Death Rides a Slow Bus in Hunza

by Jane Kinderlehrer

How would you like to live in a land where cancer has not yet been invented? A land where an optometrist discovers to his amazement that everyone has perfect 20-20 vision? A land where cardiologists cannot find a single trace of coronary heart disease? How would you like to live in a land where no one ever gets ulcers, appendicitis or gout? A land where men of 80 and 90 father children, and there's nothing unusual about men and women enjoying vigorous life at the age of 100 or 120?

We see a lot of hands going up. Fine. But first, you have to answer a few more questions before setting out for a place called Hunza, a tiny country hidden in the mountain passes of northwest Pakistan.

Are you willing to live 20,000 feet up in the mountains, almost completely out of touch with the rest of the world? Are you ready to go outside in every kind of weather to tend you small mountainside garden, while keeping you ears open for an impending avalanche? Are you prepared to give up not only every luxury of civilization, but even reading and writing?

We see a lot of hands going down. But if you want the benefits of the pure air that whips by the icy cathedrals of the Himalayan Mountains, the pure water that trickles down from glaciers formed at 25,000 feet, and the mental and spiritual peace that comes from living in a land where there is no crime, taxes, social striving or generation gaps, no banks or stores - in fact, -no money- where are you going to find it outside of Hunza?

But don't give up! Not yet, because there is still one more question to be answered. That is: are you prepared to eat the kind of food the Hunzas eat? If you are, then you can rightfully expect to give yourself at lease some measure of the super health and resistance to degenerative disease which the Hunzakuts have enjoyed for 2,000 years.

What kind of exotic, ill-tasting grub do these Hunza people eat, you are wondering. Strange as it may sound, virtually everything the Hunzakuts eat is delectable to the western palate, and is readily available in the United States - at least if your shopping horizons do not begin and end at the supermarket.

Not only is the Hunza diet not exotic, but there's really nothing terribly mysterious about its health-promoting qualities, Everything we know about food and health, gathered both from clinical studies and the observation of scientists who have traveled throughout the world observing dietary practices and their relationship to health, tells us that it is to be expected that the Hunza diet will go a long way towards improving the total health of anyone, anywhere. The Hunza story is only on of the more dramatic examples of the miraculous health produced by a diet of fresh, natural unprocessed and unadulterated food.

All systems "Go" At 20,000 Feet

Maybe you're wondering: are the Hunzas really all that healthy? That was the question on the mind of cardiologists Dr. Paul D. White and Dr. Edward G. Toomey, who made the difficult trip up the mountain paths to Hunza, toting along with them a portable, battery-operated electrocardiograph. In the American Heart Journal for December, 1964, the doctors say they used the equipment to study 25 Hunza men, who were, "on fairly good evidence, between 90 and 110 years old." Blood pressure and cholesterol levels were also tested. He reported that not one of these men showed a single sign of coronary heart disease, high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

An optometrist, Dr. Allen E. Banik, also made the journey to Hunza to see for himself if the people were as healthy as they were reputed to be, and published his report in Hunza Land (Whitehorn Publishing Co., 1960). "It wasn't long before I discovered that everything that I had read about perpetual life and health in this tiny country is true," Dr. Banik declared. "I examined the eyes of some of Hunza's oldest citizens and found them to be perfect."

Beyond more freedom from disease, many observers have been startled by the positive side of Hunza health. Dr. Banik, for example, relates that "many Hunza people are so strong that in the winter they exercise by breaking holes in the ice-covered streams and take a swim down under the ice." Other intrepid visitors who have been there report their amazement at seeing men 80, 90, and 100 years old repairing the always-crumbling rocky roads, and lifting large stones and boulders to repair the retaining walls around their terrace gardens. The oldsters think nothing of

playing a competitive game of volleyball in the hot sun against men 50 years their junior, and even take part in wild games of polo that are so violent they would make an ice hockey fan shudder.

The energy and endurance of the Hunzakuts can probably be credited as much to what they don't eat as what they do eat. First of all, they don't eat a great deal of anything. The United States Department of Agriculture estimates that the average daily food intake for Americans of all ages amounts to 3,300 calories, with 100 grams of protein, 157 grams of fat and 380 grams of carbohydrates. In contrast, studies by Pakistani doctors show that adult males of Hunza consume a little more than 1,900 calories daily, with only 50 grams of protein, 36 grams of fat, and 354 grams of carbohydrates. Both the protein and fat are largely of vegetable origin (Dr. Alexander Leaf, National Geographic, January, 1973).

That amounts to just half the protein, one-third the fat, but about the same amount of carbohydrates that we Americans eat. Of course, the carbohydrate that the Hunzakuts eat is unrefined or complex carbohydrate found in fruits, vegetables and grains, while we Americans largely eat our carbohydrates in the form of nutritionless white sugar and refined flour.

Needless to say, the Hunzakuts eat no processed food. Everything is as fresh as it can possibly be, and in its original unsalted state. The only "processing" consists of drying some fresh fruits in the sun, and making butter and cheese out of milk. No chemicals or artificial fertilizers are used in their gardens. In fact, it is against the law of Hunza to spray gardens with pesticides. Renee Taylor, in her book Hunza health secrets (Prentice-Hall 1964) says that the Mir, or ruler of Hunza, was recently instructed by Pakistani authorities to spray the orchards of Hunza with pesticide, to protect them from an expected invasion of insects. But the Hunzas would have none of it. They refused to use the toxic pesticide, and instead sprayed their trees with a mixture of water and ashes, which adequately protected the trees without poisoning the fruit and the entire environment. In a word, the Hunzas eat as they live - organically.

Apricots Are Hunza Gold

Of all their organically-grown food, perhaps their favorite, and one of their dietary mainstays, is the apricot. Apricot orchards are seen everywhere in Hunza, and a family's economic stability is measured by the number of trees they have under cultivation.

They eat their apricots fresh in season, and dry a great deal more in the sun for eating throughout the long cold winter. They puree the dried apricots and mix them with snow to make ice cream. Like their apricot jam, this ice cream needs no sugar because the apricots are so sweet naturally.

But that is only the beginning. The Hunzas cut the pits from the fruits, crack them, and remove the almond-like nuts. The women hand grind these kernels with stone mortars, then squeeze the meal between a hand stone and a flat rock to express the oil. The oil is used in cooking, for fuel, as a salad dressing on fresh garden greens, and even as a facial lotion (Renee Taylor says Hunza women have beautiful complexions).

The Apricot Kernel Anti-Cancer Theory

Do these kernels have important protective powers which in some way play an important role in the extraordinary health and longevity of the Hunza people? The evidence suggests they very well might.

Cancer and arthritis are both very rare among the Taos (New Mexico) Pueblo Indians. Their traditional beverages is made from the kernels of cherries, peaches and apricots. Robert G. Houston told PREVENTION that he enjoyed this beverage when he was in New Mexico gathering material for a book dealing with blender shakes based on an Indian recipe. Into a glass of milk or juice, he mixed a tablespoon of honey with freshly ground apricot kernels (1/4 of an ounce or two dozen kernels) which had been roasted for 10 minutes at 300 degrees Fahrenheit. It is vitally important to roast the kernels first, Houston points out, "in order to ensure safety when you are using the pits in such quantities." Roasting destroys enzymes which could upset your stomach if you eat too many at one time. In any event the drink was so delicious that Houston kept having it daily. On the third day of drinking this concoction, Houston says that a funny thing happened. Two little benign skin growths on his arm, which formerly were pink had turned brown. The next day, he noticed that the growths were black and shriveled. On the seventh morning, the

smaller more recent growths had vanished completely and the larger one, about the size of a grain of rice, had simply fallen off.

Houston says that two of his friends have since tried the apricot shakes and report similar elimination of benign skin growths in one or two weeks.

What is there in apricot pits that could produce this remarkable effect? Some foods, especially the kernels of certain fruits and grains, contain elements known as the nitrilosides (also known as amygdalin or vitamin B17) says Dr. Ernst T. Krebs, Jr., biochemist and co-discoverer of Laetrile, a controversial cancer treatment (Laetrile is the proprietary name for one nitriloside). Nitrilosides, says Dr. Krebs, are non-toxic water-soluble, accessory food factors found in abundance in the seeds of almost all fruits. They are also found in over 1,000 other plants. Wherever primitive people have been found to have exceptional health, with marked absence of malignant or degenerative disease, their diet has been shown to be high in the naturally occurring nitrilosides, Dr. Krebs maintains.

"These nitrilosides just might be to cancer what vitamin C is to scurvy, what niacin is to pellagra, what vitamin B12 and folic acid are to pernicious anemia," says Dr Krebs (Cancer News Journal, May/August, 1970).

There are other common foods (all seeds) which provide a goodly supply of this protective factor. Millet and buckwheat, both of which the Hunzakuts eat in abundance, are two. Lentils, mung beans and alfalfa, when sprouted, provide 50 times more nitriloside than does the mature plant, Dr. Krebs points out. And the Hunzas, as you might expect, spout all of their seeds, as well as using them in other ways. Since other essential protective elements are increased in the sprouting of such seeds, young sprouts are excellent foods which give us more life-giving values than most of us realize.

Apricots Rich in Vitamin A and Iron

Aside from whatever anti-cancer properties the seeds of apricots may offer, the fruit itself is exceptional in its own right. There is probably no fruit which is as nourishing as the apricot. When they are dried, and most of the moisture removed, the concentration of nutrients becomes even greater. A generous handful of dried apricots (3 1/2 ounces) is packed with nearly 11,000 units of vitamin A, or more than twice the recommended daily allowance. In fact, if this much vitamin A was put into a capsule the FDA would arrest the person selling it. because they consider this amount both "useless" and "potentially dangerous." The Hunzas eat it every day. Dried apricots also contain a great deal of iron, potassium and natural food fiber.

The Style For Longer and Better Life

Besides apricots, the Hunzas also grow and enjoy apples, pears, peaches, mulberries, black and red cherries, and grapes. From these fruits, the Hunzas get all the vitamin C they need, as well as the other nutritional richness of fresh fruit, including energy from the fruit sugars. From the grapes, they also make a light red wine that helps make their simple fare into more of a real "meal".

The World's Freshest Bread

The bread which accompanies each meal enjoyed by the Hunza's, and sometimes forms the mainstay of the meal, is called "chapatti" - and is quite different from any bread that we are used to. The grain is kept intact as long as possible, and is ground at the very last moment. The housewife grinds only as much as she needs for the next meal, and kneads it again and again with water - no yeast! She then beats it into very thin, flat pancakes similar to the tortillas of the Mexican Indians.

Chapattis can be made from wheat, barley, buckwheat or millet, so although the chapatti is something new to us, the ingredients are all familiar and easily available. Sometimes the flours are mixed together and baked in several shapes, small or large, depending on the occasion.

While bread baking at home in our country is practically a lost art because of the time involved, a surprising feature about chapattis is the incredibly short "baking time", if you can call it baking at all. The dough is simply placed on the grill for hardly more than a moment and it is finished.

"Just long enough to grow warm and no longer taste raw," Dr. Ralph Bircher noted in his book on Hunzas published by Huber in Bernie, Switzerland. "No more effective method of preserving the health value of the grain exists and the taste is excellent even without butter or jam," Dr. Bircher notes.

Here is a good source of information on vitamin B17: http://www.worldwithoutcancer.org.uk/research.html

Major-General Sir Robert McCarrison was the personal physician to British King George V. He was sent on a four year mission to the Gilgit Agency of Hunza in what is now eastern Pakistan - to learn the reasons for the legendary health and longevity of the Hunza people. Part of his efforts included feeding experiments of more than 1,200 rats:

"Rats that ate the diets of Pathans and Sikhs increased their body weight much faster and were much healthier than those ingesting the daily fares of neighboring peoples such as the Kanarese or the Bengalis. Even more extraordinary, when his rats were fed the same diet as that of the Hunzas, a diet limited to locally produced grain, vegetables, fruits, and unpasteurized goats milk and butter, the rodents appeared to McCarrison to be the healthiest ever raised in his laboratory. They grew rapidly, never seemed to be ill, mated with endless enthusiasm, and had healthy birth defect-free offspring.

"Autopsies showed nothing whatsoever wrong with their organs. Throughout their life times these rats were gentle and affectionate, and playful. Other rats contracted precisely the disease of the people whose diets they were fed, and even seemed to adopt certain of the human's nastier behavioral characteristics.

"Illnesses revealed at autopsy in rats fed the British diet filled a whole page for each rat. All parts of the rats' bodies - the skin, hair, blood, ovaries, and womb - and all their systems - respiratory, urinary, digestive, nervous, and cardiovascular - were afflicted. Many of the rats, snarling and vicious ("Bad Seeds"), had to be kept apart if they were not to tear each other to bits!!!"

We must point out that the highly mineralized Hunza have no jails or criminals or drug related problems of any kind. Disputes are usually over water rights or on rare occasion over a woman. Differences are settled quickly by the tribal elders and the worst punishment ever meted out is that of banishment from the Hunza Valley - what a difference minerals make!!!

- Dr. Joel D. Wallach page 99.

Chemical Analysis of Drinking Water from Karimabad, Hunza, Pakistan
(Data expressed as mg/l except for pH, specific conductance and suspended solids.)

	Clear Liquid After Centrifugation
SiO2	4,180
Fe	380
Ca	11,500
Mg	1,260
Na	760
K	5,800
As	0.3
Ba	43

Be	<1
Cd	0.3
Co	<3
Cu	<1
Li	11
Mn	8
Mo	<10
Pb	<10
Se	<1
Sr	32
V	1
Zn	2
SO4	3,200
Cl	300
F	60
HCO3	8,000
pH	6.98
Specific conductance	123micromhos @ 25°C
Suspended solids	396 mg/l

- Dr. Joel D. Wallach page 210.

The pass into Hunza is 13,700 foot high and is only passable during the three summer months...The indigenous plant life of the Hunza Valley was rather limited. Ninety-nine percent of the original valley was bare rock. Cultivated plants included barley, millet, wheat, buckwheat, potatoes, turnips, carrots, beans, peas, pumpkins, tomatoes, melons, onions, garlic, cabbage, spinach, cauliflower, apricots, mulberries, walnuts, apples, plums, peaches, cherries and pears. Pomegranate trees are scattered throughout the valley. They consume milk, buttermilk, yogurt and butter (which they put in their tea and use as a cooking shortening). Hunza children are breast-fed until two to four years of age.

A large variety of indigenous wildlife (i.e. - ibex or "markhors", Marco Polo sheep, geese, ducks, pheasants and partridge) provided the early Hunza with meat.

The Hunza does not cook the majority of their food because of a lack of fuel (even the animal manure is added back to their fields).

The Hunza salt supply is mined from hills near the Shimshal and Muztagh Rivers and used in their tea and for cooking in its raw brown state (the color comes from trace minerals included in the salt deposit when the ancient seas dried up).

The 14 Hunza Practices

1) Basic diet is grains (whole grain and sprouted), vegetables (raw or steamed), fruits (fruits are dried and reconstituted in water or diced and served in gelatin (goat and mutton tendon and cartilage). Meat at 2 to 4 pounds per week (i.e. - mutton, goat, yak, beef, poultry, brain, kidney, liver, etc.) is eaten as available; dairy (i.e. - whole milk, soured milk, yogurt, cheese and butter) is a staple. Grape wine known as Pani is consumed daily.

2) Their farm soils are maintained by organic agricultural practices, "That which is taken from the soil is returned to the soil." Composting, plant debris and animal manure is turned back into the soil.

3) All Hunzas work seven days each week (work never killed anyone) - to them there is no sabbath! They work 12 hours each day.

4) Fat sources include whole milk, butter, ghee, apricot oil and animal fats.

5) Total absence of additives, preservatives or chemicals in their air, food and water.

6) Daily consumption of salt by adding chunks of rock salts to their tea and in cooking vegetables and meat.

7) No agricultural sprays or chemicals of any kind.

8) All children are breast-fed for 2 (girls) to 4 (boys) years (no vaccinations or antibiotics; no birth defects and only two hermaphrodites or "mukhanas" recorded in the 2,300 year Hunza history).

9) All grains. vegetables and fruits dried for storage have been exposed to the sun.

10) Native herbs are used for medicine, seasoning and as food (salads).

11) "Glacial milk" is the exclusive water source used for drinking and irrigation purposes (the fields are flooded, when the water soaks into the soil a thick layer of mineral silt or "rock flour" is left on top of the soil - this silt is plowed into the soil before it is planted).

12) Apricot oil is used for cooking along with ghee (clarified butter) and animal fat (tallow).

13) Whole grains are used exclusively - no processed flours.

14) The Hunza eats a meager fare each day usually around 1,800 to 2,000 calories.

...The average annual precipitation in Hunza is less than two inches...The Hunza Valley was originally bare rock, the soil only being carried basket by basket up the 3,000 foot gorge walls and placed in had crafted stone terraces. This soil is continuously replaced by hand from the bed of the Hunza River 3,000 feet below...Then there was the problem of water...a year round source of water roaring from under the Ultar Glacier 50 miles away; the Ultar Glacier originates on the 25,550 foot high Mount Rakaposhi. He was able to design and construct a gravity propelled aqueduct which carried water for drinking and irrigation.

The aqueduct was a wonder of engineering as it is made from grooved logs attached together to form a 50 mile long trough which was hung from the sheer cliffs by steel nails hammered into the rock walls.

The water originating from under the millions of tons of ice grinding on the parent rock of Mount Rakaposhi was so rich with minerals that it was a bluish white - so white that the original peoples called it "Glacial Milk." For generation after generation, crop after crop and year after year for more than 2,300 years the Hunza people have drunk and irrigated their terraced fields with "Glacial Milk," unwittingly assuring their people of an optimal intake of the more than 60 minerals in the "Glacial Milk" of the Ultar Glacier!!!!

Dr. Joel D. Wallach pages 207 - 209.