

You can eat safely with diverticulitis

DR. GOTT



PETER GOTT, M.D.

DEAR DR. GOTT: My physician recently prescribed an antibiotic to take care of my diverticulitis, but my request for a list of which foods to eat and which to avoid was not granted. Can you give me some guidelines?

DEAR READER: Until a few years ago, physicians insisted on detailed dietary restrictions for patients with diverticulitis, recurring infection of sacular intestinal outpouchings. The old-fashioned prohibitions included roughage and hard to digest foods, such as nuts, salad, raw fruit and spices.

Doctors now believe that diet makes very little difference in preventing this condition. I advise you to chew nuts and salads thoroughly. In addition, you probably should avoid eating fruit with small seeds, such as raspberries, blueberries, strawberries and the like; these indigestible seeds might become wedged in intestinal sacs (diverticulosis), leading to infection (diverticulitis).

To give you more information, I am sending you a free copy of my Health Report "Diverticular Disease."

DEAR DR. GOTT: Does a vitamin deficiency cause white spots under the fingernails? Are there any other causes for this condition?

DEAR READER: Vitamin deficiencies are often associated with abnormal nail growth, including splitting, peeling and discoloration. However, the white spots you describe are more commonly due to illness and fever.

No one knows how nail growth is disrupted during sickness, but white streaks and spots often appear, then grow out with the normal nail after a person regains health. This reaction is not harmful, nor does it indicate a serious condition in most cases.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I had an aortogram for a blockage in my right thigh. Following the test, I had no pain. Could the condition have cleared? My doctor suggests surgery, yet I feel better.

DEAR READER: During an aortogram (X-ray examination of the aorta); a small plastic tube (catheter) is passed through a leg artery into the aorta. Then liquid ("dye") is injected and X-ray movies are taken. The dye fills the aorta and shows areas of blockage.

An aortogram enables physicians to determine the extent and location of obstruction in the aorta and other large arteries in the pelvis and thighs. The test does not ordinarily produce any therapeutic benefit, although it's possible that, in your case, the catheter or dye could have dislodged a blood clot, thereby improving blood flow to your thigh.

In any event, if your symptoms have improved, I suggest you postpone surgery. Most specialists do not

encourage vascular operations unless the blockage causes symptoms or is serious enough to be a potential, future hazard. If your doctor insists on surgery, ask for a second opinion from a vascular specialist.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I'm a 53-year-old female with an overactive thyroid. My doctor gave me a radioactive cocktail, and things are back to normal. Yet now I have bags under my eyes, which water constantly, lumps and a rash on both legs above the ankles. My doctor tells me the only answer is steroids, but I can't have them because my blood doesn't clot. Help!

DEAR READER: Treatment of hyperthyroidism (over-active thyroid) often includes the use of a radioactive "cocktail," an isotope that controls the overproduction of thyroid hormone.

I am not aware that this therapy is associated with watery eyes, fluid retention or rash. However, hypothyroidism (under-active thyroid) can cause these symptoms. It's possible that the radioactive material caused your thyroid to under-function.

You should have a blood test to determine whether you have the proper amount of thyroid hormone in your system. If your thyroid gland is deficient as a result of the therapy, you will have to take thyroid pills to supply the correct amount. If the tests prove your thyroid is functioning normally, your doctor will investigate other causes for your symptoms. Such symptoms can also be the result of allergic reactions, for instance. I'm concerned about your blood-clotting problem, too, which can cause red spots or hemorrhages in the skin, resembling a rash.

I don't feel comfortable endorsing your doctor's recommendation of steroids, such as cortisone, until a definite diagnosis is made. Such medicine is not ordinarily used for thyroid diseases. Incidentally, steroids will not prevent your blood from clotting; they are sometimes used to counteract blood-clotting disorders.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I'm a diabetic and take Micronase. Could this have any effect on my bowels? When discussing diarrhea with my doctor, he gave me a prescription for Carafate and Zantac. A month later, I still have the same trouble.

DEAR READER: Micronase, a pill that stimulates the secretion of insulin, does not ordinarily cause diarrhea. Some patients experience heartburn, bloating and nausea but, I suspect, your doctor will have to find another reason for your symptom.

The causes of diarrhea are legion, ranging from relatively harmless bowel disturbances (such as irritable colon) to serious conditions, such as colitis. Rather than giving you Carafate and Zantac, which are medicines to treat peptic ulcer, your doctor should, I think, approach the problem more aggressively by taking a detailed history, performing a complete examination and ordering appropriate tests, such as a stool analysis and a flexible sigmoidoscopy.

This latter test, during which a specialist examines your lower colon with a lighted instrument, is easy, causes relatively little discomfort and often gives important information about the presence or absence of infection. If your doctor doesn't choose this approach, ask for a referral to a gastroenterologist, a specialist who is trained in bowel diseases.

To give you more information, I am sending you a free copy of my Health Report "Irritable Bowel Syndrome."

DEAR DR. GOTT: Could you tell me what mycosis fungoides is? It was listed as a cause of death for my mother-in-law. We've recently been told my husband has a malignant melanoma with metastases, and there is no treatment for it. Is there any connection between the two?

DEAR READER: Mycosis fungoides is a form of skin cancer that resembles eczema. It typically appears as a rash that is itchy and chronic, then progresses to nodules in the skin. If untreated, the cancer will spread to internal organs.

Fortunately, mycosis fungoides grows slowly and is easily treated with radiation therapy. In some cases, however, the cancer develops into a kind of leukemia with abnormal cells in the bloodstream. Chemotherapy is then considered.

As far as I know, mycosis fungoides is not related to melanoma, a highly malignant skin cancer.

Because early mycosis fungoides can be confused with other skin diseases, the diagnosis can best be made after biopsy. To give you additional information, I am sending you a free copy of my Health Report "Eczema and Psoriasis."

DEAR DR. GOTT: Is it harmful to cut all the hairs out of one's nose consistently?

DEAR READER: No. Nasal hairs are there to protect the nostrils from harm by foreign material, such as bugs and creepy-crawlies.

DEAR DR. GOTT: Can caffeine cause sleepiness?

DEAR READER: Yes. As strange as it sounds, some people appear to experience profound sleepiness from

caffeine. Several such patients were described in the November 1989 issue of The American Journal of Medicine.

Caffeine is usually a stimulant causing jitteriness and insomnia. In some patients, it worsens the symptoms of depression. In others, it interferes with steroid metabolism in the body by allowing more natural cortisone to circulate in the bloodstream.

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By Glenda Hughes, Sales Rep.

A rather belated "Happy New Year" is coming to you from behind this typewriter today, but as this is the first time I have had to write this new decade, it seems appropriate.

With this New Year now in full swing, and the beginning of the '90s, I'm sure that most of you, like myself, are wondering what's in store for us in the short term, and of course, in the long term. Hopes and dreams seem to surface each New Year's eve, and as we cheered the year in, I naturally thought not only of my loved ones, but of what the "deck of cards" will deal out in real estate this year. Certainly, 1989 was a difficult year, calling upon all our energy, patience and skills that could be utilized. The market tested our strengths and weaknesses like no other market that I have ever been through. It put lots of things into perspective, and gave us a new vision of our positions in the community. I can't say that I'm sorry to see 1989 out, and I know that many of you have told me the same story but just in different covers, but I am glad that I have had this experience to add to my knowledge and my education. One never stops learning in this profession.

Now we are entering a new market, and usually, this is the best time to put your home on the market. The listings are coming in at a good clip presently, and the sales are coming in too. It will take a few more weeks to get a grip on just what is going to happen with the "spring market," but I suspect that it won't be too much different as other years. My only guess is that prices won't shoot up with the drastic speed that they have in past years. With a fair bit of inventory on the shelf, prices should be a bit more stable than the years gone by, and that makes for a much nicer market to work in, and for you to purchase in.

It would be nice to have a crystal ball, but we don't, so all we can do is work along and see what happens. I'm anxious to see what will unfold in January, so that I can report to you in February, and I'm anxious to get this year flowing, so that we can all breathe a sigh of relief and welcome this decade with positive notes.

May your dreams and your family be blessed with happy sounds in 1990.

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