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CONTENTS

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Introduction

Prior to becoming a doctor, I taught for several years at a university. When I started my practice, almost twenty years ago, I brought my love of teaching to my patients. I strongly feel that if patients understand what harms their bodies and what can be done to prevent that harm, they'll use that knowledge to dramatically increase their chances of healing. In this text I'm going to give you what I call *walk-around knowledge.* Walk-around knowledge is information that is easy to understand and easily applied to everyday life. I'm also going to share some new ideas with you that will change the way you think about how we get sick, and even more importantly, how we can get and stay well. *This new way of looking at health and disease will give you the power to enjoy a much higher quality of health, both today and far into the future.*

From virtually the very first day I began my practice, I remember being surprised at many of the symptoms my patients complained about. Having been trained as a specialist in treating back, neck, and head pain, I expected to hear complaints about these ailments, and of course that was why most of these patients had come to me in the first place. But because many other disease processes can cause back and neck pain, I had been taught to take a thorough case history from each new patient, and it was during these case histories that I began to hear about nagging daily symptoms that at the time didn't seem to have any connection to my patients' musculoskeletal complaints.

The symptoms my patients were discussing with me (and which they continue in ever increasing numbers to tell me about to this day) are the nagging, troubling daily symptoms that I know many of you are experiencing. Take food cravings, for instance, in which we become seemingly helpless to keep ourselves from eating that candy bar or pastry or drinking another

sugary soda, cafe latte, or cappuccino.

Many of my patients tell me that at times they have difficulty focusing when they read, balance their checkbooks, or do a mental thought process that's normally very easy for them. They express concern about experiencing occasional memory loss, realizing they sometimes forget simple everyday things they never forgot before.

Often parents express concern that their children are also having difficulty with concentration and focusing. Teachers report that these children can't sit still and are a distraction in class.

Many people feel tired all the time. No matter how much sleep they get, they don't seem to have the energy they need to get all their work done. Often, even though they go to bed feeling exhausted, they have difficulty falling asleep, or they sleep for two to three hours then wake up, unable to fall asleep again for several more hours.

Many of my patients have become dependent on antacids to cope with their chronic indigestion. They don't seem to be able to digest foods they once enjoyed. Some notice that they get hungry soon after eating a big meal, or find themselves opening the refrigerator and nibbling even when they aren't hungry, gaining unwanted pounds.

I often hear patients complain about having severe mood swings — one moment feeling like they can cope with life's challenges, and an hour or two later feeling overwhelmed. It's very troubling when patients tell me of having paralyzing depression. They say they just don't feel that their lives have much meaning or purpose.

I often have patients tell me about losing their tempers over little things. Husbands and wives tell me in confidence that they can't believe how angry they became at their spouse or children over things that later even they believe were insignificant.

Also, I hear about menstrual problems — complaints of irregular or painful periods, and periods that have suddenly stopped, or won't stop at all. I sadly remember seeing a twelve year old patient who began her menses at age nine and had bled every day since. She and her mother sat in my office and asked me if this was okay. In recent years I've also noticed an increase in severe menopausal symptoms that are showing up in women of younger ages and lasting for many more years than is normally expected.

Common "Little d's"

- food cravings
- candida
- memory loss
- attention deficit
- fatigue/lack of energy
- exhaustion
- temper flare-ups
- forgetfulness
- muscle pain
- joint stiffness
- diarrhea
- lack of sexual drive
- dependance on antacids
- difficulty concentrating and/or focusing
- inability to digest and/or absorb food
- colds and flus that come too often and last too long
- depression
- impatience
- menstrual problems
- menopausal symptoms
- pms
- chronic indigestion
- constant hunger
- weight gain
- mood swings
- dry skin
- acne
- hyperactivity

Often, I'll ask my patients if they've discussed these troubling symptoms with their family doctors and they'll usually say yes — that they were reassured that these symptoms were nothing to be concerned about, and would probably eventually just go away by themselves. Or worse, patients have been told that these problems are "all in their head."

What has really caught me off guard is how often I hear the same or similar complaints in patient after patient. I'm sure you can imagine how frustrating this has been for a doctor who's always wanted to cure every one of his patients of every one of their symptoms.

After many years of practice, I've learned what the consequences are of leaving these seemingly minor symptoms undiagnosed and untreated. So today, when I take a case history, I always include specific questions about them. I have come to refer to these symptoms as the *Little d's*.

Little d's

What exactly are the Little d's? Well, to best understand them, you must first understand about *Big D's*. Big D's are deadly degenerative diseases such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and Alzheimer's disease. All Big D's are referred to in medical literature as *chronic degenerative diseases*. The word *chronic* refers to the fact that these diseases take many years to develop, and the word *degenerative* means that many of our body's natural defense mechanisms, such as our immune system, must break down and eventually fail before we die from these Big D diseases.

The Little d's should be thought of as

your body's early warning system. . .

As an example, recent annual statistics of Big D's showed that in one year 300,000 people died of cancer in the United States and 300,000 more died of various diseases of the digestive system. About one million Americans suffered heart attacks: 400,000 attacks were fatal while 200,000 other people suffered strokes.

One hundred thousand people died with Alzheimer's disease, and every day many thousands more are being diagnosed with this debilitating Big D. I'm convinced that deaths from Big D's would be dramatically lower if the people included in those statistics knew what you're going to know by the time you finish reading this book.

Here's where the new way of looking at the disease process, and those Little d's, comes in. I want to refer back for a moment to that list of nagging daily symptoms that my patients are always complaining about: food cravings, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness or memory loss, hormone imbalances, attention deficit in children, and decreased immune responses that allow colds and flues to come too often and last too long. I call these Little d's or *little diseases* because I've come to understand that these symptoms are degenerative diseases as well.

I'm convinced that deaths from Big D diseases would be dramatically lower if the people included in those statistics knew what you're going to know by the time you finish reading this book.

Does that surprise you? I realize that referring to these non-life-threatening "symptoms" as degenerative diseases is certainly not traditional medical thinking. However, each of these Little d's is clearly the result of a degenerative process, and understanding this process and forming a strategy to deal with it is vitally important to your long term health.

I use the word *degenerative* with the Little d's in just the same

way as I do with the Big D's because degeneration refers to the process by which your body's natural defense mechanisms begin to break down. But, unlike the Big D's, where over a long period of time whole systems begin to fail before you have obvious symptoms, with Little d's all that's required for symptoms to appear is for just a few days to pass during which you fail to provide adequate nutrition to your body's cells.

I also use the word *disease* when I refer to Little d's, but to understand why you must break the word *disease* down into its component parts. *"Dis"* means "the opposite of," or, more accurately, "not." Add this to *"ease"* and you have *"not-ease."* So the Little d's should be thought of as your body's early warning system, or your body's way of telling you that your cells, due to a lack of necessary nutrition, are unhealthy, or, *"not at ease."*

How Our Bodies are Affected by Little d's

Our bodies deal with the daily task of preventing and healing Little d's through an amazing process called *cellular regeneration.* Here's how it works.

The human body contains roughly 27 trillion cells — that's 27,000,000,000,000. About *140 billion* (140,000,000,000) of these cells are repaired or replaced *daily.* Isn't that amazing? For example, most of the cells that line your mouth are repaired or replaced after every meal. Your body will repair or replace the cells that line your digestive system every two to three days. In fact, in about three months time, every cell in your vital organs (such as your heart, pancreas, and liver) will have been completely repaired or replaced. Just think for a minute about the complexity involved in that process.

Rates of Cellular Repair	
Mouth	After every meal
Intestinal Walls	2 to 3 days
Vital Organs	100 days
Complex Cells	18 to 36 months

Just what is it that has to fail, or degenerate, at the cellular level that will cause you to feel Little d symptoms? Well, cellular regeneration, like any other regeneration process, requires raw materials that cells utilize to perform the tasks of repairing or replacing your aging cells. In the case of cellular regeneration, since your body doesn't produce any of these essential raw materials, your cells are completely dependent on you to supply these materials through your daily nutritional intake. Once you've done *your* job, each cell's innate intelligence, or inherent knowledge, takes over and begins the job of transforming these dietary raw materials into the biochemistry necessary for the repair or replacement of that cell. If you fail to provide this nutrition in adequate amounts, or in forms that the cell can't utilize, the cell's ability to perform the necessary repairs is greatly reduced, and in just a few days, if you're paying attention, you'll notice the onset of one or more Little d's.

To give you an example of how the Little d degeneration process works, and the importance of daily monitoring of your Little d symptoms, let's take a look at the cells that perform the many functions of your digestive system, which include the stomach, gall bladder, and pancreas, which have specialized cells that produce your digestive enzymes. If these cells are producing enzymes in inadequate amounts or of poor quality due to improper cellular repair, it becomes impossible for your body to get all the nutrition available from the food that those en-

zymes are supposed to be digesting. This quickly leads to the Little d's of indigestion, malnutrition, and fatigue, which eventually lead to the far more serious Little d of a decrease in your immune response system. Then come the Little d symptoms of infections that take too long to heal (such as colds and flues that come too often and linger for weeks). Can you begin to see how this works?

So, what are the raw materials that are so important to cellular regeneration and to your overall health? There are two, the first being *amino acids.* Altogether, there are twenty different amino acids that link together in structures called *amino acid chains* that form your body's proteins and cellular enzymes. The second type of essential raw materials are *minerals* that function as *cofactors,* which means that these minerals combine with cellular enzymes, thereby activating or driving cells to perform their specialized cellular functions.

Simply put, when cells don't get the raw materials they need to regenerate, they begin to degenerate.

In a really simplified analogy, think of each cell in your body as a factory. The factory walls and the machinery inside it are made up of amino acids and the source of power that drives the machinery are the minerals. Without either element, neither can function very well. Simply put, when cells don't get the raw materials they need to regenerate, they begin to degenerate.

Of course, I don't mean to imply that there aren't many other nutrients, such as vitamins, that are also necessary in your daily diet in order to enjoy optimum health. I only mean that the most *basic* nutrition your aging cells need for cellular repair is adequate and usable amounts of amino acids and minerals.

Amino Acids

I have already told you that amino acids link to form proteins, but did you know that well over half of each cell in your body is made up of hundreds of these different proteins? Proteins form the outer cell wall of each cell, as well as the basic framework for each of the structures inside the cell. These structures act as cellular "machinery" that are responsible for that cell's repair or replacement function as well as any other specialized function that particular cell is designed to perform, such as the production of insulin, hormones, or digestive enzymes. Additionally, amino acids combine to produce the proteins that form thousands of intracellular enzymes, without which the cell can't function. Without adequate high quality amino acids to make cellular proteins, no cell repair or replacement can occur.

To fully appreciate the importance of providing your cells with a daily food source of complete amino acids, you should know a little bit more about how amino acids work. Your body uses only twenty different amino acids to create its many different cellular proteins. These twenty amino acids are linked together in chains of varying combinations, each combination making a different type of protein. For example, some amino acid chains, such as the ones that form the proteins that make up your heart muscle, can be several hundred thousand amino acids long. Other chains can be as short as three or four amino acids, like the neuropeptides that bathe your brain cells.

Your body is capable of producing ten of these amino acids, called *nonessential amino acids,* by itself. The other ten, called *essential amino acids,* must be provided to your body by way of your daily nutrition. When you fail to provide your cells with even one of these essential amino acids, that cell's innate ability to form the proteins necessary for repairing or replacing itself is dramatically limited. When this happens, either your body

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produces a cell of poor quality, or in some cases, no repair or replacement occurs at all. It's important to remember that when your body fails to repair or replace an aging cell, or when the repair or replacement of that cell is of poor quality, you lose the health benefits of whatever that cell is specialized to contribute. You can imagine the effect, over time, that this will have on your body's ability to cope with either the Little or Big D's.

For example, I believe that one of the reasons for the recent dramatic increase in the use of antidepressant medication is that some people cannot produce adequate amounts of serotonin, the body's natural "mood elevator," due to inadequate or poor quality amino acids and minerals available at the cellular level in those patients.

Minerals

In addition to amino acids, your cells require adequate amounts of absorbable minerals. And while *all* trace minerals are extremely important to your body, my research and clinical results have convinced me that the eight *most* important minerals for cellular repair and replacement are calcium, cobalt, copper, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, zinc, and manganese. These eight minerals are the necessary cofactors that help to bond one cellular enzyme to another, thereby activating the enzymatic reaction. Remember the example of the factory? Minerals are

the "fuel" which drive cells' "machines." The machines are made of amino acids which have linked together to form proteins and cellular enzymes. Proteins and cellular enzymes, just like machines, perform specialized functions that keep you healthy. Without minerals to "power" cellular enzymes, no cellular biochemistry can occur, and the cell will die. It's important to understand that without this mineral bonding, each individual enzyme is utterly *useless* to the repair process — or for any other cellular function. And just as in the case of failing to provide all twenty amino acids for protein synthesis, if you fail to provide your cells with even *one* of these eight essential minerals, the breakdown of cellular repair results in yet another pathway leading to the development of one or more Little d's.

By this point, you may be wondering why you still have so many Little d symptoms, even though you eat a healthy, well-rounded diet and take lots of supplements. It's a fair question to ask, and the answer is that no matter how well-rounded one's diet, or how many food supplements one swallows every day, at the body's *basic cellular level*, the vast majority of Americans are literally starving.

Our Foods

Let me tell you how I came to that conclusion. As far back as 1936, Congress was so concerned about mineral depletion in our food sources that the U.S. Senate commissioned a panel to study the problem. The resulting report, entitled "US Senate Document Number 264," concludes that evidence the panel gathered substantiated Congress' concern: Commercially grown food crops were indeed providing people with inadequate amounts of the minerals necessary for optimum health. Now remember, that was 1936, and I can tell you that the mineral content of our food today is far worse than it was then, and

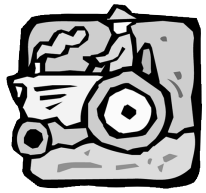
here's why: Since that report was written, because of changing economic realities and the rapid growth of our nation's population, a dramatic increase in food production has become necessary. Over the past forty to fifty years, due to our increased demand for food, we've seen a steady movement away from relatively small, family-run farms, and an increase in large corporate farming operations. We once benefited nutritionally from the age-old practice of crop rotation, whereby complimentary crops are alternated each year to replenish minerals in the soil that the previous year's crop depleted, as well as the practice of simply allowing some fields to lie fallow for a year or more. Many years ago organic fertilizers such as manure and plant trimmings were composted and then returned to the soil. The annual flooding of cropland along our great rivers once brought flood waters rich with mineral silt to the depleted soil. Now, we have the mixed blessing of dikes that very effectively protect homes by holding back flood waters, but which also keep mineral-rich silt from being deposited on our croplands.

Unfortunately for our bodies, old farming methods have given way to the concepts of maximizing crop yields and profits. Today's food producers have learned that there are three or four basic minerals that they must put back into the soil to produce the large and colorful fruits and vegetables that you see in the produce section of your grocery store. However, these minerals are of little or no nutritional value to your body because the few supplements that are added to the soil are artificially synthesized in a form that is essentially nonabsorbable in your intestine. And, because plants need a wide range of minerals to produce vitamins, the reality is that when you go to the grocery store today, you're buying tomatoes with little Vitamin A, whole grain cereals with low levels of Vitamin E, carrots with almost no beta carotene, and citrus fruits with little or no Vitamin C.

When I was growing up in the 50s and 60s, I spent most of

my summers working on the family farm in east Texas where my grandparents farmed several hundred acres of corn and various vegetable row crops. Although I was always on the farm at harvest time, and any number of fresh vegetables from our fields were available to my family, the only vegetables my grandmother and aunts would prepare for us were the vegetables that came from my grandmother's garden that she carefully tended year after year. I never asked why we never ate the row crops, I just knew that Grandma's vegetables tasted much better than those from the field.

At the body's basic cellular level, the vast



majority of Americans are literally starving.

My grandmother worked hard to carefully mulch our family garden with vegetable trimmings from the kitchen and organic fertilizer from the animal pens in the barn that I had to haul out and dump on the garden. In contrast to my grandmother's organic fertilizer, I recall helping my grandfather spray chemical fertilizer onto the commercial crops. Even back then, the spray was made up of only those three or four synthetic mineral supplements I told you about earlier.

Of course, today I know that the organic minerals from compost and manure were what gave Grandma's fruits and vegetables their delicious flavors, and I've since wondered if she knew just how beneficial her garden was to her family's long term health.

In hindsight, I regret how long it took me to realize that there was a connection between those two contrasting farm methods and my seeing, years later, the multitude of Little d symptoms I was trying so hard to help my patients control. The

connection, I discovered, is that foods grown in mineral-depleted soils yield mineral-deficient plants, which when eaten, always result in mineral-deficient bodies. Now you understand what I mean when I say that most Americans are actually starving.

As if this lack of minerals in our food is not bad enough, it's also becoming more difficult for us to consume adequate amounts of usable amino acids. Recall that amino acids form those hard-working proteins and enzymes that are so important in our daily battle with the Little d's, and that we must consume considerable amounts of ten different amino acids each day from our food alone.

Most people obtain these amino acids from meat protein. So when you consider those long meat counters bulging with poultry, beef, and fish at the grocery store, I understand how difficult it is for you to imagine that getting adequate high-quality protein from meat could be a problem.

Unfortunately, more and more studies show that relying heavily on meats for your amino acids exposes you to various health problems. For example, today's commercially grown poultry and cattle are dosed with powerful antibiotics to control the bacterial infections caused by housing the largest number of animals in the smallest possible space. Furthermore, anabolic steroids are typically given to cattle in the last few weeks of their lives to increase their body weight, while toxic amounts of mercury, lead, and cadmium contaminants are found in most coastal fish.

So when you eat the meat of these animals, you should be aware that you're also eating antibiotics in the meat which kill the friendly bacteria in your own intestines, and you're eating steroids and heavy metal poisons that can damage your liver and other organs.

You might ask, "Well, Dr. Meyers, what about using vegetarian proteins, such as beans, rice, and vegetables, as amino acid sources?" My answer is that while this is an excellent idea, it's still not a complete solution, since many of my vegetarian patients suffer from the same Little d's as my meat-eating patients.

Foods grown in mineral-depleted soils yield mineral-deficient plants,

which when eaten, always result in mineral-deficient bodies.

Here's why: Remember the ten essential amino acids that you have to supply your body from food each day? Well, as it turns out, there's only one vegetarian food source that I know of (which we will talk about in a few minutes) that contains all ten of those essential amino acids — and it's not available at your local grocery store. A few vegetarian food sources have as many as seven or eight of these essential amino acids, but you have to know which ones they are and, more importantly, which vegetarian foods have the other two or three amino acids necessary to make up all ten. Many of my vegetarian patients complain about the large quantity of vegetarian foods they have to consume to maintain their health. The reason this is necessary, I explain, is that because of the depletion of our soils, the grains and beans they are eating today may contain as little as one tenth of the protein they contained forty years ago — and the fruits and vegetables they're eating today contain little or no minerals. The unfortunate result of this is vegetarian patients with a bunch of Little d's.

Now I know I've made this all sound pretty bleak — and I promise I'll tell you about a good solution in a bit, but right now I want to make sure that the importance of understanding

If you don't learn how to control your Little d's,

the likely result will be development later in life of a Big D such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, arthritis, or diabetes.

Little d's is clear to you, because often when I get to this point in explaining the concept of Big and Little d's to my patients they'll say something like, "Dr. Meyers, this is just too complex, and it seems like dealing with my Little d symptoms is going to be way too much of a hassle. I've put up with them for a long time now, so I guess I'll just take my family doctor's advice and learn to live with them."

I'm always glad when I hear this reaction because it gives me the opportunity to make two very important points. First, getting your essential amino acids and minerals is actually not complicated, and you know that if you can get these two raw materials that allow your cells to repair themselves, you have increased your ability to control or eliminate your Little d's. Second (and this is really the point I've been leading up to), if you don't learn how to control your Little d's, the likely result will be development later in life of a Big D such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, arthritis, or diabetes.

Now, just to show you how this works, let me give you three specific examples of how the Little d's, when ignored, can become Big D's.

Diabetes

When I take the case history of a patient who has developed the Big D of diabetes in his forties, fifties, or sixties, he will invariably tell me that he's experienced years of Little d symptoms of blood sugar swings, light headedness, and cravings for sweets which he's learned to satisfy by consuming sugary foods, usually a candy bar or soda. Physiologically, what is happening to this person is that for a long time he has had another Little d — an over-reactive pancreas — that produces too much insulin, just the *opposite* of diabetes. Too much insulin lowers blood sugar levels too quickly, causing symptoms of light-headedness and sugar cravings. Eating candy bars and drinking sodas, which provide a brief burst of energy, perpetuates this blood sugar roller coaster until later in life the cells that produce the insulin in the pancreas become exhausted and can no longer produce adequate amounts of insulin. The patient then becomes dependent on daily injections of insulin to survive. That's how a series of relatively minor Little d symptoms, ignored one by one over a lifetime, become the deadly Big D of adult-onset diabetes.

Heart Disease

This same Little d/Big D progression is the cause of the two most common forms of heart disease. The first, atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries, begins with the Little d of a thickening of the endothelial cells that line our arteries. Remember when I discussed cellular regeneration? Well, given the proper amino acids and minerals, each of your body's cells has the innate intelligence to repair or replace a damaged or aging endothelial cell, thereby preventing this thickening from occurring in the first place.

This is important, because once this thickening progresses far enough, cholesterol begins to catch on these thickened cells

and form deposits which can eventually cause a heart attack by completely closing off the flow of blood to the heart muscle.

The other Big D of heart disease is called cardiomyopathy. Cardiomyopathy is the end result of many years of the Little d of improper cellular regeneration, which eventually results in a weakened heart muscle itself.

Can you begin to see how important it is to recognize and control these Little d's before they cause enough degeneration to develop into Big D's? It's important to understand that by paying attention to your body's Little d signals and providing proper daily nutrition, your body's cells are perfectly capable of making the necessary daily repairs that prevent the development of Big D's.

Cancer

Cancer is another great example of how a bunch of Little d's can lead to a Big D. No one wakes up one day with a malignant tumor! Millions of cells have had to fail to perform properly over many years for that tumor to have developed and later become malignant.

It's significant to understand that we all have thousands of cancerous cells abnormally reproducing in our bodies every day, caused by such ordinary things as x-rays, smoking, secondhand smoke, air pollution, pesticides and other carcinogens in our food, and even excessive exposure to sunlight.

Because cancerous cells are so common and potentially deadly, our body's innate intelligence has developed several different ways to control the growth of these cancerous cells. For example, suppressor cells that recognize and kill cancer cells are produced by our immune system, specifically in the thymus gland and in our bone marrow. But failure of other cells to either turn these suppressor cells on or off is a Little d that occurs at the cellular level when the cells responsible for this job

are not correctly repaired or replaced.

Here's the point: When you starve your cells by eating mineral and protein depleted foods, repair or replacement of aging cells can't take place. This results in Little d's which inevitably progress into Big D's.