

HEALTHY CONNECTIONS

EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITY ONE "BODY" AT A TIME

Wellness Program of the African People's Education & Defense Fund, Inc. August 2004
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Your Mind Is A Terrible Thing To Waste: The Importance of Brain Health

By Cassandra Floyd,
APEDF Wellness Program

The Importance of Brain Health

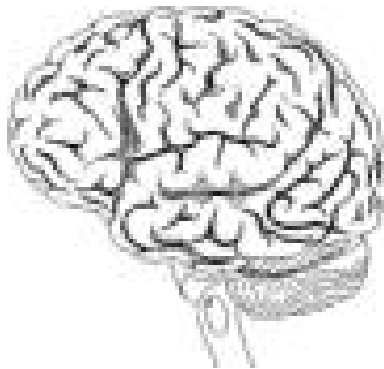
I never knew exactly how complex a subject the brain is. In doing the research for this article I learned enough to write a book. I want to begin by saying that here at the African Peoples Education and Defense Fund we do everything from the perspective of African people living with disparities in health, education, and economic development. We developed this newsletter as "educational ammo" to arm our people with the information needed to defend themselves from the attacks of bad health habits and inadequate health care.

There's the obvious thinking aspect of the brain for solving problems, working, living, and creating. Then there are the not-so-obvious things like emotions, maintaining relationships, and most importantly the functioning of the entire body. Every muscle, every organ, every tissue in the body relies on the brain to function properly, so there in lies the importance in maintaining this miraculous mass of gray matter.

Diseases and Disorders

Alzheimer's Disease

There are innumerable diseases and disorders affiliated with the brain that are both directly and indirectly related to the brain. Oddly enough, almost all have "unknown causes," yet almost all are linked to



nutritional deficiencies. For example, Alzheimer's Disease, a degenerative disease affecting the brain cells, is linked to deficiencies in vitamins B12, A, and the carotenoids (including beta-carotene); as well as minerals such as zinc and selenium.

Autopsies of people who died with Alzheimer's show excessively high levels of the toxic metals aluminum and mercury. The release of mercury from dental amalgams is the primary means of mercury exposure. Some of the means of aluminum exposure are drinking beverages from aluminum cans, cooking with non-stick dishes, wrapping food directly in aluminum foil, and using antiperspirant (which is absorbed directly into the lymphatic system). All of these over time can contribute to the "death" or degeneration of the brain cells affiliated with Alzheimer's disease. It is important to mention that while once a rare disease, Alzheimer's now affects more than 4.1 million people in the United States.

Multiple Sclerosis

Multiple Sclerosis is a degenerative disease of the nervous system that mainly affects the brain and the spinal cord. More specifically, it is the hardening of multiple tissue affecting the brain and spinal cord. Myelin sheaths are a fatty substance surrounding the brain and spinal cord, providing protection from toxins and damage. With MS, the body's immune system malfunctions and produces antibodies that attack the

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HEALTH WATCH



African-Americans Need Better Dental Care

More than half of African-American men have untreated dental problems, putting them at greater risk than all other Americans of contracting maladies that lead to tooth decay, gum disease and oral cancer, according to a report released recently by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute.

"African-American men . . . have the lowest survival rate of any

group" once cancerous lesions are detected, the report said. The report also under-scored the social consequences of having bad teeth.

"In this society, your appearance and ability to communicate matter greatly in getting and keeping a job," said Eddie Williams, the Joint Center's president. "Oral disease and untreated dental problems rob you of both."

The Joint Center report, which drew on a range of statistics from the federal government

and other sources, said 51 percent of African-American men have untreated dental problems, compared with 28 percent of white men.

"The Joint Center notes that African American males are a particularly neglected group, particularly those living on low incomes," Surgeon General Richard Carmona said. "We know that men generally...seek fewer health services than do females and that African American males face substantial challenges accessing health care."

The report recommended several remedies, including the development of federal, state and local standards for accessing dental care for at-risk populations, loan repayment options for dentists in nonwhite communities and a requirement by commercial insurers and Medicaid to include an annual visit to the dentist as part of their health plans.

Black Teens At Greater Caffeine Risk

Many pediatricians and nutritionists blame sugary soft drinks for making kids fat, rotting their teeth and causing calcium deficiencies.

A study adds increased risk of hypertension and cardio-vascular disease to that list, not because of sugar, but because of caffeine. African-American teens are at highest risk, researchers from the Medical College of Georgia recently reported.

Black youngsters who consumed the most caffeine (more than 100 mg, about three 12 oz. cans soda) had higher blood pressure

In a recent study, black teens had higher blood pressure than other young people after consuming lots of caffeine-laden drinks.

readings than all other adolescents in the study.

They estimate that 68% of boys and 62% of girls ages 12 to 17 drink one or more soft drinks daily, and 22% consume coffee or tea daily.

About a quarter of U.S. adults have high blood pressure, which can lead to cardiovascular

disease, the leading cause of death in the U.S. Complications from high blood pressure kill almost five times as many blacks as whites.

Children are being affected by hypertension at an earlier age, so the American Heart Association recommends an initial blood pressure check at age 3, and annually thereafter.

HOW MUCH CAFFEINE:

- 12 oz. cola: 40mg caffeine
- 8 oz. coffee: 115mg caffeine
- 8 oz brewed tea: 40mg caffeine



All People's TyRon Lewis Community Gym Guide to Great Fitness



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Muscular Strength versus Muscular Endurance

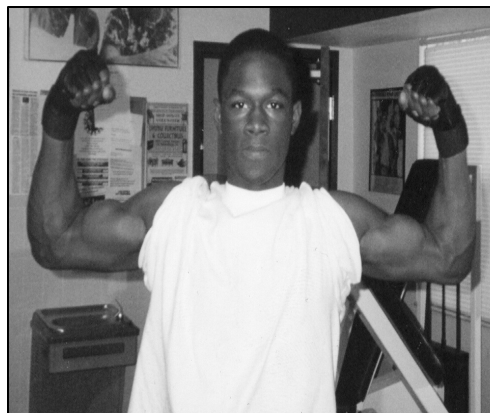
*By Damon Reio, Manager,
All People's TyRon Lewis
Community Gym*

Many physiological aspects should be considered when weight training; one is the difference between muscular strength and muscular endurance.

Muscular strength or power is associated with how fast one can lift a relatively heavy amount of weight. Muscular endurance relates to how many times one can lift a certain amount of weight. Knowing this is very important when learning your personal weight training capacity. It can be the determining factor whether you desire to get bigger, stronger, or more toned.

Let's say two individuals, who weigh the same, are weight training and have different muscular capabilities. Zaire has good muscular strength and is able to bench press 200 lbs. four times. On the other hand, Namibia may not even be able to bench press 200 lbs. one time, but is capable of bench pressing 160 lbs. for 20 repetitions.

Does this mean that Zaire can



surpass Namibia's 20 repetitions with 160 lbs.? Definitely not. In fact, it is very probable that Zaire may not be able to complete 20 repetitions. Just because someone can lift more than you or is stronger does not necessarily mean they are more conditioned than you. On the other hand, just because someone can lift or perform an exercise for a longer period time than you does not mean they are stronger than you.

Our regular training routine as well our personal body make up determines whether we are strong or have endurance. Aerobic (meaning with air) exercise is a long lasting exercise that can be carried on within the body's ability to consume and process enough oxygen to support the activity.

Although typical aerobic activities include running and swimming, circuit training and lifting with high repetitions also require that your muscles use high volumes of oxygen.

Depending on your workout, you can train your muscles to consume more oxygen in order to endure more repetitions. This is good if your are trying to develop bigger muscles (hypertrophy) or become toned.

Anaerobic exercise (without oxygen) is a high intensity exercise that exceeds the body's aerobic capacity and builds up an oxygen debt. Because of its high intensity, anaerobic exercise can be continued for only a short time. Power lifting requires your muscles to work at a high intensity for a very short time.

Muscular endurance and strength can also be determined through our personal muscular make up. Genetically, we are each born with a certain amount of fast twitch muscles and slow twitch muscles. Most of us are born with more of one than the other.

(Continued on next page)

Know the Glycemic Index of Foods

This chart shows the glycemic value of common foods. Foods with a high glycemic index are foods that spike our insulin and cause sugars to be stored in our body as fat. This chart is for those who are trying to avoid foods high in simple carbohydrates.

BAKERY PRODUCTS		DAIRY PRODUCTS		PASTA	
Donut	108	Ice cream	87	Fettuccine	46
Waffles	109	Ice cream, low fat	71	Macaroni	64
BREADS		Milk, full fat	39	Linguine	65
Bagel, white	103	Milk skim	46	Spaghetti, wholemeal	53
Melba toast	100	Yogurt, low fat, artif. sweet	20	ROOT VEGETABLES	
Wheat bread, wholegrain	99	FRUITS AND JUICES		Beets	91
Pumpnickel	71	Apple	54	Parsnips	139
Wheat bread, white	101	Apricots, dried	44	Potatoes, french fries	107
BREAKFAST CEREALS		Banana	77	Sweet potato	77
All-bran	60	Dates	141	Carrots	70
Cornflakes	119	Grapes	66	Potato, baked	121
Grapenuts	96	Orange juice	74	Rutabaga	103
Oatmeal	87	Pear, fresh	53	SNACK FOODS	
Rice Krispies	117	Pineapple juice	66	Popcorn	79
Special K	77	Raisins	91	Pretzels	116
Cheerios	106	Apple juice	58	SOUPS—Split pea soup	
Cream of Wheat	100	Apricots, fresh	82		86
Oat Bran	78	Cherries	32	SUGARS	
Rice Bran	27	Grapefruit	36	Fructose	32
Shredded Wheat	99	Orange	63	Glucose tablets	146
Total	109	Peach, fresh	60	Lactose	65
CEREAL GRAINS		Pineapple	94	Sucrose (table sugar)	92
Barley, pearled	36	Plum	55	Glucose	137
Cornmeal	98	Watermelon	103	Honey	83
Rice, brown	79	LEGUMES		Maltose	150
Rice, white	83	Black beans	43	VEGETABLES	
Buckwheat	78	Broad beans (fava beans)	113	Peas, dried	32
Millet	101	Kidney beans	42	Peas, green	68
Rice, parboiled	68	Navy beans juice	54	CRACKERS	
Sweet corn	78	Soy beans	25	Stoned Wheat Thins	96
		Black-eyed beans	59		
		Chick peas(garbanzo beans)	47		
		Lima beans, baby, frozen	46		
		Pinto beans	55		

Muscular Strength Versus Muscular Endurance, Continued from Page 3

If someone has an abundance of fast twitch muscles, their muscles are responsible for being explosive with speed for short periods of time. Slow twitch muscle fibers are responsible for the body's long term endurance.

If muscle types were the determining factor, it would be safe to assume that Zaire has an abundance of fast twitch muscles while Namibia has an abundance of slow twitch

muscles. Sprinters have short fast twitch muscles and long distance runners have long slow twitched muscles.

It is very easy to manipulate your muscles to attain fast or slow twitched muscles. Plyometrics, or exercising using fast bursts of energy, can change slow twitch muscles into fast twitch muscles. In addition, consistent endurance training can turn fast twitched muscles into slow muscles.

Asthma: A Concern for African & Latino People

Asthma is a growing concern in this country, particularly in inner-city African-American and Latino populations. Asthma is a chronic lung disease characterized by episodes of airflow obstruction. Symptoms of an asthma attack include coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness.

Asthma occurs in people who are predisposed to develop asthma because of genetic and environmental factors that determine susceptibility. A variety of "triggers" may initiate or worsen an asthma attack, including viral respiratory infections, exercise, and exposure to allergens or to airway irritants such as tobacco smoke and certain environmental pollutants.

Once asthma sufferers learn what conditions prompt their attacks, they can take steps to control their environment and avoid these triggers. However, medical treatment with anti-inflammatory agents (especially inhaled steroids) and bronchodilators is usually necessary to prevent and control attacks. With optimal management, control of asthma is usually an attainable goal.

The Impact of Asthma

Asthma affects nearly 15 million Americans, more than 5 percent of the U.S. population. In 1991, asthma claimed approximately 5,000 lives. After a decade of steady decline in the 1970s, the prevalence of asthma, hospitalizations for asthma, and mortality

due to asthma each increased during the 1980s.

In 1993, among children and young adults, African Americans were three to four times more likely than whites to be hospitalized for asthma, and were four to six times more likely to die from asthma. Poverty, substandard housing that results in increased exposure to certain indoor allergens, lack of education, inadequate access to health care, and the failure to take appropriate medications may all contribute to the risk of having a severe asthma attack or, more tragically, of dying from asthma.

The scope of the health care problem caused by asthma lies not only in the large number of Americans with the disease, but also in the limitations that asthma can impose on daily life. Asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism due to chronic illness and is the second most important respiratory condition as a cause of home confinement for adults.

Each year, asthma causes more than 18 million days of restricted activity, and millions of visits to physicians' offices and emergency rooms. A recent study found that children with asthma lose an extra 10 million school days each year; this problem is compounded by an estimated \$1 billion in lost productivity for their working parents. In 1990, asthma-related health care cost our nation approximately \$6.2 billion.

Source: blackhealthcare.com

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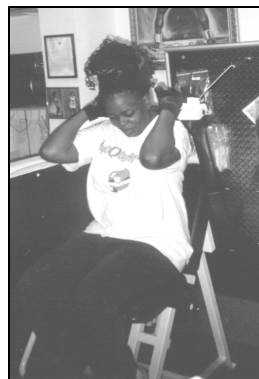
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Importance of Brain Health, Continued from Page 1

myelin sheaths. This leads to scarring of the sheaths (degeneration) which causes either distorted communication or lack of communication between the nerve endings causing symptoms from slurred speech, vision problems, to loss of mobility.

MS is usually diagnosed between the ages of twenty-five and forty, and more often in women.

Though the cause of MS is unknown, there are many indicators of what causes its progression. MS also is linked to several vitamin and mineral deficiencies like those affiliated with Alzheimer's, as well as calcium and also the omega 3 fatty acids. Stress (which depletes Vitamin B6 & 12) and malnutrition, whether from poor absorption or poor diet, often precede the onset of the disease.

Another theory is that this condition may be caused by food allergies or intolerances, especially allergies to dairy and gluten. Mercury poisoning from dental amalgams are also sited in the development of this disorder. Finally, complete diet may play the key role in the development of MS.

Where MS is fairly common is the US and European countries, it is almost unheard of in countries such as China, Korea, and Japan. The consumption of saturated fats, alcohol, and cholesterol are much greater in Western countries than those in Asian countries. Recent studies point to a possible link between MS and candida (yeast) infection. Chlamydia has also been cited as a possible cause of MS.

ADD/ADHD

Otherwise known as Attention Deficit Disorder, or ADD with Hyperactivity, ADD/ADHD is a fast growing diagnosis given to an astonishing 9 to 10 percent of all

school-aged children. Some of the factors linked to the development of the disorders are heredity, anxiety, allergies, smoking during pregnancy, oxygen deprivation at birth, environmental stress or pollutants, artificial food additives, injury, infection, lead poisoning (more common in African children), and prenatal trauma or malnutrition.

Most emphasis is placed on diet in ADD/ADHD. Reactions to food additives and coloring contribute to behavioral changes often labeled as ADD/ADHD. Although the child is often labeled as having a learning disability, the child is usually of above-average intelligence and highly creative.

Another theory in recent studies is over-exposure to television and/or computer games. While we see life in real time, video games and television display life in hyper-speed. The brain gets used to this speed, so that when a child gets into a classroom and is forced to sit still for up to an hour watching a teacher in real time, it becomes difficult to keep the child's attention. In the absence of hyper-speed mental stimulation, these children are easily distracted, impatient, impulsive, and may act out or become enraged.

Stress

Simply put, stress is how your mind perceives a threat and how your body responds to that threat. Although stress is an unavoidable part of life, it is how a person deals with stress that determines its effect on the body.

Extended stress is thought to play a role in the onset or the progression of such diverse illnesses as cardiovascular disease, rheumatoid arthritis, migraines, cancer, asthma, nervous tics, skin rashes and diseases (eczema and psoriasis), impotence, menstruation irregularities, colitis,

irritable bowel syndrome, diabetes, high blood pressure, lower back pain, and a score of others.

In essence, all of these diseases have to do with the brain first: its perception of what is a threat. When the brain perceives a threat, it kicks the adrenal glands into overdrive. Stress response, too, has more to do with diet than anything else. The body's responses to stress can cause the depletion of valuable nutrients. To fight stress, you have to replace stress-fighting vitamins and minerals such as B6 & B12, magnesium, potassium, and calcium.

Does stress cause the deficiency or does the deficiency cause the stress? The answer to both is yes. If your doctor tells you that you're deficient on any of these you may need to evaluate why. Do you become easily annoyed while driving? Do you immediately panic if an expected check is a day late in the mail? Do you find yourself becoming short tempered with your children or spouse? You could be suffering from a vitamin or mineral deficiency caused by that same stress.

Other Diseases and Disorders

The connection to mind and body is so much more than we think. Some of the other diseases that we didn't touch on but are affected by brain health are: insomnia, schizophrenia, depression, chronic fatigue, stroke, anorexia/bulimia, obesity, Parkinson's disease, and narcolepsy.

Help and Solutions Nutrition

In my opinion, good health starts with the mind. You must first make the decision to take control of your body. This means taking

Brain Health, Continued from previous page

all the necessary steps to overcome illness and prevent it as well. The importance of proper nutrition for you and your family cannot be stated enough!!

Cook so that you know exactly what's in the food you are eating. Boycott fast food (or it will be the death of you and your children). Your diet should consist of at least 50% vegetables and fruit, and buy a good multi vitamin/mineral to make up for what you don't get from you foods. Drink only distilled water (at least 8-8oz glasses daily) to help rid the body of heavy metal toxins.

Make sure you get enough:

Vitamins – B6, B12, A, E, biotin (vit K), Niacin.

Minerals – Magnesium, Selenium, Potassium, Calcium, Folic Acid.

Supplements – Omega 3 fatty acids (found in fish, olive oil, canola oil), Kava Kava (stress), Ginkgo Biloba (circulation), Green Tea (antioxidants prevent cellular damage and cancer), and Garlic

(anti-bacterial, anti-fungul, anti-microbial, anti-viral, and anti-parasitic agent that also contributes to general health and longevity).

Brain Exercise

Just like the rest of your body, your brain especially needs adequate exercise to function properly. **The brain has to be challenged in order to grow!** You should always push yourself to learn more, to be more creative, to solve problems, and to express yourself and release creatively.

Some studies suggest that those who regularly write in a journal or to a pen pal are significantly less likely to develop dementia and other mental disorders. Other researchers have had the same results when the subjects learned a new language or instrument. It is also important to read daily, both for yourself and to your children. So go ahead and buy some clay, learn to play sax, learn Swahili, take a dance class, and write a novel (or just to a friend)!

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