

Archives



Environmental Toxins and Weight Gain

An interview with Paula Baillie-Hamilton, M.B., B.S., D.Phil.



by Russ Mason, M.S

Paula F. Baillie-Hamilton, M.B., B.S., D.Phil., an expert on metabolism and the impact of toxins upon the human system, has recently proposed that as well as being linked to many people's conditions such as hormonal imbalance and a weakened immune system, that the toxins in our environment may lie at the cause of weight gain.

Dr. Baillie-Hamilton has, through her years of research, identified certain toxic chemicals, which can cause a person to gain weight. She calls these substances "Chemical Calories" because they act within our bodies as hormones, and have a damaging effect on the sympathetic nervous system (SNS), the hormonal regulatory system for weight control. Dr. Baillie-Hamilton defines a "Chemical Calorie" as an estimated value of the degree of damage caused by a chemical to our natural weight loss systems. Dr. Baillie-Hamilton's thesis is clear: detoxification (through the use of certain dietary supplements and eating organic food) as well as other health-promoting activities, the individual will not only rid the body of dangerous toxins, but will also experience a loss of weight. Therefore, until the problem of ridding the body of toxins is fully addressed, no diet will ever work.

Particularly nasty are those chemicals, which are used to fatten livestock — and there is a wide spectrum of them. Many of these products are, or were, used as growth promoters in the animal industry, allowing higher profits through decreased feed costs. When we eat commercially produced beef, pork, lamb or chicken, which have been treated with certain chemicals, any remaining chemical additives left in the animal products will then enter our systems, and—in addition to other damage they may cause—could also affect our weight. Depending on the specific toxin, the effects could also lead to chronic disease, nerve damage, muscle damage, hormonal imbalances, or a variety of other conditions. Fish and seafood also tend to have high levels of contaminants, particularly fatty fish, such as salmon and trout. Hence, Dr. Baillie-Hamilton cautions against eating them, as well as the taking of fish oil supplements, which are likely to be contaminated. However, fish with white flesh - such as cod -- tend to have much lower toxic residues, and are generally considered safer.

A vegetarian diet does not automatically guarantee safety from toxins because many chemicals with suspected fattening properties enter our bodies as pesticides on fruits, vegetables, personal care products, air fresheners, carpeting, aerosol sprays and other contaminants. All of these may potentially add the pounds while creating illness in the process. And yet, our bodies, Dr. Baillie-Hamilton explains, have highly effective natural "Slimming Systems." When functioning optimally, these systems are able to process food while facilitating the elimination of toxins.

RM: *How can toxins affect our weight?*

PB-H: Because when they impact on the various hormonal systems they send false messages by masquerading as the hormones themselves. Another way they work is by directly damaging the levels of natural hormones produced or released. Because our hormones control most of our basic desires such as our appetite for certain foods and our energy levels, if these systems are upset, we could be driven to eat more than we need, but worse still the foods we are increasingly driven to eat will tend to be those high in sugary carbohydrates and fat. It has also been found that certain chemicals will not only produce nerve and muscle damage, affecting the ability to exercise, these same chemicals also modify the hormones, which decrease the desire to exercise. And that is shocking.

RM: *Which are the principal toxins we need to be mindful of?*

PB-H: Organophosphates are right at the top. In addition to being highly toxic to insects, these chemicals are also highly toxic to humans. They are very dangerous. In fact, organophosphates are derivatives of the chemicals used at Auschwitz as nerve gas. They also have the ability, in low doses, to fatten livestock by reducing their ability to use up existing fat stores and have been marketed for this purpose. Although the use of organophosphates has been banned as a growth-promoting substance, they can still be found in pesticides. Organophosphates have been shown to disrupt the major weight controlling hormones, such as catecholamines, thyroid hormones, estrogens, testosterone, corticosteroids, insulin, growth hormone, and leptin. They appear to alter levels of—and sensitivity to—neurotransmitters; they interfere with many metabolic processes; and they cause widespread damage to body tissues, particularly nerve and muscle tissues. So bear that in mind the next time you reach for the can of bug spray!

RM: *What other chemicals do we need to be mindful of?*

PB-H: There is a very long list! But your readers should know that antibiotics can also negatively impact on the human system, even though they tend to have a positive image. Many of these chemicals attack the weight-control mechanism and, as a result, cause weight gain. What is significant is that the vast majority of all forms of livestock will be exposed to anti-bacterial agents at some stage in their lives. Residues of antibiotics are found in meat from treated animals, which means that you're probably taking them also.

Remember, that hormones determine all whatever kind of food you eat, and when you eat throughout the day. Different hormones stimulate an appetite for different foods. And, as the levels change, they will drive you to seek out whatever your body needs at a particular time.

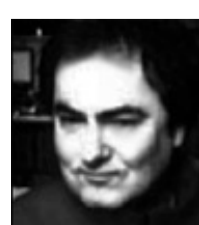
One group of hormones, catecholamines, tend to be greatly diminished in obese people - hence the craving for fatty foods as catecholamines tend to suppress the appetite for fats.

RM: *What sort of advice do you have for average person who wants to detoxify and lose weight in the process?*

PB-H: I believe that everyone needs to take supplements, because the world has changed. Food has become more processed, which usually results in a diminished nutritional benefit. In the last 100 or so years, when toxic chemicals have been around, our need for certain vitamins and minerals has increased; and this is because the chemicals to which we are exposed sometimes use up our stores of vitamins and minerals, and other nutrients, as well as increase the rate at which we lose them. Also, the benefits of exercise are well known. As one detoxifies, the desire to exercise tends to come back. Obese people who lead sedentary lives will see this all change as they begin to remove the long-accumulated toxins from their bodies. Even mild exercise will increase the oxygen supply, which will help the detoxification process.

RM: *What else do you recommend?*

PB-H: It is a good idea to keep the home well ventilated. Remember that the air indoors circulates less and tends to be far more polluted than it is outdoors, even in cities. Along with that, having plants in the home is a very good idea because they soak up airborne chemical calories while they exhale oxygen, containing clean air. Spider plants are particularly efficient at absorbing toxins.



A former English teacher, **Russ Mason, M.S** is a native of Webster, New York and is a regular contributor to Alternative & Complementary Therapies. He is also Senior Editor for Nature's Wisdom Magazine.