



When I introduce the idea of moving toward a whole foods plant based diet , the initial response by the majority of people is, “I could never give up cheese.” I am very sympathetic to this, because it was a hard one for me too! It has become less difficult over the years as I have learned more about cheese and how it works in our bodies. Beware! I might gross you out.

The milk of all mammals contains a substance called casomorphin. According to Dr. Neal Barnard, chairman of PCRM (Physician’s Committee for Responsible Medicine), casomorphins are exactly what they sound like, a mild form of a calming substance related to opiates. It helps baby mammals bond to their mothers, and it really helps the mother’s ability to calm their child. Do you remember the look on a baby’s face as they drift off to sleep after a feeding? I often thought they looked literally tranquilized. Well they actually are.

Since cheese is a more concentrated version of the fats and proteins in milk (much of the water has been removed), the casomorphins are also more concentrated than in other dairy products, hence the addictive quality. Cheese is also one of the foods most concentrated in saturated fat with many varieties over 70% of calories from fat. There is some evidence that fat itself has some addictive qualities, since our bodies are programed to pack calories away as a survival guarantee to protect us from the next famine. Unfortunately those calories are sitting in our cells for the day that never comes for most of us!

Okay are you ready for the gross stuff? Here are some of the disgusting facts about cheese:

1. Milk contain pus. The cows are milked with machines that are anything but gentle. They are prone to mastitis. Even though the milk has been pasteurized, the pus is still in there!
2. Rennet is the enzyme that is used to make the cheese. It is a stomach enzyme harvested from the stomachs of cattle in slaughterhouses. It is scraped directly from their walls of their stomachs.
3. I know most people don’t want to think about this, but the cow has to become pregnant and have a baby cow to produce the milk in the first place. The baby is taken away at birth, and if it is a boy, he is put in a small contained area and taken away to be killed for veal. The calf and mother cow cry for each other, sometimes for days.
4. As with milk, the cheese contains hormones (some because of cows being milked until the 7th month of pregnancy and some added in their food to promote more milk). It may also contain antibiotics if the cow was treated for mastitis. The negative impact of antibiotics is helping create superbugs and making us all more vulnerable to infections.

5. A cup of diced cheddar cheese has over 500 calories, with 28 grams of fat. It is clearly one of the most unhealthful foods in our diet

The amount of cheese consumed by the average American has increased 8 fold since the 1950s. When I eat out, I often have to specify no cheese on my salad! Since when is cheese part of a salad? Oh well, I'm over it, but it took a while. I had to expose myself to some of the uncomfortable information, which was painful, but very motivating. When I feel a relapse coming on, I can drive a few miles out in the country and see the little calves in their small dog house like containers, and it reminds me of the ethics behind the food choices we make.

Thanks for letting me rant a bit on this subject! I welcome feedback on the topics of these newsletters. Please respond.

Health Matters NW is my health coaching business. I offer free initial consultations for anyone who wants to learn more about what a health coach can do for you. If you want relief from the stress, aches and pains, struggles with weight or chronic health issues, give me a call or email me for an appointment. I won't make you give up cheese, I promise, but we will explore some ways to add some more healthy foods to you life.

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