



Excerpt from Smart Life Forum on *Your Body's Sign Language*, July 2007

The Concept of Body Signs

The concept of a relationship between the diet of an individual and his physical appearance dates back at least as far as Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1530-1593). He painted pictures of people using vegetables, meats, fish, chickens and even kitchen utensils. The concept he was trying to convey was that what we eat shapes character and appearance.

Body Shape

The discussion of specific body signs begins with body shape. Signs include “beer belly syndrome,” obesity, small waist and Alzheimer’s, and the upper body weight gain pattern. These derangements of body shape are often associated with blood sugar abnormalities. Consumption of refined carbohydrates probably has the largest effect on body shape contributing to weight gain and contributing to diabetic risk for those who are genetically susceptible to the disease. An emaciated appearance can reflect dieting, anorexia, digestive disorders, or other metabolic problems associated with nutrient utilization.

From Head to Toe

The hair and scalp can reflect circulatory impairments. The blood must pump against gravity to reach the top of the head. Baldness patterns in men have been associated with increased risk of heart attack. Loss of hair in women has been associated with iron deficiency; iron is an important nutrient for healthy blood. Premature loss of pigment of the hair can reflect nutrient deficiencies and serve as an indicator of an accelerated aging process. The hair is primarily composed of sulfur containing amino acids. Poor condition of the hair and scalp can reflect deficiencies of amino acids or essential fatty acids.

Someone once said that the eyes are a window to the soul. The eyes can provide clues to a number of nutritional problems. Tendencies to experience allergic responses are often reflected by changes in the appearance of the eyes and the tissues around the eyes. This can include dark circles around the eyes, puffiness resulting from fluid retention, and characteristic wrinkling patterns beneath the eyes. The reflectivity of the eye is a rough gage of adequacy of specific nutrients like essential fatty acids, zinc and vitamin A.

Functionality of the eyes can also reflect nutritional status. Development of macular degeneration suggests deficiencies of photoprotective substances including lutein and zeaxanthin. Lutein appears to have an affinity for the peripheral retina and rods, while zeaxanthin seems to be preferentially taken up by the cones of the macula. Cataracts can reflect long term deficiencies of antioxidants and photoprotective nutrients. Diabetic cataracts can result from deficiencies of vitamin C and flavonoids. The elevated blood sugars associated with diabetes can interfere with vitamin C utilization.

Creasing of the ear lobe has been associated with increased risk of cardiovascular disease. The depth of the creases has been associated with increasing severity of hardening of the arteries. Ear lobe creasing may reflect oxidative damage to the tissues. Hearing loss is becoming increasingly common as people expose themselves to excessively loud sounds. Clients should be evaluated for hearing loss—simple tests are available. Nutrients can provide significant protection when the ears are exposed to loud sounds.

Mouth breathing causes oxygen deprivation of the tissues. The cause of the airway obstruction should be identified and addressed. Dr. James Garry suggests that obstructions of the nasal cavity exist in 85% of all children in the United States. Allergy is a common contributor to this problem. Runny nose is also a common allergy indicator.

The mouth and teeth can provide significant nutritional and health indicators. The teeth provide a glance at mineral utilization and adequacy. They also reflect exposure to excessive fluoride (fluorosis) and mercury exposure as reflected by “silver” fillings. The mouth and gums are the site of first contact with foods put in the body. Inflammation or canker sores can reflect intolerance to foods. Cracks at the corner of the mouth can indicate excessive dehydration due to inadequate fluid intake or use of medications which cause fluid loss. Cracks at the corner of the mouth are also characteristic of vitamin B2 deficiency. Swelling of the tongue may serve as an allergy indicator or clue to adrenal weakness.

Electric shock sensation in the neck may indicate deficiency of vitamin B12. Anesthesia can deplete this important nutrient triggering this symptom following surgery.

The elasticity of the skin alters with age. Premature wrinkling and loss of elasticity can result from a lifetime of excessive free radical exposure and poor diet lacking in antioxidants. The skin can also indicate blood flow (ruddy complexion) and adequacy of carotenoids (slight yellowish tint to the skin). An abnormally pale skin may indicate anemia. The skin can also provide a clue to sun exposure (tanning) which may provide a clue to adequacy of vitamin D. Roughness of the skin and pigmentation may be a clue to niacin deficiency. Bumps on the skin or hardening around the hair follicles may result from deficiencies of vitamin C or vitamin A.

Alterations in the appearance of the hands are characteristic of rheumatoid and osteoarthritis. Swollen hands and carpal tunnel syndrome may suggest deficiencies of vitamin B6 or vitamin B2. The fingernails provide a nutritional history over the previous 6 months. White spots on the nails are often associated with deficiencies of zinc or protein. Weak, brittle nails may result from poor digestion, especially deficiency of stomach acid, protein, or biotin deficiency.

Back and leg problems can result from difficulties in mineral utilization. Back pain may improve with calcium, magnesium and cod liver oil supplementation. Leg cramping is commonly associated with energy deficits. Cramping of any muscle groups should be taken as a serious matter since it may suggest that the heart is at risk. Magnesium deficiencies are common with muscle cramping. Restless leg syndrome is strongly associated with excessive caffeine intake.

Internal Conditions

Evaluation of the process of elimination is one of the most neglected aspects of medicine. Numerous problems are associated with inadequate fiber intake and imbalances of intestinal flora. Transit time and stool shape and volume serve as valuable indicators of intestinal health. Urine can also provide health clues. A pink urine after eating beets may be indicative of iron deficiency.

Loss of appetite may result from serious deficiencies of zinc or vitamin B1. Loss of appetite can be life threatening. Binging may be indicative of an allergic response to a food or to excessive intake of sugar, salt, or hydrogenated oils. Bloating, burping, and bad breath may result from deficiency of hydrochloric acid or allergic responses to foods. Use of antacids may aggravate these problems as well as destroy the gastric barrier that protects us from microbial pathogens ingested with foods.

The brain and nerves are composed primarily of fatty acids. Depression, anxiety, or memory difficulties can result from toxic exposures, inefficient energy production by these tissues, or by deficiencies of key nutritional building blocks of healthy brain and nerve cells. Exposure to mercury is probably a significant contributor to autism and Alzheimer’s. Zinc and magnesium are particularly important supports for the normal functioning of the ionic channels in nerve cells. Allergic response can be a significant contributor to depression, migraine and neuropathy.

Internal conditions can be suggestive. A rapid pulse is suggestive of allergic response to foods or inhalants. Dizziness when rising suddenly may be indicative of adrenal weakness. Chronic pain is commonly caused by deficient bone mineralization and vitamin D deficiencies.

There has been a dramatic increase in the incidence of male and female problems such as breast cancer, prostate cancer, and benign prostatic hypertrophy over the last several decades. These problems are probably contributed to in a significant way by toxic exposures to estrogenic chemical pollutants, and deficiencies of iodine and vitamin D.

Full details and documentation for these body signs is available in Jim McAfee’s book *Your Body’s Sign Language: Clues to Nutritional Well-Being* which can be ordered at www.yourbodyssignlanguage.com or by calling (800) 359-6091..