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(612) 373-0710

consumer radio briefs

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Food Additives (1:30)

Minnesota Extension Dairy Products Specialist Vern Packard says a perspective is needed regarding food additive problems. All foods contain chemicals that can be termed poisonous or anti-nutritional in their effect in the body.

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The digestive system functions to detoxify them or get rid of them through the excretory process. Whether illness occurs depends entirely upon how much we eat of that food. Anything eaten in excess could cause illness.

The coloring agents Red Number Two and Red Number Four have been banned, but the flavor enhancer M-S-G (monosodium glutamate) is still in use. Packard says for a time M-S-G was thought to cause allergic symptoms. Food allergies are known for many foods.

B-H-T (butylated hydroxy anisole) is extensively used to keep foods from going rancid. A number of years ago a group of researchers found what they thought to be an adverse response in test animals fed this compound. Much work has been done since and no one has yet been able to repeat that original finding. Recently B-H-T has been shown to increase the life span of test animals. Packard says this is not unreasonable since aging and death are caused by oxidative processes and B-H-T is an antioxidant.

The emphasis on unsaturated fat and the objections to B-H-T or other antioxidants present a conflict since B-H-T is needed to prevent off-flavored fats and oils.

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