

January 5, 2015

TODAY'S HEALTH FOR THE EMPOWERED WOMAN

A CHILD'S QUESTIONS

As I pondered out loud how to begin the New Year with my next article, I was asked by my ten year old granddaughter, Lauren, "Do you still write about women's health?" When I responded affirmatively she asked if she could posit a few questions from a "kids" perspective. Since this season is ruled by and for children it seemed like a reasonable request. So share if you like with your own children and grandkids.

1.) Does alcohol affect illness? Besides making you ill from imbibing in excess causing liver damage, blood vessel disease, heart disease, diabetes and alcohol dementia, alcohol consumption, in answer to her question, will most certainly affect established disease. Alcohol raises blood sugar and worsens diabetes while inhibiting the liver's ability to control and regulate blood sugar. Alcohol in moderation has been shown to lower blood pressure by enlarging the size of blood vessels and thereby reducing the strain on the heart but in large consistent quantities will actually damage blood vessels and increase the risk of heart disease. Alcohol is well known to damage brain cells (remember the worst hangover you ever had?) Those at risk for Alzheimer's and dementia would be well advised to not drink at all. A child should know that alcohol adversely affects reaction times and judgment and is the leading cause of accidents and motor vehicle fatalities. People with known liver disease from diabetes, chronic hepatitis, cancer etc should avoid alcohol as it hastens the death of liver cells and will accelerate and make worse these illnesses. 2.) "How do you know if you have some sort of disease?" Simply put, you don't. Children wrapped up in play, school, and fantasies are usually not attuned to self evaluation when it comes to health. We recognize tugging on ears, changes in bowel habits, fever, sore throats, skin rashes, difficulty breathing and mucus filled noses as telltale signs that warrant a trip to the pediatrician. To answer her question I would emphasize that she is too young to be concerned with the vast array of infectious diseases, hereditary diseases, tumors and cancers that are a part of our world. Children should be aware that if they "don't feel good" as evidenced by sluggishness, pain, belly ache, etc., it would be a good time to tell Mommy or Daddy so medicine can be bought to make them feel better. Prattling on about surgical illnesses and cancers that are rare in children will only incite fear and might indeed preclude them from telling you when they don't feel well. 3.) "Why is tobacco bad for your body?" The schools and the New York State Department of Health advertisements have done a remarkable job of bringing this question to the fore and recent evidence has shown that smoking in teens is remarkably reduced. Lauren lost a grandfather to lung cancer so her question is not without foundation. Well, Lauren, and all you other children and teens, smoking will cause you to have trouble breathing, increase your chances of asthma and bronchitis, yellow your teeth, cause wrinkles and premature aging, ruin your circulation, cause problems in pregnancy that will affect the baby and of course cause lung cancer that WILL KILL YOU. This happens because of the poisons in the cigarette paper and because of the product, nicotine, that is found in tobacco. I realize that this article is somewhat different than my usual but if I can empower my granddaughter with my answers to her health questions, I would hope to influence the children in your life as well.