Activia and Other Yogurt Touted as Digestive Cures May Make Digestive Problems Worse

Dairy products often cause digestive problems, finds Dr. Wangen, Chief Medical Officer of the IBS Treatment Center. People with digestive difficulties should use caution when choosing a treatment. Getting expert advice and testing for food allergies and other causes of digestive problems can increase the chance of success.

Seattle, WA (PRWEB) November 14, 2007 -- Yogurt is often marketed as a treatment for Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS). But for a significant proportion of people with digestive problems, consuming yogurt is exactly the wrong thing to do. IBS, an ailment affecting as many as 20% of the adult population, is one of the most common disorders diagnosed, according to the National Institutes of Health. Although probiotics, found in yogurt, can be beneficial, studies have also shown that the consumption of dairy products is one cause of IBS and digestive symptoms like diarrhea, constipation, abdominal pain, gas, and bloating.

Dr. Wangen, Chief Medical Officer at the IBS Treatment Center cautions people who try this approach. "A large number of our patients who experience IBS are actually suffering from a dairy allergy but don't realize it. Yogurt, although it is fermented, is still a dairy product and can be a potent trigger of their digestive problems. For these people the consumption of yogurt, even brands with high probiotic bacteria content, is inadvisable."

Yogurt advertising has recently promoted the digestive benefits related to probiotics. Brands such as Activia® claim in their ads that eating their product for 2 weeks can help with constipation and bloating. And since they do contain probiotics that have been shown to have positive effects on intestinal health, the claims have some merit.

However, the IBS Treatment Center sees hundreds of patients with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and digestive problems. Patients frequently report having tried regular yogurt or one of the new high bacteria products such as Activia®. Unfortunately, many of these patients also report that these products did not help them or even made them feel worse.

Discovering whether or not you have an allergy to dairy can be far more complicated than most people realize. Dairy is in most things that people eat, in one form or another. Dairy products, such as whey powder and casein are used in many processed foods, from baked goods and chips to candies and chocolate products. Although many people are familiar with lactose intolerance they are unaware of the high incidence of dairy allergies. Lactose intolerance results from an enzyme deficiency and can be easily solved. But dairy allergies are just as common and are unfortunately difficult to test for and correctly diagnose.

Proper medical evaluation of digestive problems should take into consideration all of the possible issues and conditions that can contribute to the patient's health problems. Testing for food allergies and bacterial imbalances can provide a more complete understanding of the patient's digestive problems and enable safe and effective treatment.

At the IBS Treatment Center patients are evaluated for reactions to dairy as well as most other common foods. Testing is also done to determine whether or not probiotics (good bacteria) are required and in what form and dose. Only after taking all of these things into account is an effective treatment plan developed, as each patient is unique. In cases where the patient needs supplementation of probiotics, non-dairy probiotic options are
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