



The Lark Letter

A WOMAN'S GUIDE TO OPTIMAL HEALTH & BALANCE

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A graduate of Northwestern University Medical School, she has served on the clinical faculty of Stanford University Medical School, and taught in their Division of Family and Community Medicine.

A distinguished physician-educator whose clinical practice has spanned 31 years, Dr. Lark continues to teach and write. Her most recent book is *The Chemistry of Success*.

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Dear Friend,

In last month's Miracle Corner, I shared with you the story of Ian Purse's dramatic recovery from 12 years of debilitating chronic fatigue. His recovery came through the use of BodyTalk—an innovative new healing system that uses applied kinesiology, or muscle testing, to query the wisdom of the body and create a pathway for healing even the most difficult health problems.

I first found out about BodyTalk last year when my friend Brooke Baggett, a Reiki Master healer and acupuncturist, started to study this system. She wanted to use it with her other therapies to help heal her patients. I was quite intrigued by her description of BodyTalk, since I began to study and work with muscle testing many years ago and found that it did, indeed, provide a way of tapping into the body's innate wisdom.

Brooke has since integrated BodyTalk into her practice and, like Ian, has had great success with its use. She has found BodyTalk to be very helpful for a variety of health issues—including asthma, reproductive disorders, allergies, chronic fatigue, infections, digestive disorders, Parkinson's disease, anxiety, depression, learning disorders, back pain, and arthritis. She recently shared with me an interesting case history of one of her clients. For me, it reinforced the wonderful healing potential of BodyTalk, and I asked Brooke to share it with you in her own words:

Helping Marguerite

"When Marguerite first came to me, she appeared to be the picture of health. She was a young 42-year-old who exercised daily, ate healthfully, and seemed quite emotionally balanced. So, I was surprised to hear that her chief complaint was daily migraines, with pain so severe that she required prescription medication. I have been able to completely relieve the pain of migraines for many people with the use of acupuncture, so I thought I would have no trouble at all helping her.

"We started with a regimen of weekly acupuncture treatments, in the hopes of opening her energy flow and thus alleviating her migraine pain. The pain subsided a bit at first and she was able to take less medication. However, she reached a point where there was no more relief, and she was still suffering from migraine pain and still taking her medication a few times a week. For me, this was by no means a satisfactory result.

"I asked Marguerite if she would be willing to try BodyTalk. I explained that BodyTalk is able to determine on what level—physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual—the stresses of daily life have interrupted the body's communication system. A BodyTalk practitioner can reconnect the lines of communication, thus encouraging the body/mind to do its own healing. She said she would be willing to try this method.

“When Marguerite came for her session, what we discovered changed the pattern of her migraines dramatically. Upon doing muscle testing, I picked up imbalances relating to the following information: 12 years old, grief, home and family, and maple and pine trees. Marguerite knew exactly what her body was trying to communicate. After shedding some tears, she told me she had lost her mother when she was 12 years old. This was something she had never verbally shared with me before, but her body knew it was a key to solving her migraines. Her mother had died from brain cancer, which at the time the doctors were treating as migraines. During her grieving process, she spent much time among the maples and pines near her home.

“I checked in with Marguerite several days later, and was thrilled to hear that she hadn’t experienced any migraine pain. The same was true a few weeks later. The wonderful news is that this is only one of many cases that show the amazing healing capacity of BodyTalk. I believe it will profoundly change the way we look at health care.”

The BodyTalk Healing System

BodyTalk is based on the fact that every living thing is made of energy. When that energy is properly tuned and there are no blockages to its flow, then direct and efficient communication runs freely within your body—between one organ system and another, and between your body, mind, and spirit. It’s only when all the lines of communication are fully open that everything can function together for optimal health.

BodyTalk is a means of tapping into the body’s communication system to assess whether any of the lines are down—which can hinder healing from an illness or an injury. Through BodyTalk, it’s possible to figure out *which* lines are down, and then help the body reestablish communication and begin to heal.

What Is BodyTalk?

BodyTalk is noninvasive, simple, and effective—and there are no harmful side effects. Practitioners communicate with the body to locate the specific

areas that need repair. This is done using neuro-muscular biofeedback, or muscle testing, that allows the practitioner to have a dialogue with the innate wisdom of each individual’s body. Communication is reestablished between the various parts of the body by tapping specific points over the head and heart to recreate the healthy energetic linkages.

The main premise of BodyTalk is that the body can heal itself. With many healing techniques—both conventional and alternative—practitioners use their knowledge to try to figure out what’s wrong and fix it. But none of us will ever know the body as well as it knows itself. BodyTalk sees the body as being wise and brilliantly engineered, equipped with built-in analytic and therapeutic systems of its own. BodyTalk practitioners help channel this wisdom to promote optimal healing.

The Body’s Wisdom

The key to the BodyTalk system is *order*. Every cell within our bodies, every spark of emotion, every belief system, every one of our thought processes—all these things must be able to communicate together in an orderly fashion, so the body can coordinate the billions of bioelectrical, chemical, and energetic events that support life.

When something goes wrong, this rapid-fire internal dialogue allows the body’s own wisdom to determine the order in which repairs should be made, and then directs the body’s energy to heal the trouble spots in the most efficient manner. For example, your body may not want to detoxify its overly burdened liver *until* the digestive problem in the small intestine is healed—otherwise, toxins liberated from the liver can flood into the small intestine and be rapidly absorbed by the body through its raw, unhealed lining.

This cart-before-the-horse type of treatment is typical of many medical approaches, and it can create what is often referred to as a “healing crisis.” This isn’t to say that healing crises should never occur. But when treatment is done without consideration for priorities, the healing crisis can be much more intense than is necessary.

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A strong proponent of giving women the information they need to make health decisions, Dr. Lark has applied her extensive research in

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Miracle Corner

Just Don't Think!

As you may recall, I discussed the Feldenkrais method in the June 2005 issue of *The Lark Letter*. The Feldenkrais method is a technique that teaches you how to move your body in a way that improves your overall mind/body functioning. In essence, it helps you reprogram the way your body and mind work (and work together), so that they function more effectively.

Feldenkrais can be used to treat a wide variety of physical problems, including arthritis and the aches and pains associated with injuries. But did you know that it also helps with mental, learning, and developmental problems? Because it's such a holistic technique, I truly believe it's a life-changing technique—so much so, that I practice it regularly!

My friend Barbara White, a skilled Feldenkrais practitioner in the San Francisco area, always has such amazing stories to tell me about the many benefits her patients have experienced. One of the most fascinating stories she shared with me has to do with a patient who used Feldenkrais to re-range and refocus her mental patterns, thus helping to alleviate severe gastrointestinal problems and insomnia caused by severe anxiety.

A Life Full of Anxiety

Elizabeth was a very successful entrepreneur, as well as a devoted mother and avid tennis player. But her life was definitely not perfect—she had terrible insomnia, constipation, and other gastrointestinal problems due to high anxiety and stress.

She sought help from Barbara, and it did not take long for Barbara to determine that Elizabeth was producing entirely too much adrenaline. Adrenaline is produced by the sympathetic nervous system and causes arousal and alertness. In Barbara's case, it was overly active—which made it difficult, if not impossible, for her to relax. In fact, Elizabeth did everything—even “relaxing”

activities like playing tennis—with a fierce, competitive nature that compounded the problem.

Sensory Awareness

The Feldenkrais method teaches you to become more attuned to how your sensory system works. The technique shows you how to really *notice* how you feel during certain situations. The brain is not typically tuned in to these kinds of signals, but with the heightened awareness that Feldenkrais helps create, you can treat and even prevent many health problems—especially those made worse by stress.

In Elizabeth's case, she learned to become much more aware of the way she breathed during stressful situations, and how her muscles felt *before* they tightened up. With this new awareness, she was able to take measures to prevent her anxiety before it even started. Barbara also taught her how to take a step back and *not* think and problem-solve all the time—especially while in the bathroom, where her tension made normal elimination very difficult and aggravated her problem with constipation. She could sit on the toilet for a half-hour and just worry with no results. Through Feldenkrais, Elizabeth learned to recognize her body's many signals, and was able to consciously change those patterns that caused her health problems.

Within two months, Elizabeth started noticing significant results. Now, she has the power to control her anxiety and stop the endless cycles of worrying. She approaches life with a lighter viewpoint, and is now able to practice the Feldenkrais method on her own to maintain her miraculous life changes.

Learn More

To read more about the many benefits of the Feldenkrais method, please refer to the June 2005 issue of *The Lark Letter*, which you can find archived on my subscriber center at www.drlark.com (your login is your e-mail address, and your password is 74069S). To learn more about Barbara or to purchase one of her educational CDs, call 877-872-4504.

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How BodyTalk Works

When an illness, injury, or trauma is too severe, the lines of communication in our bodies get jammed as a result. The BodyTalk system taps into our inner wisdom to find out where the problem is and which lines need to be re-linked—helping our bodies heal

themselves, quickly, efficiently, and completely. Here's how a typical session might go:

- ▶ **Phase One: Gaining Permission.** You begin the session by lying face up, fully clothed, on a massage table with your arms at your sides. The practitioner stands beside you and asks your four centers of awareness—your physical body,

your conscious mind, your unconscious mind, and your higher, spiritual self—for permission to treat you. Each awareness center is given the opportunity to withhold permission. Responses are gauged through muscle testing. The BodyTalk system maximizes accuracy by isolating the test to a small but strong muscle in your arm.

- ▶ **Phase Two: Locating the Problem.** Once permission has been secured, the practitioner locates the energy circuits in the body that need balancing by asking the body yes/no questions: “Are organs a priority?” (YES) “Lungs?” (NO) “Liver?” (YES)... and so forth. Once again, the body’s answers are determined through muscle testing. The practitioner follows the flow of answers until the precise location of the problem(s) has been mapped out.
- ▶ **Phase Three: Reestablishing the Linkages.** Next, the practitioner focuses on each of the identified problem areas, usually placing the patient’s hand over the area. The practitioner then places his or her hand on each major body system in turn, asking where the linkage needs to be reestablished: “Link to heart?” (NO) “Lungs?” (NO) “Pancreas?” (YES)... For each linkage requested, the patient’s hand remains on the problem area while the practitioner touches the proper reflex point on the body that will link the system. The practitioner then lightly taps the patient’s head and heart, as described below.
- ▶ **Phase Four: Tapping and Breathing.** Tapping the patient is done lightly on two areas of the body—on the top of the head, and on the sternum over the heart. Tapping the head alerts the brain to that particular linkage, and asks it to reactivate that line of communication. Tapping the heart alerts the heart to the repaired link, and asks it to make the link permanent. (In traditional Chinese medicine, the heart is the central coordinator and energy organizer of the body.) While the practitioner is

tapping, the patient takes two cycles of deep, exaggerated breath to acknowledge and incorporate the corrections into the body’s awareness.

I find the BodyTalk System to be exciting because not only is it completely safe, but some people see dramatic results in as little as one session. It can be used as a stand-alone treatment, or to enhance the effectiveness of other therapies. In addition to its ability to affect physical, emotional, and spiritual healing, I particularly like the fact that this healing modality is respectful of the body’s wisdom. It reminds us, in essence, to listen. Our bodies will tell us what we need. They always have.

If you’re interested in trying BodyTalk and would like to find a qualified practitioner near you, go to www.bodytalksystem.com. If you live in northern California and want to contact BodyTalk practitioner Brooke Baggett directly, call 408-202-3444 (www.brookebaggett.com).

Q&A—Curing Canker Sores

Dear Dr. Lark,



Even after I stopped drinking grapefruit juice, I still get painful canker sores. How can I make them go away for good? I already eat a healthy diet. –Colleen

Dear Colleen,



Canker sores may be little, but they cause big discomfort because your mouth’s tissues are so richly innervated. The thing most people don’t realize is, they’re usually a signpost of a health issue elsewhere in the body. But because they draw your attention so sharply to your mouth, the larger issue often gets overlooked. That’s why cutting out the citrus didn’t solve your problem, and why not everybody who regularly consumes highly acidic food and drink gets canker sores.

Canker sores are the most common oral mucosal disease in humans. A February 2000 report from the University of Michigan School of Dentistry estimates that they occur in 20 to 25 percent of the population. So, why are some people prone to them, but not others? To answer that, we have to look at what I’ve found to be the three most common conditions that raise your risk of getting canker sores. If you can resolve those three issues, you can get rid of your canker sores for good.

A Good Diet May Not Be Good Enough

The layers of cells that line your cheeks, gums, and tongue are shed and replaced incredibly quickly. So, they need an abundance of nutrients delivered

Partial List of Conditions Resolved Through BodyTalk

Allergies	Female-related health problems (menopause, PMS, menstrual cramps)
Anxiety and depression	
Asthma	Food intolerances
Chronic fatigue	Headaches
Digestive disorders	Joint and back pain
Emotional, self-esteem, and body image issues	Learning disorders
Endocrine imbalances (thyroid, pineal, spleen, adrenals, etc.)	Reproductive disorders
Fears, phobias	Sexuality and relationship issues
	Viruses and infections

constantly to the basement membrane where they're manufactured. The trouble is, you can be deficient in some of those nutrients even if you're a healthy eater. Research indicates that deficiencies in vitamin B12, folate, and iron account for as many as 20 percent of all cases of recurrent canker sores. And, it has been repeatedly shown that when those deficiencies are corrected, the response ranges from dramatic improvement to complete resolution. Make sure you're getting plenty of the following:

- ▶ **B vitamins.** Especially at risk are vegans, who eat no animal protein (our primary source of B12); people who don't eat lots of fruits and vegetables (our primary source of B9) or whole grains (for B6); or people who overcook their food (which destroys all B vitamins). To absorb these vitamins, your stomach mixes them with mucoprotein enzymes, which tend to decline with age, stress, stomach problems, or stomach surgery. And, they're absorbed better, and work best, when taken together.

Therefore, get your "Bs" two ways. Eat raw or gently cooked vegetables, fruits, and whole grains that are naturally rich in B6 and B9 (as well as B12-rich organic chicken breast or wild-caught cold water fish if you're not vegetarian). In addition, take top-quality B supplements. **I recommend 50-100 mg vitamin B complex per day, plus 800 mcg folate (divided into two or three daily doses).**

- ▶ **Iron.** Research indicates that canker sores occur one-and-a-half times more often in women than men, due at least in part to a higher incidence of iron deficiency from menstruation. And because animal flesh is a major source of dietary iron in meat eaters, vegetarians need to be especially iron-savvy. Because iron supplements can cause toxic iron overload, even menstruating women should consult their physician before taking iron.

The good news is, even vegetarian women of child-bearing age should be able to meet their iron needs by strategically eating foods rich in non-heme iron (such as asparagus, bananas, beans, broccoli, chard, dates, leafy greens, lentils, molasses, nuts, okra, peas, plums, prune juice, rice bran, squash, strawberries, turnip greens, and whole grains) combined with foods that enhance iron absorption (such as fruits, dark leafy greens, beans, grains, sesame seeds, and vitamin C supplements) while avoiding anything that interferes with iron absorption (such as alcohol, refined sugar, dairy products, soft drinks, coffee, and tea).

- ▶ **Zinc.** In a Turkish study of patients with recurrent canker sores, half were given zinc supplementation and half were given placebo for one month. The

canker sores diminished and did not reappear for three months in the group taking supplemental zinc. Zinc is known for being critical for healthy epithelial cells, such as those found in your mouth. **I recommend 220 mg zinc once daily, taken for a few days only while you have active canker sores.** (The usual dose is 15–25 mg per day.)

- ▶ **Antioxidants.** In another Turkish study, the levels of vitamins A, E, and C in serum and saliva were significantly lower in patients that had recurrent canker sores than in healthy control subjects. These powerful antioxidants support healthy epithelial tissue and efficient healing. I'm also a big fan of the antioxidant quercetin, found in onions and apples. **I recommend 1,000–5,000 IU of vitamin A per day, 5,000–25,000 IU of beta-carotene per day, 600–3,000 mg of vitamin C per day in divided doses, and 400–2,000 IU of natural vitamin E per day (found in most high-quality multinutrient formulas), as well as 300–600 mg quercetin per day.**

Reduce Stress

Need another reason to reduce stress in your life? Several studies, including one from the UCLA School of Dentistry, prove that canker sores are more likely to occur during times of stress—due to your body's own immune system attacking the mucosal lining of the mouth. In some high-stress groups, such as medical and dental students, a study by the University of Michigan School of Dentistry reported that canker sores occurred in as many as 50 to 60 percent of the people!

Support Your Acid-Alkaline Balance

An overly acidic constitution, due to an aging and/or an overwhelmed natural buffer system, can leave you vulnerable to canker sores. To assess whether you are overly acidic, and to help restore your acid-alkaline balance, take a look at the July 2004 issue of *The Lark Letter*, which you can find on my subscriber center at www.drlark.com (your login is your e-mail address, and your password is 74069S).

Q&A—Living Well with Celiac Disease



QUESTION

Dear Dr. Lark,

Over the past year, I've had increasing symptoms of indigestion—bloating and gas, mostly. My physician ran a blood test and found out that I have celiac disease. He says there are a bunch of foods that I can't eat—ever—and that I'm at increased risk for some kind of intestinal cancer. I can't decide if I should be depressed or petrified. —Pam

Celiac Disease - continued on page 8

My Favorite Fat-Burning Foods

Ever wonder why slim people stay slim, and fat people stay fat? A key factor is what I call “energy conversion.” Food broken down in the digestive tract is absorbed into the bloodstream and dispersed into cells throughout the body where it is converted to energy. In lean people, heat production goes up by as much as 40 percent after a meal, which means they’re burning the fuel. In overweight people, it may rise 10 percent or less, which means food energy is stored as fat rather than burned.

The good news is, there are many wonderful foods that are not only healthy and delicious, but will also kick your metabolism into high gear. Here are five of them:

- ▶ **Green tea:** Green tea contains special chemicals called polyphenols, which have exceptional antioxidant activity and help promote overall good health and well-being. One cup of brewed green tea contains about 100 mg of polyphenols. Research suggests that green tea is effective in helping to burn calories. The polyphenols in green tea appear to block the enzyme that breaks down norepinephrine, a brain chemical related to metabolism. The higher your levels of norepinephrine, the greater your metabolism and the faster you’ll burn calories.
- ▶ **Almonds:** The oil in almonds contains phenylethylamine, a naturally occurring, feel-good brain chemical that works as a natural metabolism booster. Phenylethylamine is also thought to play a role in improving your mood and energy—both of which are important in controlling your eating, by providing the motivation you need to become more physically active.
- ▶ **Garbanzo beans (chickpeas):** Garbanzo beans contain L-phenylalanine, an essential amino acid that functions as a natural antidepressant. It boosts your memory, mood, and libido as well as your metabolism. It also provides a feeling of fullness, enabling you to eat less and still feel satisfied. Other foods that contain L-phenylalanine include soybeans, fish, poultry, almonds, pecans, pumpkin and sesame seeds, lima beans, and lentils.
- ▶ **Tofu:** By increasing your consumption of tofu, you’ll increase your levels of the amino acid L-tyrosine. In addition to boosting physical stamina, mental energy, and mental sharpness, L-tyrosine helps your body produce thyroid hormones that drive your metabolism—helping to burn calories and regulate your weight more

efficiently. It can also help keep your hunger under control, improve your sex drive, and promote an overall sense of well-being! Other foods that contain L-tyrosine include fish and poultry.

- ▶ **Brown rice:** Whole grains such as brown rice are high in chromium, a mineral that is essential for metabolizing protein, carbohydrates, and fat. Chromium also increases your body’s own natural sensitivity to insulin, thus aiding in your weight loss efforts. In addition, it has been shown to help increase lean body mass and decrease body fat—both factors in weight loss.

A complete program for effective, natural weight loss can be found in my new book, *Eat Papayas Naked: The pH-Balanced Diet for Super Health and Glowing Beauty* (Silverback Books). It’s also packed with wonderful recipes that are truly satisfying and delicious. Here are a few of my favorites.

CHICKEN KABOBS WITH RADI-CUMBER SALAD (SERVES 2)

Chicken contains L-tyrosine, which helps your body produce thyroid hormones that drive your metabolism and help keep your hunger and weight under control.

- 2 wooden skewers (9 inches each)
 - 8 ounces boneless, skinless chicken breast
 - 1 tablespoon lemon juice
 - Salt and black pepper to taste
 - 2 tablespoons olive oil
 - 9 ounces cucumber
 - 9 ounces radishes
 - 1½ tablespoons Bragg Liquid Aminos (available in health food stores)
 - 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
 - ½ teaspoon chopped dill weed
 - 2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley
1. Soak the skewers in water for 30 minutes. Cube the chicken breast and thread the cubes onto the skewers.
 2. In a shallow dish, mix the lemon juice, salt, pepper, and ½ tablespoon of the oil. Put the chicken skewers in the marinade and turn to coat. Peel the cucumber, wash the radishes, and cut them into round slices. Broil the skewers for 8–10 minutes in the oven. Meanwhile, stir together the Bragg Liquid Aminos, remaining 1½ tablespoons olive oil, salt, pepper, red pepper flakes, and dill weed. Add the cucumber, radishes, and parsley, and toss.
 3. Serve the broiled chicken skewers with the salad.

SAVORY ZUCCHINI SAUTÉ (SERVES 2)

Zucchini is a great, low-calorie vegetable. Its fiber helps fill you up and keep you full, while its wide variety of female-beneficial nutrients (including potassium and phosphorus) help keep your body in a slightly alkaline state.

- 3 ounces white mushrooms
- 1 green onion
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
- 1½ tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 8 ounces large zucchini

1. Rinse and stem the mushrooms, then slice them and the green onion. Toss them in the lemon juice, vinegar, 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, sesame seeds, salt, and pepper. Rinse the zucchini, slice into eight medallions, and season with salt.
2. Brush the remaining olive oil in a skillet and heat to medium. Sauté the zucchini medallions for a few minutes on each side, and season with salt and pepper.
3. Transfer the zucchini to plates and top with the mushroom mixture.

STIR-FRIED GARBANZOS AND GREEN VEGGIES (SERVES 2)

Garbanzo beans contain L-phenylalanine, an amino acid that helps satisfy your appetite and boost your metabolism.

- 8 ounces spinach leaves
- 1 green bell pepper
- 5 ounces green onions
- 4 ounces sugar snap peas
- 1 small celery stalk
- 1 thumbnail-size piece of fresh ginger
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 9 ounces cooked garbanzo beans, drained
- 3½ tablespoons vegetable stock
- Salt to taste
- Cayenne pepper to taste
- 1–2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons soy yogurt

1. Thoroughly wash and stem the spinach and chop it coarsely. Wash and quarter the bell pepper; remove its stem, ribs, and seeds, and cut it into julienne strips. Cut

washed and trimmed green onions diagonally into pieces. Remove any tough parts or strings from the peas. Wash and trim the celery stalk and cut diagonally into bite-size pieces. Peel ginger and garlic and mince.

2. In a wok or skillet, heat the oil over high and briefly stir-fry the ginger and garlic. Add the bell pepper strips, green onions, peas, and celery; sauté for about 4 minutes, stirring constantly.
3. Add the spinach, garbanzos, and stock; sauté for another 2–3 minutes. Season to taste with salt, cayenne, and lemon juice. Spoon even portions onto plates and dollop 1 tablespoon of yogurt in the center of each serving.

PUMPKIN OATMEAL COOKIES (MAKES 4–5 DOZEN COOKIES)

These not-too-sweet cookies will fill your home with a wonderful aroma. The pumpkin provides an added shot of vitamins A and C, potassium, dietary fiber, and manganese.

- 1 cup canned or cooked pumpkin
- ¾–1 cup xylitol
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 3 cups rolled oats
- 1½ cups rice flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 cup raisins
- Canola oil spray (if necessary)

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream pumpkin and xylitol on medium speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add eggs; mix on high speed to combine. Mix in vanilla; set aside.
3. Combine oats, rice flour, baking soda, and baking powder in a large bowl. Stir to combine. Add the oat mixture to the pumpkin mixture and beat on low speed to combine, 10–15 seconds. Remove bowl from mixer and stir in spices and raisins.
4. Drop by spoonfuls on non-stick or oil-sprayed cookie sheets, about 2 inches apart. Bake until golden and just set, about 18 minutes. Transfer to wire rack to cool.

You can find Eat Papayas Naked: The pH-Balanced Diet for Super Health and Glowing Beauty *in bookstores and on Amazon.com.*

Celiac Disease - continued from page 5

ANSWER A

Dear Pam,

There's no need for despair or fear—you're in the driver's seat with celiac disease. Also known as "sprue," it's an intolerance to the protein (gluten) found in wheat, rye, and barley. Oats are also implicated, because they're often processed in wheat mills and get contaminated with leftover wheat dust in the machinery.

Celiac Confusion

Current statistics indicate that about one in every 100 people is affected with celiac disease, with symptoms ranging from mild to severe bloating, gas, diarrhea, constipation, cramps, fatigue, aches, flu-like symptoms, and/or mood swings. So, it should come as no surprise that it's often misdiagnosed—as fibromyalgia, lupus, MS, chronic fatigue, irritable bowel, Crohn's disease, and others. Furthermore, a single blood test isn't foolproof, so anyone suspected of having celiac disease should get a second opinion. The celiac blood panel—a battery of tests looking for several antibodies—is more accurate. If there's any remaining doubt, a biopsy can be taken under sedation.

When someone with celiac disease eats anything with gluten, her immune system attacks her own small intestine, ultimately causing damage to the villi (tiny, fingerlike extensions) in the intestinal lining. Over time, scar tissue can develop and permanently interfere with healing. Your villi are essential for absorbing nutrients, so this damage can lead to malabsorption and malnutrition, as well as anemia and osteoporosis.

There is a somewhat higher risk of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in people who have *untreated* celiac, perhaps as a result of the chronic inflammation. Eliminating gluten from your diet not only relieves symptoms, it also neutralizes that increased cancer risk.

Beating Celiac Disease

No medicine or surgery is required. Just avoid foods that contain gluten. However, this isn't a casual undertaking—it's an important commitment, if you want to heal. It's also not as difficult as it sounds. More on that in a moment.

It's well-known that gluten is one of the most common food allergens. It's also well-known that allergic conditions often develop from excessive exposure to an allergen (usually a protein). We live in a culture that fills us up with gluten, and I have found that many women—even those without celiac disease—experience problems such as fluid retention and bloating from eating wheat and other gluten-containing grains. With this in mind, I believe we'd all benefit

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from cutting down on the amount of gluten in our diet. The following recommendations can be useful for virtually anyone seeking a healthier, more varied diet.

What to Eat, What to Avoid

Gluten is found in wheat (including durum, semolina, spelt, and kamut), barley, rye, and contaminated oats. Triticale is often marketed an alternative grain, but it's related to wheat and isn't a good substitute.

Gluten is also hidden in many processed foods. For example, frozen French fries are often coated with a dusting of wheat flour. Some brands of baking powder contain wheat flour. And, it's often used as a thickener in processed foods such as gravies, soups, sauces, and pie fillings. Ingredients to look for on product labels include modified food starch, unidentified starch, hydrolyzed vegetable protein (HVP), hydrolyzed plant protein (HPP), texturized vegetable protein (TVP), binders, fillers, excipients, extenders, and malt. It will take some practice, but you'll soon get the hang of it.

For an easier transition to a gluten-free diet, find substitutions that you like before going cold-turkey. Luckily, today you'll find scores of gluten-free products readily available in most health food stores, many major supermarket chains, and over the Internet. Make a list of the foods you're willing to give up first, followed by those you'll replace over time. Keep moving forward until you've successfully transitioned to an entirely gluten-free way of eating. This may take a month or longer—it's up to you.

The bottom line is that there's no reason to feel deprived! Cooking at home using known, trusted, whole ingredients or gluten-free mixes will help you succeed faster. Gluten-free grains include brown rice, buckwheat, amaranth, potato, millet, quinoa, corn, and uncontaminated oats. Almond flour is delicious in baked goods. Bette Hagman, a leading expert in gluten-free cooking, suggests this substitute for wheat-based flour: For every 3 cups of wheat flour, substitute 2 cups rice flour, 2/3 cup potato starch, and 1/3 cup tapioca starch.

For more information on my favorite gluten-free products and where to get them, log onto my subscriber center at www.drlark.com. Your password is 74069S.

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Have a healthy, blessed, and joyful March!

Susan M Lark M.D.

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