

Microwaved food has no radiation danger

DR. GOTT



PETER GOTT, M.D.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I've heard a lot about microwave ovens being safe, yet what about the food cooked inside them? Isn't it bombarded with radiation? My doctor claims up and won't give me an answer. Since you have a lot of guts and have disagreed with your own clan in the past, I'm hoping you will give me a direct answer.
DEAR READER: I doubt my an-

swer will be at odds with current medical information, but it will be direct. Microwaved food is safe. Microwave ovens do not use radiation, such as X-rays; rather, the ovens bombard food with high-frequency sound waves. These waves stimulate the food molecules to vibrate, thereby causing heat, so that substances "cook" from the inside out.

Once removed from the oven, food cools because the molecules are no longer excited by the microwaves. X-rays and other radiation alter molecules; microwaves do not. Therefore, microwaved food contains no residual radiation or danger.

You are correct in stating that modern microwave ovens, if used according to manufacturers' directions, are safe. However, there are two caveats. First, with continued use, the seals on these ovens deteriorate, al-

lowing leakage of microwaves during operation. This can be a hazard because such waves may heat up objects in the environment, causing — among other complications — cataracts in humans.

Also, microwaves that escape from an oven can be dangerous to people with cardiac pacemakers because this wave energy can penetrate the skin and cause the pacemakers to re-program inappropriately. Therefore, a microwave oven must be used carefully. Check door seals periodically and request authorized service if you suspect that leaks may have developed.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I'm a 26-year-old female diagnosed eight years ago with ovarian cysts. Over the years, my doctor has treated me with birth-control pills and a depo-progesterone

shot that totally shuts down my menstrual cycle — all in an effort to decrease the size of the large cyst. My period never returned. He now has me on fertility pills to force a period and states the cycles I was having weren't cycles at all. What does he mean?

DEAR READER: Ovarian cysts — fluid-filled blisters that can cause abdominal pain — are related to ovulation. When an ovum leaves the ovary, at the beginning of its journey to the uterus, a cyst can form at the site. With time, the cyst may enlarge, causing discomfort. Your doctor initially followed traditional procedure by giving you birth-control pills, which inhibit ovulation (and cyst formation), followed by progestin (depo-progesterone) to cause the uterine lining to shed. Therefore, you had menstrual periods without ovulation.

Neither I nor my gynecological consultant understand why your physician would follow this by prescribing "fertility pills." Such medicine, by stimulating ovulation, would make matters worse by causing more cysts. As a general rule, medicine that encourages ovulation is not recommended for women with ovarian cysts.

Perhaps you misunderstood your doctor's comments about your cycles. If not, you should obtain a second opinion from a qualified gynecologist who can recommend more appropriate treatment.

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