

### 37. Foods as Medicine

by Cheryl Block

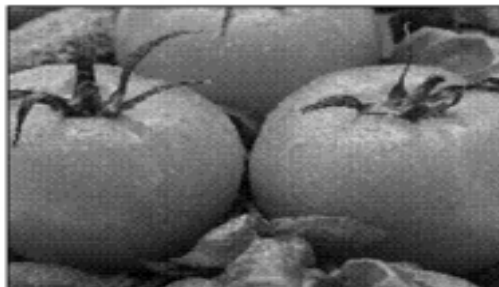
**A** <sup>1</sup>We know that food provides us with nutrition and vitamins. <sup>2</sup>Scientists are now studying and testing claims that certain foods, called “functional foods,” may also help to reduce the risk of disease if they are eaten regularly.

**B** <sup>3</sup>One group of functional foods is fruits and vegetables. <sup>4</sup>Scientists have found that tomatoes and broccoli contain natural chemicals that may help to fight disease.

**C** <sup>5</sup>Another group of functional foods is whole grains, like oat bran. <sup>6</sup>However, most people don’t eat oat bran by itself. <sup>7</sup>Instead, oat bran is put into products such as oatmeal and certain breads. <sup>8</sup>Scientists have found strong evidence that eating oat bran can lower cholesterol. <sup>9</sup>Doctors have linked high levels of cholesterol to heart disease.

**D** <sup>10</sup>In 1997, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) gave the Quaker Oats Company the first officially approved health claim for a food. <sup>11</sup>The FDA allowed the company to label its products with the health claim that eating oat bran lowers cholesterol. <sup>12</sup>The FDA approves only health claims that have research to support them.

**E** <sup>13</sup>Fortified foods have added vitamins and minerals. <sup>14</sup>This idea started in 1830 when a chemist discovered that adding iodine to



salt prevented an enlarged thyroid gland, or goiter. <sup>15</sup>The newest trend in fortified foods is adding herbs. <sup>16</sup>Food companies have started making claims that these herbs will improve your health and even prevent disease. <sup>17</sup>Tea with added ginseng says it gives you “a positive energy boost.” <sup>18</sup>Soup with echinacea claims to “fortify the immune system.” <sup>19</sup>Are these claims facts or opinions?

**F** <sup>20</sup>Many people believe herbs improve health and prevent disease. <sup>21</sup>However, most herbs have never been tested to find out if this is true. <sup>22</sup>There are no standards for products that contain herbs. <sup>23</sup>Nor is there evidence to prove their claims as food additives.

**G** <sup>24</sup>Functional foods may prove to be of great benefit to people. <sup>25</sup>However, it is important to look for evidence of testing before believing what the product says. <sup>26</sup>Not all health claims may be facts.