

## Andrew Weil Opposes Sprouts

A Healthy Perspective Of Sprouts

Response to Dr. Andrew Weil's Opposition to Sprouts

by Gabriel Cousens, MD (author of "*Conscious Eating*" and "*Spiritual Nutrition and the Rainbow Diet*")

Today, with so many bits and pieces of information relating to health are coming to our attention it's difficult to be clear about what is healthy and what is not. Perspective is essential. Here's an example. Andrew Weil, MD wrote an article which appeared in *Natural Health Journal*, in which he warned against eating legume sprouts, including alfalfa sprouts.

I have significant respect and appreciation for Dr. Weil. He is one of a minority of physicians and authors involved for many years in the area of natural healing. In this instance, the perspective of Dr. Weil's position reflects a mechanistic and drug oriented (even if they are natural) AMA type of thinking that lacks a fuller viewpoint of what healthy eating and living is about.

Although his point is worth considering, because he's saying that people need to be aware of all considerations when they select a diet, his conclusions miss the forest for the trees. His opinion is made further inaccurate by his ignorance of the evidence for the importance of enzymes in live food. Dr. Weil's comment that, "there is no reason to think that any of them [live enzymes] survive digestion to affect other systems of our bodies," is simply inaccurate. He attempts to say that the value of live enzymes in alfalfa sprouts and other live foods is mythological.

The only mythology that exists is the old AMA medical reasoning that live food enzymes are not absorbed into our system from the gastrointestinal tract as whole, active proteins because they are theoretically broken down by the digestive process. This medical myth has been proven to be scientifically inaccurate from a variety of approaches.

For example, people have been successfully ingesting pineapple enzyme, bromelain, for years, as a treatment for muscle and joint inflammation. Research with radio- active tracers shows that at least 40% of the pineapple enzyme is absorbed into our system in an intact form. This is simple, but straight forward evidence. Live cell analysis experimentation has shown that within ten minutes after ingesting enzymes to break up red blood cell clumping, they are able to see the red blood cells become unclumped. Something is happening in the blood after the enzymes are ingested that suggests the enzymes are effective in the blood.

The most important scientific evidence and argument disproving Dr. Weil's AMA medical logic about enzymes, comes from a research paper by Dr. Michael Gardner at the School of Biomedical Sciences in England, titled "Gastrointestinal

Absorption of Intact Proteins" published in the *Annual Review of Nutrition* in 1988.

After his extensive review of the literature, Dr. Gardner concludes: "the concordance between results obtained by independent workers using different experimental approaches is now so strong that we cannot fail to accept that intact proteins and high-molecular-fragments thereof do cross the gastrointestinal tract in humans and animals (both neonates and adults)." In other words, the live enzymes in alfalfa sprouts are able to cross the gastrointestinal tract in their intact form and therefore can have the healing affect on the body claimed by live food advocates. "...alfalfa sprouts have been used as part of healing therapeutic programs in live food healing centers for years."

One of the most important aspects of live foods, ignored by Dr. Weil, is that food enzymes pre-digest the food in the food-enzyme part of the stomach, and therefore have a beneficial affect to our health without even having to pass through the gastrointestinal wall. Research by Dr. Beazell, a noted researcher in the field, published in the *American Journal of Physiology*, shows that 60% of the complex carbohydrates, 30% of the protein, and 10% of the fats are digested in the food-enzyme stomach by the enzymes contained in raw food. By eating food which is not cooked, we preserve our own digestive enzyme energy. This enzyme energy, according to the Law of Enzyme Adaptation formulated by Dr. Howell, considered the father of food enzyme research, can then be transferred to other needy places in the body to bring good health.

Although I do not agree with Dr. Weil's perspective, I validate that there are small amounts of a variety of naturally occurring toxins that may be found in the vegetable and fruit world. In my book, *Conscious Eating*, I have a whole section on the natural occurring toxins in food. After listing them in detail and discussing clinical and laboratory research on them, I came to the same conclusion as the National Academy of Science Natural Research Council. It is that these factors (natural occurring plant toxins) are not significant if ingested in moderate amounts, particularly if one is in good health. While it is good for people to be aware of the micro amounts of naturally occurring toxins, it is important to understand that the body has a sufficient defense system and the live foods we ingest have sufficient anti-oxidants to metabolically detoxify these toxins if we are eating them in moderate amounts. It is also important to understand that the word toxin does not mean carcinogen, as is subtly implied by Dr. Weil.

The major toxins in legumes are hemagglutins which line the intestine and block protein and fat absorption and anti-trypsin factors which disrupt protein digestion, causing putrefaction and gas. Neither of these toxins are cancer producing. It is misleading and alarmist thinking to imply that all toxins are cancer producing. However, because the hemagglutins and anti-trypsin factors commonly found in legumes do disrupt the digestive process, I do not recommend eating raw legumes and immature sprouted legumes. Sprouting and rinsing some of the

legumes seems to greatly reduce these digestive inhibitors so that some of them can be eaten in modest amounts, especially sprouted garbanzo beans (chick peas) and Chinese (Mung) bean sprouts, as well as alfalfa and clover sprouts. I have observed the digestibility of garbanzo and mung bean sprouts, if eaten in small amounts, in hundreds of people.

My clinical experience with alfalfa sprouts in thousands of people, that of the Hippocrates Health Institute for 25 years with thousands of people, and that of Dr. Szekely, healer and noted researcher from the 1930s [who ran a live food clinic serving alfalfa sprouts to over 123, 000 people over 30 years], is that alfalfa sprouts and clover sprouts have never been noted to cause any pattern of symptoms in a general population, and certainly not cancer.

In the report of Dr. Ames, which Dr. Weil quotes as the basis of his article in *Natural Health*, there is no mention or implication that alfalfa sprouts are associated in any way with cancer as Dr. Weil implies. Instead, alfalfa sprouts have been successfully used as part of healing therapeutic programs in live food healing centers for years. There are millions of pounds of alfalfa sprouts eaten safely throughout this country daily with no obvious problems. Alfalfa sprouts are a wonderful, healthy, biogenic food, yet alfalfa sprouts, eaten in excess and harvested before they are mature do contain a small percentage of an amino acid analog called *canavanine*.

Canavanine has been reported to cause a worsening of symptoms in several cases of people who suffering from Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (S.L.E.). The people in these anecdotal cases seemed to have increased their intake of alfalfa sprouts, either because they were the only fresh vegetables available in winter, or because they began eating them in massive amounts. The canavanine concentration is highest in the alfalfa seeds and decreases in concentration after the third day of sprouting. Because canavanine is water soluble, rinsing the sprouts each day decreases the concentration.

Alfalfa sprouts are best eaten when they are fully mature. At this time they are at their nutritional peak, have become rich in color and have their first leaf division. This is usually around day seven. For several years, I have advised my S.L.E. patients, and other with rheumatoid-like diseases, about the possible dangers in eating immature sprouts. Following this advise of selecting mature alfalfa greens and not eating them to excess, as of yet, no one with these diseases has suffered an exacerbation of symptoms after eating alfalfa sprouts. It is important to emphasize that there is no human clinical evidence that healthy people without S.L.E. have anything to be concerned about if they eat mature alfalfa sprouts in moderation.

There appears to be a subtle, and almost joyful meta-communication in Dr. Weil's statement, that alfalfa sprouts, and live foods by implication, are something to fear. Many people on a live food diet tuned into this subtle communication, and

called me with concern after Dr. Weil's article appeared.

It is important to maintain the larger health perspective that sprouts and other live foods are incredible life-giving and healing foods. Raw legumes are an exception to this, except for mature alfalfa and clover sprouts, and small amounts of garbanzo and mung sprouts. They contain a rainforest of undiscovered and known good health characteristics such as" anti-oxidents, anti-carcinogens, live enzymes, electromagnetic energies, a high zeta potential, high levels of vitamins, nucleic acids, paciferans (plant "antibiotics"), auxones (beneficial plant hormones), and other factors whose health benefits far outweigh and neutralize the potential dangers of minute amounts of naturally occurring toxins. In America, where 60% of the population does not eat fresh vegetables and fruits on a daily basis, it is important to be aware of the resistance to a health lifestyle and diet, rather than create exaggerated fears about them. Part of being a conscious eater is to know about these issues, and eat in a moderate way using a variety of sprouts and other live foods in the diet. With this holistic perspective, Mother Nature's gifts of live and natural food can be eaten with love and not fear.

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