

## **Editorial**

# **THE NEGATIVE LIFESTYLE AND CONTEMPORARY DISEASES**

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The so-called "modern negative lifestyle" has an essential role in the occurrence of multiple diseases. The advantages of technological progress are beyond question; our existence is longer and much more beautiful than of our predecessors. Unfortunately, this "progress" goes hand in hand with a lot of deficiencies. Among the most common ones we can mention: unhealthy nutrition, sedentary lifestyle, smoking, pollution, stress, alcohol and other harmful substances excess, drug abuse, spiritual and moral unbalance. The diseases favored by these unhealthy factors were called "diseases of comfort", including obesity and other metabolic diseases, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, respiratory diseases, neuropsychiatric diseases, muscle-skeletal disorders etc. In order to combat them, the first step consists in ameliorating the lifestyle, by: adequate nutrition, physical activity, maintaining a normal body weight, maintaining normal values for arterial tension, plasma glucose and lipids, smoking cessation, moderate alcohol consumption etc.

### **Which are the problems we must fight?**

The main component of the “negative lifestyle” is considered to be **the unhealthy diet**, our no.1 enemy, now and in the future. First of all, the intake of calories is higher than the human body needs and is associated with a restraint in physical activity. Because the

expenditure of calories is reduced, they are stored as adipose cells and contribute to obesity growth. This raise of calories intake is often determined by foods rich in animal fats and/or refined carbohydrates that seem attractive, tasteful, cheap and easy to prepare.

Other negative aspects of the modern diet are: unhealthy content in fatty acids in some products, salt intake, artificial additives, inadequate cooking methods, excessive association of alcohol consumption.

In our days, **sedentary activities** are part of our life. People don't walk anymore, don't use the stairs, always go by car or other transportation ways and spend a lot of hours in front of the TV or computer. The same pattern can be observed in our children: they don't run enough; they play computer games and consume a lot of sweet foods and beverages, with an important impact on their growth and development.

**Smoking** proved its negative effects on millions of people. However, smoking cessation policies are still far from success worldwide.

**Pollution**, present in many areas, is guilty for apparition of many diseases. In the near future, fighting pollution must become a global concern and shouldn't be reserved only for several organizations.

Human society has a growing number of individuals; our existence is more dynamic every day and generates restlessness and

**stress.** The role of stress in development of actual pathology is beyond doubt. Cardiovascular diseases, neuro-psychiatric diseases, metabolic diseases and other disorders are caused or strongly influenced by stress.

**Alcohol abuse** has a lot of medical, social and economic consequences. Diseases caused by excessive alcohol consumption are: liver diseases, neuro-psychiatric diseases, cancers, cardio-vascular diseases, accidents and others. But, researches have proved that moderate alcohol intake, especially red wine has protective roles against metabolic and cardiovascular diseases.

**Other harmful substances** are often present in our modern life. One of the most frequent substances is coffee. As it is with alcohol, moderate intake of coffee (1-2 cups/day) has no dangerous effects on health. But, excessive consumption, especially if it is associated with smoking and alcohol might have severe consequences on our nervous, cardiovascular and digestive systems. The outcomes are even more serious when we talk about drugs use.

**Drugs and medication** are often abused in our society. This increased use of medication is on one hand justified by the growing number of diseases, the new therapies discovered and the higher interest and medical culture of population. On the other hand, self-medication is more and more frequent, as a response to stressful lifestyle, partial information from the media and ignoring the essential principles of a healthy life.

**Spiritual and moral unbalance** frequently characterise modern man, who is always restless, in continuous movement, insecure and lonely.

### **Which are the solutions?**

A very well documented statement designed for reduction of cardiovascular diseases and other chronic diseases was presented by The American Heart Association (AHA) in 2006. The main objective of these recommendations is the use of an overall healthy diet, associated with an important decrease in risk for cardiovascular and non-cardiovascular diseases. A diet rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains and fibres, low-fat meat and fish (at least twice a week) is strongly recommended by AHA.

A healthy body weight is reflected by BMI between 18.5 and 24.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup>. We can talk about overweight at BMI between 25 and 29.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup> and about obesity at a BMI over 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, a growing number of overweight and obese persons are registered every year all over the world, the main concern being the children and adolescents.

Another objective of AHA recommendations refers to maintaining normal values of plasma lipids. The higher LDL-cholesterol level is the bigger is the risk for diseases; this is why it should be maintained under 100 mg/dl. The most important cause of growing values of LDL-cholesterol is the intake of saturated fatty acids and *trans* fatty acids.

HDL-cholesterol level must be over 50 mg/dl for women and over 40 mg/dl for men, while triglycerides levels should be under 150 mg/dl, in order to decrease the risk for cardiovascular diseases.

Other AHA recommendations are: intake of saturated fats under 7% of total calories, intake of *trans* fatty acids under 1% of total calories, intake of cholesterol under 300

mg/day. These statements can be respected by choosing low-fat meat or vegetables, low-fat milk products and low intake of hydrogenated fats.

For maintaining the normal values of blood pressure (under 120 mmHg for systolic blood pressure and under 80 mmHg for diastolic blood pressure), people should reduce the salt and salty foods intake and the alcohol consumption.

The normal values for fasting plasma glucose are now below 100 mg/dl; over 126 mg/dl we can already talk about diabetes. In the last decades, all over the world, a growing intake of sweet foods and beverages was registered, especially in children and young adults. This is why AHA strongly recommends the decrease of these products consumption.

Regular physical activity is essential for reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases

and maintaining of health. All adults should have at least 30 minutes of physical activity almost every day, while 60 minutes/day are needed for children and adults that must loose weight. Sedentary activities, like TV watching and computer work should be reduced as much as possible.

Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption must be strongly avoided. However, moderate alcohol quantities can be included in a healthy diet, but no more than two glasses of wine/day for men and one glass of wine/day for women.

A natural reaction to all the threats of our lifestyle is the growing interest in information and increased awareness of the public concerning medical education. Public health policies and prevention strategies must be encouraged and implemented worldwide.

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