Mood swings and depression: let’s get to the bottom of it
by Rebecca K. Kirby, M.D., M.S., R.D.

It is estimated that 10 million Americans are on psychoactive medications. Drugs may modify the chemical environment of the cells and often alleviate symptoms, but they do not get to the root of the trouble. We need to give more thought to the nutrition of the brain. The brain, like other organs in the body, relies on a full spectrum of nutrients and the biggest user of these nutrients is the brain!

If you took 100 people, you would find a 10-fold difference in their need for any single nutrient.

However, brain cells like all other living cells commonly live under suboptimal nutrition. This is true of everyone, but in particular those with mental illness. Studies of hospitalized psychiatric patients show that upon admission 25% were deficient in folic acid, 32% had deficient levels of vitamin C, and 10% had actual scurvy. In addition, suboptimal levels of B12 were found at 30 times the prevalence of the general population. A deficiency in any one of these nutrients can cause an imbalance in the nutritional environment of the brain.

It is important to supply these nutrients to the brain. The brain must get from the blood those nutrient elements that are furnished from what we eat and drink. Certain nutrients are essential, meaning that our body cannot manufacture them, and they must be replenished or eaten daily.

With a poorly nourished brain you may experience depression and mood swings that interfere with functioning. Mood swings are normal and depression is appropriate at times, but an out of balance biochemistry can cause mood swings and depression to become so extreme that they interfere with normal activities.

In a study conducted in Great Britain, 80% of people with mood disorders noticed that food choices affected how they felt. They named sugar and alcohol as food stressors, and supportive foods were water, vegetables, fruits, and oil-rich fish. In his book, The Brain Chemistry Diet, Dr. Michael Lesser says that reducing refined carbohydrates and cutting out the “whites” will keep the blood sugar and accompanying mood swings under control. The “whites” are not a bad laundry day but represent foods that have been refined to improve shelf life and are no longer whole foods. These include white sugar, white flour, white rice, and white oils and fats (highly refined vegetable oils and hydrogenated fats).

Whole foods are generally metabolized at a slower rate to provide better blood sugar control, and they can provide what is needed to aid the digestion and absorption of nutrients. Highly refined carbohydrates or simple sugars affect insulin release and contribute to hypoglycemia and subsequent mood swings. The slower metabolism of protein and fats can help slow down someone in an agitated state.

Dietary fat plays a critical role in

C-reactive protein strong predictor of heart health in women

Cardiovascular specialists at Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas are looking more closely at C-Reactive Protein (CRP)—a protein that shows inflammation in the body. A more sensitive version of the CRP test shows better results as a marker for coronary heart disease, particularly among women patients.

When a simple blood test shows an elevated CRP level, a woman and her physician realize that more aggressive steps are needed to control this risk factor for heart disease. Heart disease is the number one killer of both men and women.

The CRP test not only shows heart disease, but it also is an indicator of generalized inflammation in the body. This could include any number of inflammations such as rheumatoid arthritis or bacterial infections, as well as heart disease.

Recent studies show CRP to be a better indicator of heart disease than LDL cholesterol, the “bad guy” of cholesterol that shows up in blood tests.
Nutritional Medicine
by Ron Hunninghake, M.D.

The top 10 benefits of tea

10) Tea is magical: “If you are cold, it will warm you; if you are too heated, it will cool you; if you are depressed, it will cheer you; if you are excited, it will calm you.”

9) Tea is low in carbs and low in calories: Unsweetened, fresh-brewed tea—both black and green, hot or iced, regular or decaffeinated—is 100 percent natural, has no fat, calories, sodium, or sugar.

8) Tea is packed with phytonutrients: The antioxidants in black and green tea, called flavonoids, may help to maintain healthy cells and tissues as well as contribute to healthy cardiovascular function. Antioxidants are natural plant-based biochemicals that prevent oxidation or “rusting” of living tissues.

7) Tea has a high ORAC score: USDA researchers, using a test tube measure called ORAC, found that an 8-ounce serving of black or green tea is more effective in neutralizing free radicals than individual servings of more than 33 commonly consumed fruits and vegetables.

6) Tea has just the right touch of caffeine: Regular black and green teas contain about half the caffeine as a comparable cup of coffee. International Food Information Council Foundation reports that: Extensive research shows that moderate caffeine intake is not a health risk. Moderate use of caffeine is defined as about 300 mg per day (eight cups of brewed hot or iced tea or three cups of brewed coffee).

5) Black tea may reduce your risk of heart disease: Eight hundred elderly Dutch men consuming 3.4 cups of tea per day decreased their risk of death from coronary heart disease by 58 percent compared to those who consumed lesser amounts of flavonoid-rich foods.

4) Tea may take the place of a baby aspirin: Aspirin has been shown to provide protection against heart attack or stroke by reducing tendency of blood platelets to stick together to form clots that block arteries. Many doctors recommend that patients at risk for heart attacks take aspirin every day. Emerging findings from animal studies suggest the flavonoids in tea may also decrease the tendency of platelets to stick together.

3) Tea may reduce your risk of cancer: Animal studies suggest that both black and green tea may help prevent or delay the formation of tumors—specifically in the skin, lung, esophagus, stomach, and colon.

2) Tea restores mind and body: Recent studies indicate that drinking a cup of black tea rapidly “revives” by improving mental alertness. These effects of tea are not solely due to the effect of caffeine.

1) Tea is the perfect social drink: For over 5000 years, almost every culture on the planet has enjoyed “tea time.” Tea, black, green, or the intermediate oolong blend, is mankind’s most popular, most healthy, most calming, most reviving beverage.

Mood swings—Cont’d from page 1

brain health. All cell membranes are made up of fats (lipids). The brain is the fattest organ in the body and requires fat-soluble vitamins to protect the cell membranes. The omega-3 fatty acids are the most abundant of the essential lipids in the membrane of the brain.

The omega-3 fatty acids have been shown to be effective in treating cardiovascular disease, rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn’s disease, and bipolar disorder. Dr. Andrew Stoll’s research published in The Archives of Clinical Psychiatry showed that persons diagnosed with bipolar disorder improved in only four months when supplemented with concentrated fish oils versus placebo.

So, again, our body chemistry creates brain chemistry. The brain is a chemical factory that produces neurotransmitters and derives the raw materials for synthesis from amino acids, with vitamins and minerals as essential cofactors.

Did you know that amino acids, continued on page 3
vitamins and minerals, as well as fatty acids, can be measured in each individual? We are all unique so the biochemical make-up and requirements differ from one person to the next. Dr. Roger J. Williams explained this principle as biochemical individuality. If you took 100 people, you would find a 10-fold difference in their need for any single nutrient.

That is why it is important to measure your nutrient levels. Finding the right molecule to address your particular biochemical need is the basis of Orthomolecular Psychiatry. The Nobel scientist, Linus Pauling, who coined the phrase orthomolecular, said, “The functioning of the brain is affected by the molecular concentration of many substances that are normally present in the brain. The optimal concentrations of these substances for a person may differ greatly from the concentrations provided by his normal diet and genetic machinery.”

The optimal nutrition that we must supply to the body by the food we eat is unique to each of us. Here at The Center we measure the levels of these different components to better understand each individual’s biochemistry.

To study what nutrient deficiencies were found in people with depression who came here to The Center, I conducted a review of a dozen random charts. I found overtly deficient plasma vitamin C levels in 25%. The brain is the second biggest user of vitamin C, requiring 15 times the vitamin C beyond the level found in the plasma. Rich sources of vitamin C include citrus fruits, peppers, strawberries, melons, cabbage, potatoes, tomatoes, and dark green vegetables.

Three particular B vitamins, riboflavin, niacin, and B6, were found to be low in those co-learners with the diagnosis of depression. The B vitamins are essential for normal brain function and a healthy nervous system; a deficiency of any one of which can cause depression. Riboflavin, B2, is found in milk, yogurt, liver, and dark green leafy vegetables. Niacin, B3, is found in meat, tuna, peanuts, and whole grains. B6 is found in whole grains, fish, dark green vegetables, and lentils.

Chewing the fat

Dr. Ron Hunninghake has been getting excellent results by using the Atkins Approach with co-learners and the people who have come to the Lunch and Lectures he has given covering this subject.

Dr. Atkins’ book, Dr. Atkins’ Diet Revolution, was first published in 1970 and has sold millions of copies. His latest book, the one Dr. Ron is using, was published in 2002 as Dr. Atkins’ New Diet Revolution.

Dr. Ron does not see the book so much as a diet to lose weight but as a guideline for a new lifestyle. When used in this way, it works much better. But Dr. Ron points out that Dr. Atkins was the doctor to promote the diet plan in the United States and the doctor to take the heat for promoting it. But there were others in Europe who promoted the low carbohydrate method before 1970.

Speaking from his home in the United Kingdom, Barry Groves, an engineer and author, told the Townsend Letter for Doctors & Patients, “My interest in nutrition and its effects on health really began in 1962 when I was working in Singapore with the Royal Air Force. We had a problem, my wife and I—we were overweight. Since our marriage in 1957, each of us had gained nearly 18 Kilos. We had tried all the usual ways to lose weight: cutting calories, eating inert fillers, taking appetite suppressants, wearing sweaty clothes, indeed we tried just about every weight-loss idea going—with results that were decidedly short-term.”

Then he came across a book, Eat Fat and Grow Slim by Dr. Richard Mackarness. It changed their lives. The book advocated what they thought was impossible: an unrestricted calorie diet for weight loss. This was a high animal fat, low carbohydrate way of eating. So they tried it. It worked and they have been doing it for over 40 years with success.

He retired from the Royal Air Force in 1982 and devoted himself to a full-time job of literature search, writing, and lecturing to support his way of life in the United Kingdom.

Life Without Bread by Dr. Chris-
Could something as simple as getting enough water in our bodies help us to be healthier? F. Batmanghelidj, M.D., has researched the effects of water both clinically and scientifically and his answer to that question is a resounding yes. He shares his knowledge of over twenty years on this subject in Water: For Health, For Healing, For Life. Dr. Batmanghelidj views water as nature’s miracle medicine that is simple, safe, free, and effective. Simply adjusting our fluid and salt intakes can help us treat and prevent dozens of diseases, avoid costly prescription drugs, and enjoy vibrant health. We know that plants need water not only to survive but also to thrive. Our questions this month are taken from his book.

1. ___________ is one of the very last indications of dehydration of the body. By the time this indicates a water shortage, many delicate functions of the body have been shut down and prepared for deletion.
   a. Blurred vision
   b. Salivation
   c. Dry mouth
   d. None of the above

2. The human body is about 75% water and 25% solid matter.
   The brain is said to be about ___________% water and is extremely sensitive to any dehydration or depletion of its water content.
   a. 50
   b. 60
   c. 75
   d. 90

3. Coffee, alcohol, some teas, and manufactured beverages can substitute for the pure natural water needs of the body.
   a. True b. False

4. The most significant and major complication of dehydration is the loss of a number of essential amino acids that are used to manufacture _____________.

5. We need to pay serious attention to our daily water intake because _____________.
   a. it is the best lubricating laxative and prevents constipation
   b. it is essential for the body’s cooling (sweat) and heating (electrical) system
   c. without water nothing lives
   d. all of the above

6. Only water that is free and can move about, the water you drink, generates hydroelectric energy at the cell membrane. It is not stored.
   a. True b. False

7. When we don’t drink enough water, the cells become depleted of their energy. They then have to generate energy from ____________ rather than the water.
   a. blood
   b. food
   c. fire
   d. none of the above

FOR ANSWERS, SEE PAGE 7

Healthy salt?
by Tim Lawton, M.D.

Is there a healthy alternative to table salt? In last month’s article, “Bringing Down High Blood Pressure,” I mentioned a salt substitute used in Finland called Pansalt. This product contains a mixture of sodium, potassium, magnesium, and lysine. Pansalt has replaced conventional table salt (sodium chloride) in over 1000 commercial food products in Finland, and it is even being used by restaurants such as McDonald’s. Since the introduction of Pansalt in the 1970’s, deaths from heart attacks and strokes have dropped by 60% in Finland. A similar product called Heart Salt is available at the Gift of Health.

Mood swings—Cont’d from page 3

vegetables, beans, and brown rice.

Half of the charts I reviewed revealed a magnesium deficiency in those with depression. Low magnesium can cause depression and insomnia, plus depression can lower magnesium. One international study showed that higher rates of depression and suicide were seen in countries where magnesium is deficient in the diet. Magnesium is found in whole wheat, dried beans, nuts, and collard greens (again, a dark green leafy vegetable).

Zinc and chromium were also found low in one quarter of those individuals with depression. Stress lowers zinc and raises copper which can contribute to agitation. Zinc is calming and has been found to be decreased in bipolar patients. A balance of zinc and copper is important. Zinc is found in oysters, meat, egg yolks, whole grains, split peas, and pecans. Chromium is vital in the regulation of blood sugar which is important in controlling mood swings. Good sources of chromium include whole wheat, oysters, eggs, meat, and potatoes.

We need fats from whole foods. All of these individuals with depression had high levels of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-6 fatty acids are found in vegetable products like corn, safflower, and cottonseed oils which we tend to consume out of balance with the products that have high levels of omega-3 fatty acids like fatty fish, walnuts, flax seeds, and soybeans. Deficient levels of the omega-3 fatty acid, EPA or eicosapentaenoic acid, were found in 40% of those reviewed. This fatty acid is a precursor to anti-inflammatory substances which is important not only in conditions like arthritis, but an exaggerated inflammatory response can also depress mood.

Whole foods can provide a wealth of essential nutrients for the brain. There are even serotonin-promoting foods such as walnuts, pineapple, plum, tomatoes, eggplant, and avocados which may help lift a blue mood. Remember to avoid refined starchy foods, sugar, and caffeine when agitated. But don’t sweat the imperfections. Enjoy whole foods the majority of the time and feed your brain well.
The Garden and the gardener

by Melvin D. Epp, Ph.D.

The rains of late summer and the cooler temperatures have given the Brightspot Garden a new look. When you look down at the garden from the sidewalk around the domes, the whole garden appears vibrantly green. Indeed, the whole garden is still in production in mid-September. As the spring crops were harvested, the empty spots were filled with second plantings.

The corn has tasseled, and it is only a matter of time until more sweet corn can be harvested. The cucumbers and summer squash are in production again. Fall plantings of arugula always grow well. A succession of plantings has made possible the continuous harvesting of radishes. Lettuce also takes well to the cooler days.

A gardening tip in one of the magazines that I read this spring suggested not to dig out the broccoli plants after the spring harvest was finished, but rather to cut them back to three or four inches to encourage two side shoots to grow. These shoots would be Heading during the cool days of fall. Weekly, we are harvesting a few pounds of broccoli off these plants. I expect that we will continue to harvest a bit weekly until after frost.

The real joy of fall gardening, however, is that there are fewer bugs. This was a buggly summer, but now there are very few.

This is also the time of the year to preserve herbs for wintertime. Flavor your foods with herbs rather than salt. Freeze basil by packing chopped leaves into ice cube trays. Pour water or juice over the packed leaves and freeze. Store the basil cubes in airtight freezer bags. For fresh basil in a dish, just add a cube. Alternatively, the basil can be made into pesto, but leave the cheese out, and freeze pesto in ice cube trays also. When you want some pesto, thaw one or more cubes and add the cheese. The cheese in frozen pesto will lose its flavor. Dried basil also loses most of its flavor.

Basil will be the first to show cold temperature damage when the first frost comes. Sweet potatoes will be next. But fall is a great time to garden.

Herbal History

Rooibos, Aspalathus linearis

Tea from the rooibos (pronounced ROY-boss) bush is becoming more popular since marketers began touting it as an excellent source of antioxidants. Researchers discovered that this mild tasting tea was rich in polyphenols—plant based nutrients that have a potent antioxidant effect.

Rooibos is grown in a small area of South Africa near the town of Cedarberg. The needle-like leaves and stems are harvested in the summertime and then processed by either fermenting to make red tea or kept unfermented to make a yellow/tan tea.

Fermenting is done today as it has been done for hundreds of years. Recently, it was discovered that the green rooibos tea has more antioxidants than the fermented tea. Both the green tea and the fermented leaves are packaged as loose tea or in tea bags.

The tea has a smooth, non-bitter taste that is pleasant to drink either hot or cold. The unfermented has a mild “green” taste without the astringent taste. The fermented tea has a stronger sweet and fruity taste.

There have been over 50 studies discovering the phytonutrient values of rooibos tea and its effect on cancer in the test tube and with animals, but none have been done on humans. Rooibos tea shows good results on cancer in mouse studies. It also proves useful in preventing cancer from exposure to x-rays. Rat studies show fermented rooibos tea to greatly reduce lipid peroxidation in four areas of the brain compared to rats that drank water.

Folklore has indicated that rooibos tea is useful for colic, allergies, and other ailments. Since it has zero caffeine and very low tannin, it does not need to be subjected to decaffeination such as green or black tea.

Food of the Month

by Donald R. Davis, Ph.D.

BRAZIL NUTS are the seeds of giant trees in the Amazon rainforest. Their pollination is so specialized that Brazil nuts have not been successfully farmed. Income from harvesting and shellng supports tens of thousands of native families and protects nut areas from deforestation. Selenium is extraordinarily high, averaging 14 RDAs per oz. (about 7 nuts) in nuts bought in the shell (shown here) and about 1.4 RDAs if pre-shelled. The difference derives from the two products having different geographic origins. Brazil nuts are also good sources of magnesium, phosphorus, boron, copper, linoleic acid, vitamin E, and thiamin.

The length of each bar shows the amount of one nutrient. If a bar extends out to the inner circle, the food has enough of that nutrient to match the calories it contains. The numbers show nutrient amounts in RDAs per serving shown. The pie charts show the sources of calories (left) and the types of fat (right).
Mental Medicine
by Marilyn Landreth, M.A.

Enjoying slow motion

When was the last time you took a few moments to stop and really look at the landscape around you? With all the fall colors coming on and the bright blue skies this is a great time of year to enjoy nature. This was brought home to me recently when I had minor surgery on my foot. It wasn’t anything serious, but it slowed me down a great deal. Now, when I walk from one dome to another, I have to walk slowly and that allows me time to see all the beauty around me. I have the choice of fretting and fuming (I admit I do that sometimes too) because I have to walk so slowly or just relax and enjoy.

As with most people today, my life is usually very busy. A caption under a Hamilton cartoon said, “I’ve tried relaxing but—I don’t know—I feel more comfortable tense.” That kind of describes the way I can be, but with the advent of the weighted down foot I’m slowing down in more ways than one. By slowing down my ability to speed through life the other senses are coming more into play. The sound of the wind rushing through the leaves, the sharp smell of the marigolds, the rough and smooth textures around me are all noticed more than normal.

Georgia O’Keeffe said, “Nobody sees a flower—really—it is so small it takes time—we haven’t time—to see takes time, like to have a friend takes time.” Hopefully, I’ll remember to take the time to enjoy the beauty around me with all my senses. Take a few precious minutes for a Mental Medicine break and enjoy the beauty around you.

Case of the month

A 51-year-old woman came to The Center in late January, 2003, with concerns of several abnormal laboratory findings, anemia, intestinal candidiasis, tension headaches, low thyroid, ringing in her ears, and a fever of unknown origin.

She had been mostly in bed with a high fever and chills since mid December of 2002. The last time this happened was two years before this and the illness lasted for three months. This time she had been very fatigued and had swelling in her hands and feet. Before this happened she was involved with her son’s high school football team, fund-raising for projects, sending her Christmas cards, and working eight hours a day—to mention a few.

Dr. Lawton saw her on the first day and Dr. Riordan saw her on the following day. They wanted to see laboratory testing, including a test for the cytomegalovirus, Epstein-Barr virus, thyroid, vitamins and minerals, amino acids, parasites, and food sensitivities. In addition to this, they gave her a 15 gram intravenous vitamin C infusion (IVC) on one day, followed in two days by a 25 gram IVC. Both of these were followed by a plasma vitamin C test.

She went home with the materials to continue the 25 gram IVCs twice a week for four weeks as well as Gentle Iron, MSM powder, vitamin C, Ultram for pain, and alpha lipoic acid. In early February the IVC was increased to 50 grams.

She returned in late February and she said that she was doing so much better. She even went to church on Sunday, something she had not been able to do. She was eating better, her energy was better, and the pain and swelling was down in her legs. The results of the laboratory tests showed that her liver was better, but the iron was still low, indicating anemia.

In July, she came for an appointment. She said that she planned to wean off the Proboost as well as the MSM since the pain was gone. She still has a little stiffness in the morning, but this gets better throughout the day. She is continuing the IVCs.

CENTER UPDATE

Does nut eating cause weight gain?

“Frequent nut consumption is associated with lower rates of coronary artery disease (CAD),” according to a recent report in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. But if you eat a lot of nuts, which are high in fat, will you gain weight and have high cholesterol?

Donald Davis, Ph.D. and a consultant at The Center, says no. For several years, he has been supporting eating nuts through his Lunch and Lectures and other work while he has been at The Center. But the researcher, Joan Sabaté, who is from the Departments of Nutrition and Epidemiology and School of Public Health, Loma Linda University, wanted to find out if eating nuts could be a cause for the high rate of obesity seen in the United States during the time Doctor Davis has been preaching that we should be eating nuts.

To do this, she checked the published literature for the last 24 years. This included Dr. Levine’s study on the absorption of peanuts, peanut oil, and peanut butter that was reported in The New England of Medicine in 1980 to a recent article on nut consumption and decreased risk of sudden cardiac death that appeared in the Archives of Internal Medicine.

First, she found that, “Although differing in methodology and dietary control, collectively these investigations provide [substantial] evidence that short-term consumption of moderate to large amounts of nuts does not increase weight.”

Secondly, she found that people who eat nuts may tend to engage in higher levels of physical activity than people who don’t eat nuts. Thirdly, she learned that nuts might increase the resting energy expenditure because of their high-protein and unsaturated fat content. This just may result in less fat storage in nut eaters.

“The current data do not indicate that free-living people on self-selected diets including nuts have...increased weight,” Dr. Sabaté concluded.
c. Through the loss of enzyme functions brought about because of dehydration the aging process begins.

b. While these beverages contain water, most of them also contain dehydrating substances such as caffeine.

b. Adequate hydration of the body might be the best insurance against premature aging and early loss of our different sensory systems.

d. Dr. Batmanghelidj lists 46 reasons why our intake of water is so important.

a. The previously supplied water is now busy with other functions and cannot leave its binding position to rush to where water is needed.

b. The body is pushed into storing fat and using its protein and starch reserves because it is easier to break these elements down, leading to weight gain.

### WATER: FOR HEALTH, FOR HEALING, FOR LIFE
*By F. Batmanghelidj, M.D.*

Are you one of the many people who never drink water? Did you know that one of the easiest and cheapest ways to better health is by drinking enough water? Have you learned to ignore your body’s signals of thirst and dehydration? Dr. Batmanghelidj has written a book describing the body’s many needs for water. Soft cover.

Retail Price: $14.95  
Health Hunter: $13.46

### FEELING DOWNRIGHT DEPRESSED? LET’S GET TO THE BOTTOM OF IT
*With Hugh D. Riordan, M.D., & Rebecca Kirby, M.D.*

This lecture was presented by Dr. Riordan, the Director for the Center for the Improvement of Human Functioning International and Dr. Kirby, physician, biochemist, and dietician, who teamed up to tackle the topic of depression. Just how do nutrients affect our ability to think? Well, the number one nutrient for depression is vitamin C, but there’s more. Learn The Center’s approach to better mental health.

### DOING ATKINS RIGHT
*With Ron Hunninghake, M.D.*

There is a right way and a wrong way to do Atkins. Many well intentioned people bring their old dieting habits to the Atkins approach and end up failing to sustain weight loss, unable to change their eating habits for the better. With current research demonstrating Atkins to be effective not only at weight loss but cholesterol control and energy enhancement, it may be time to try Atkins again...the right way. Dr. Ron has powerful insights to share with you to help you get the results you want.

*To Order, Fill Out the Form Below*
Upcoming Events...

Lunch & Lectures:
- October 9  Yoga to Keep Us Younger
- October 16 Kid Nutrition: Tips for a Happier, Healthier Family
- October 23 Take a Break: It May Save Your Life
- October 30 Tune-up for Optimal Health

Atkins Q & A with Dr. Ron - The Center's Approach to Atkins:
- October 7  Misconceptions: What Does the Research Tell Us & What About Diabetics?
- October 14  Is Atkins Safe for Kids?
- October 21  Atkins Secret: Shifting to Fat Metabolism

- October 9  Know Yourself/Beat The Odds Mini Presentations and "Ask the Doctors"

- October 10 & 11 - Know Yourself/Beat The Odds Days

- October 10 & 11 - 9 a.m.-noon - Health Hunter Appreciation Day - Double Discounts in the Gift of Health

"Unorganized" sports prevent childhood obesity

Unorganized sports such as street hockey and riding a bicycle are better for a child than sitting at home watching television, according to a Canadian study that appeared in the *International Journal of Obesity* recently.

Art lessons, music lessons, and even playing video games are better than sitting passively and watching television. When the child is playing video games, he or she is at least actively involved in the game and not snacking on high calorie foods out of boredom. But unorganized sports are best.

Unlike organized sports where the child is sitting on the bench waiting for their chance to play, in unorganized sports the child is actively involved with playing the game. “They are on the move all the time,” the researchers said.