



## *My Story*

**M**y battle with weight began in 1963 when I went away to Switzerland to school. I was fifteen years old. My father, a medical doctor took an international position with the World Health Organization and I was transplanted from a peaceful, happy life in the Pacific Northwest to the cosmopolitan city of Geneva Switzerland. I weighed 108 pounds.

Imagine a 15-year-old girl, who has just left all her friends and family behind, thrust into the middle of a beautiful, vibrant city and a new school knowing no one.

That was me.

I was at an all-time emotional low, dealing with many changes and unfamiliar surroundings. So I placated my self with Swiss cheese — you know the kind of cheese with holes in it — Emmenthal, as it is known in Switzerland. I took a liking to this cheese and bought it

in great quantities after I arrived at the school. I would spend my pocket money on a kilo of Swiss cheese and a loaf of French bread. Sequestered away in my dorm room – I would eat the whole thing!

After several weeks, my clothes began to feel tight. I would write letters to my parents asking for more money to buy new pants, and bathing suits – I was popping out of them and I had no idea why.

By the time, several months later, I had spent the summer in the Swiss Alps eating cheese, chocolate and lots of French bread, I had gained nearly 40 pounds.

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## ***The Secrets Behind My Weight Problem***

In 1983 I went for my annual physical. I was 38 years old and had experienced fluctuations in weight for 20 years along with a number of symptoms that had me

quite puzzled. I was married and raising two pre-teen daughters at that time. I was also a freelance writer for a major city newspaper and glossy magazine. Like every good doctor's daughter, I went for my annual physical every year and I figured this check-up would be the same as every other one: blood pressure, pap test, a look in the ears and throat, and a few pokes here and there, and thankfully a clean bill of health for another year. I had been gaining weight, and had a few odd symptoms and had not been feeling terrific — not really sick but not really well either. As I lay on the examining table covered in a paper sheet, I discussed with my doctor the myriad symptoms I had been experiencing, plus my struggle to keep my weight under control. I also told her about the depression and feelings of overwhelm and anxiety.

Not only had I battled weight for at least 20 years, suffered from depression and at times anxiety. As if this wasn't enough to complain about, I went on to tell the doctor of my greatest fear. I had been bumping into things — the edge of a doorway, or catching my hip on a table edge or the back of a chair. I seemed to be losing my balance or my sense of perception. Could this be the dreaded warning signs of Multiple Sclerosis (MS)?

I thought for sure that she would say that these problems were all in my head. Surprise! I was met with interest and compassion. She appeared to have an immediate understanding of the problem.

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Allergies! No way! Why, I had never broken out in a rash, hives, had an asthma attack or reacted violently to anything I had eaten, or so I thought. Allergies, I concluded, were for neurotics.

Interestingly enough, my doctor shared how she too had suffered from similar symptoms. She suggested that a special kind of allergist — a specialist in Environmental Medicine — could hold a key for me.

That was a very important day, and one that would shift me out of the world of fashion, change the course of my life, and lead me into an exciting career in health education.

My doctor referred me to a colleague who specialized in the treatment of food allergies, the Candida yeast syndrome, and environmental illness. In her opinion, it was unlikely that I had Multiple Sclerosis;

more likely, I had multiple food allergies and a sensitivity to yeast. It was worth investigating.

Tucking the name and address of the Environmental Medical specialist into my purse, I wondered what the next step would be.

It was November, just a few weeks before Christmas, and no one was going to deprive me of my shortbread, eggnog, and all other seasonal goodies that I looked forward to. We'd discuss the allergies later. I proceeded to eat and drink my way through Christmas that year. Then, when the last chocolate had called out to me to be eaten, and the last crumb of Christmas cake consumed, I was ready for my appointment.

Feeling more depressed than ever — puffy and bloated, with all the buttons straining on my blouse — I entered the allergist's office. The next piece of the puzzle was about to unfold. All of my symptoms were full-blown. There is no way that this doctor could have an answer to such a host of problems.

A very detailed history was taken, each symptom carefully noted, plus a list of foods I most frequently consumed, which was an unusual question for a doctor to ask. I had to confess that I had frequent cravings for sweets and bread. Testing was scheduled for the following day.

Environmental Medicine is a special branch of medicine that deals with the person's relationship to

the environment. The approach is comprehensive and holistic. Everything a person eats, breathes, or comes in contact with can all affect one's moods, one's physical symptoms, or even one's weight.

### ***Food Allergy Testing***

The next day, during several hours of testing, I was to learn more about the effects of foods and chemicals on the body. In this testing area, I was fascinated to see a room full of different people react in different ways to the common foods found in the average shopping cart. This kind of testing, called intradermal testing, involves the injection of a concentrated amount of each allergen or substance under the skin, at ten minute intervals. The pulse rate is taken, reactions noted, and a wheal or bump at the injection site is measured. After ten minutes, each test is neutralized and individuals are brought back to normal so that subsequent tests can continue. The substance being tested is not revealed to the patient until that test is completed.

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In my case, milk brought on stomach cramps, post-nasal drip, and a dry cough. My eyes became puffy and my face felt “full,” as though I were retaining fluid.

Obviously the healthy cottage cheese salad that I ate every day for lunch was doing me no good. Wheat brought on a fuzzy feeling in my head and exhaustion; I could hardly keep my eyes open during the test. I was sad to think that I would have to give up making the eight loaves of bread that graced the family table each week. Bread was supposed to be the staff of life, but it wasn't helping me!

The testing continued. Oranges brought on a pounding sinus headache and pulsating temples. What would I do without my morning orange juice? Chicken – fatigue, arthritis in my hands, plus a raised pulse. Potatoes – fatigue, pain in my wrists, hands, and knees. One by one, all of the foods in my diet were being crossed off my list – what was left to eat? Coffee brought on a feeling of extreme exhaustion. I was well aware that caffeine made me hyper, but it was interesting that the bean itself made me feel tired. Corn gave me an instant headache, spacey feeling, and a stomachache. Corn? Why would corn be a problem? I so rarely ate corn except fresh from the farmers' market in the summer. But, as I was to find out, corn is everywhere: most packaged and canned products contain corn. Even baby powder, some

toothpastes, and the gummed adhesive on envelopes and stamps contain corn. It's not so easy to eliminate.

Help! Stop! Things were going too far. But just as I was experiencing all kinds of reactions to common foods, there were other people in the testing room who were going through their own reactions as well.

Bill, a healthy but slightly overweight 35-year-old, was experiencing a runny nose, streaming eyes, and a red face from (he found out later) apples — one of his favorite foods. An hour later, when tested for wheat, he fell fast asleep.

Arlene, an attractive 30-year-old executive, broke out crying uncontrollably in the middle of a conversation. She had suffered all her life from depression. What could cause such a reaction? Eggs. She loved them, ate two for breakfast, and would even whip up an omelet for a late-night snack.

Colleen, an overweight nine-year-old, jumped up and down with hyperactive and aggressive behavior in reaction to sugar and milk. Ten minutes later, a neutralizing dose of the same allergen would clear her symptoms quite miraculously and return her to a normal calm little girl.

It was clear that all of us in that testing room reacted to the foods that we ate most frequently or the foods to which we were addicted.

Wheat, dairy products, and corn appeared to be the

worst offenders, affecting every single person in the room — but in different ways. I gained a new understanding of the phrase “you are what you eat.”

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Then I was tested for common inhalants and chemicals — the things that we are exposed to in the environment. This was a revelation. Chlorine brought on fatigue and pulsating temples; even the tap water had to go! Formaldehyde brought on a headache and that spacey feeling again, as well as fatigue and an increased pulse rate.

Formaldehyde is impregnated into synthetic fibers. This was an important link for me because I always felt tired and developed a mild headache when I was researching my weekly fashion column. Many women told me that they found shopping exhausting. I am sure that that it is not because of the overwhelming choices but probably because of the chemical emissions from all the clothing in the stores.

Surely the tests were finished. At this point my whole life, my diet and my career were being seriously challenged. How was I going to navigate my way through this information? It was hard to accept.

But we aren't finished yet: Just one more test — a yeast extract called *Candida albicans*. This test took 30 minutes.

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Within ten minutes, the test brought on a dry cough and that old familiar feeling of panic and anxiety across my chest. A few minutes later, this turned into depression. Then my neck and shoulders became stiff and the numbness and tingling in my arms and hands became severe. All of my symptoms were being graphically reenacted with a drop of this extract injected under my skin.

At last, all that I needed to know was there in black and white. I almost cried with relief that here, finally, was an answer. These reactions indicated that my “healthy” diet and *Candida* yeast were the cause of my physical symptoms.

After a full day of testing, I was barely able to drive home because I had such a bad headache from all of

those food allergy reactions one on top of another. But the decision was clear: I had to eliminate my favorite foods temporarily so that my body could recover from their toxic effects, and I needed to take medication to eradicate the Candida yeast strain.

### *Noticeable Improvement*

Within three weeks of taking a specific herbal substance to eradicate the Candida yeast, and making the necessary dietary changes, I began to feel better. The pain in my neck and shoulders and the tingling down my arms had diminished. I knew I had made a breakthrough when I could turn my head, without pain, to back the car out of the driveway. I adhered very closely to the dietary restrictions for several months, which was no mean feat and added considerable stress to my busy life as a mother and newspaper columnist.

But my energy returned, I was no longer tired and worn out, and the great bonus was that I could eat as much as I wanted, and as long as I stayed away from *offending foods, I lost weight*. My battle with weight gain was over. Most days I felt like a 21-year old. My skin became clear and my brain and memory returned to normal clarity. My temperament and my attitude toward life was one of joyous anticipation. This is how we are all supposed to feel!