

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

February 9, 2020

“Cautions with ‘Fake Meat’ Burgers”

We have been repeatedly cautioned about the health dangers of “processed” foods and impossible burgers are highly processed. The so-called “beyond meat” or “impossible burgers” contain soy and wheat allergens. “Fake meats” or alternative meats are climbing in popularity. But we should take a look at the ingredients in these foods. It appears that plant-based meat isn’t as healthy as you have been led to believe. Marketing leads us to believe that “plant-based (fake meat) burgers” consist solely of plants-based ingredients. However, the products are specifically designed to mimic the texture and flavor of meat and they contain an extensive ingredient list that’s at odds with the better-for-you image these foods are trying to create. We’re being duped into eating heavily processed food that contains numerous preservatives, additives, fillers, texturizers, and chemicals linked to cancer. They’re high in sodium, and low in nutritional quality. Sodium content is especially significant because high-salt diets contribute to high blood pressure, which can cause heart attacks, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, and blindness. For the people who switch to plant-based meat out of fear that red meat will increase their risk of heart disease, the salt content in these meat analogs means they’re unknowingly jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire. Therefore, consumers should NOT be told that highly processed fake foods are any better for you than the meat products they’re replacing. We all want to eat healthier foods, but the marketing around fake meat is misleading. You probably assumed it was healthy because it is supposed to be only from plants. But it’s not. Not even close. Potentially dangerous ingredients include: **Red #3** is an artificial food dye that the FDA has recognized as a thyroid carcinogen since 1990; **Red #40**; **Caramel coloring** refers to any of the four classes of caramel food coloring, two of which are associated with cancer; **Tertiary butylhydroquinone (TBHQ)** is a synthetic preservative which has been associated with increased risk of convulsions, liver enlargement, neurotoxic effects, and tumors; and **Methylcellulose** which is the active ingredient in many laxatives. The “plant based” ingredients have been significantly altered from their original form in plants. Testing has found dangerous levels of hexane and other by-products in soy-based meats. The biggest harm could come from what’s called heme. And, based on an equivalent serving of 85% lean ground beef, the Beyond Burger contains more fat (18g vs 15g). It’s also significantly higher in calories (250 compared to 215), for those of us monitoring calorie intake.

In the America that I love, we will not be tricked into believing that highly processed, low quality food is healthy for us by calling it “a plant.” Fake meat is not healthier.

Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

Surgeon/Scientist/Patient Advocate

27439 Highway 441, Kentwood, LA 70444

985-229-6955 Home | 985-229-3760 – Fax | 985-514-0578 – Cell

rhowesmd@hughes.net

| www.iwillfindthecure.org

