act on glucose, a fuel for the brain. It also increases the efficiency of the thyroid and it does not raise cholesterol levels but does raise the HDL levels, the good guys. It is difficult, however, to find

funding for research on coconut oil for since it is a natural product, the pharmaceutical companies are not interested in supplying grant money.

The Omega 3 oils are also excellent. Of course, we believe everybody knows about eating the fish rich in omega 3's—salmon, mackerel, sardines, tuna sparingly. At one time parents routinely gave their children cod liver oil. Dolores recommends cod liver oil because it is better assimilated.

Green tea and Rooibos (red tea) are loaded with antioxidants. Black tea also has a fair amount. Tea can be had decaffeinated although the caffeine in tea while as great as in coffee is more diluted in the individual serving. The red tea is good for the adrenals – very calming.

Perri offered an aside as to why drinking coffee acts as a laxative. Since coffee passes through the kidney, which the kidney identifies as toxic, the kidney rids it from the body, quickly resulting in bowel movement. Of course, as well all substances ingested, the body builds up a tolerance and the effect diminishes.

**ALLERGIES:** To self check, eat a single food. Wait 10-15 minutes and check your pulse rate. If it has risen 10 or 15 points, you are allergic to that food. To avoid becoming allergic to a specific food, do not eat the same food every day or even every other day. Rotate your foods—a four-day rotation diet is good.

MSN, a sulfite, is found in every joint in the body. There is sulfur in the hair. Garlic, onions, leeks, the foods in the Allium family are rich in sulfur. People interested in receiving maximum benefit from garlic may eat it raw. Taken with parsley, the odor is masked, but for a treat, roast the garlic cloves and add to a cooked dish of food. Don't peel the cloves in advance. Raw ginger is another beneficial herb, especially for any kind of esophagus problem. Ginger helps to relieve nausea and acid

reflux. Cabbage juice is good for acid reflux. Cabbage juice is called Vitamin U. Sauerkraut is especially good. Don't throw away the juice.

Glutathione, a combination of cysteine, glycine and glutamine is a simple molecule produced naturally in your body. It is considered one of the most important antioxidants in the body, quenching free radicals, detoxifying the body. There is some association with glaucoma that is viewed as a degenerative disease, but the research although funded at one point by Columbia University has not been actively pursued since the chief researcher retired. The alternative healers, however, are very aware of the implications of reduced glutathione for it is viewed as a major antioxidant. It is relatively easy to increase your glutathione levels—the Allums (see above), bioactive whey protein, exercise, supplements such as N-acetyl-cysteine, alpha lipoic acid, Vitamins B6, B12. Perri suggests hemp seeds. These are high in protein and delicious. They can be sprinkled on your food.

**GRAINS:** With the epidemic of gluten intolerance, grains such as rice, quinoa, amaranth—all of which are delicious, can be substituted.

**THE PERRI PROTEIN SHAKE** – A cup of soy, coconut, or hemp milk. A dash of cinnamon, a tablespoon of flaxseed oil or 2 tablespoons of ground flax seed, a tablespoon of lecithin granules (try to get a soy-free one). Lecithin is an emulsifier and it also feeds the brain. (Capsules do not provide enough of the substance), 2 scoops of a whey powder, perhaps half a banana, fruit in season. It's a good morning drink. You can improvise; just add to the basics above.

By now you must know that sugar is a no-no. Perri stated that the galactose in milk and cheese (raw cheese is preferable) which are sugars, causes a problem of fluid in the lens, impairing healthy vision. To be sure you're not ingesting sugars, read the labels—sucrose, fructose, dextrose, maltose, lactose are all sugars.

**EGGS:** There has been a reversal of the thinking about eggs. They're fine; actually, the egg is a perfect food. No need to worry about cholesterol. In fact, with the new research about cholesterol, the brouhaha about its dangers may be over-exaggerated. Likewise, butter in moderation is also good for you.

**MELATONIN:** Most of us do not get enough sunlight to naturally increase the Vitamin D levels in our bodies. If we did, we would probably sleep better, but taking 3 mg of melatonin to make up for its lack may help with sleep. It has also been found to help combat cancer and there is some research linking melatonin levels to eye health.

We want to thank Dolores Perri for once again meeting with our Group and offering the wisdom of her long history of healing through natural resources. The Group was very grateful to hear her thoughts and to be warmed by her support and interest in our problems of coping with glaucoma.

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Catherine Duffek is starting a glaucoma telephone support group for parents of children with glaucoma. For more information about the telephone support group programs in association with Guild Health Services of New York/Lighthouse International, please refer to <http://www.guildhealth.org/Parent-Tele-support>. Any parent who may be interested in joining this group, please contact Catherine Duffek, 617-797-6476 or email: [cduffek@msn.com](mailto:cduffek@msn.com).

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Please note: The contents of this newsletter are for informational purposes only. The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

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**This newsletter is published by the Glaucoma Support  
and Education Group in partnership with  
The Glaucoma Foundation**

