Star health

DHAKA SUNDAY NOVEMBER 23, 2003

e-mail: starhealth@thedailystar.net

Sources of vitamin A

Vitamin A can save you from xeropthalmia, keratomalacia and ultimate night blindness. Take plenty of food that contain vitamin A in your diet.

λ Cod liver oil is the best source
λ Cheese, cream, butter
λ Eggs, liver
λ Dark green leafy vegetables like spinach, kale, broccoli are excellent! Other good sources are carrots, squash, fruits like mango, papaya, cantaloupes
λ Milk is a good source, esp. if fortified with vitamin A

Make your Eid journey comfortable

TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

Many people manifest some health hazard like vomiting, headache, dizziness etc. during long journey. For eid purpose people go to the remote area to pass their time with family. During their travel some people have to suffer these discomforts. But they can easily avoid these by simple medications, which sometimes needs no prescription and available in the roadside dispenseries. Let us learn about the motion sickness and its prevention and make our eid journey free from these sort of troubles.

Motion sickness occurs when the body is subjected to accelerations of movement in different directions or under conditions where visual contact with the actual outside horizon is lost. The balance center of the inner ear then sends information to the brain that conflicts with the visual clues of apparently standing still in the interior cabin of a ship or airplane. Symptoms generally consist of dizziness, fatigue, and nausea which may progress to vomiting.

Prevention is best accomplished by seeking areas of lesser movement in an interior location of a large ship or by facing forward and looking outside. Several medications are now available both by prescription and over the counter that may prevent or limit the symptoms of motion sickness. If medications are necessary, they are best taken at least one hour before travelling. Side-effects of these medications usually consist of sedation and dry mouth and they should not be taken by people who have glaucoma or urinary obstruction. Recent studies have shown that Ginger root may be as effective as the other drug treatments but is associated with fewer side effects.

Motion sickness may be treated with a variety of medications. For many years, the first-line drug has been dimenhydrinate, an antihistamine that is available without a prescription. The main side-effect is drowsiness. Meclizine is another antihistamine that is effective for motion sickness. The scopolamine patch is also applied. The scopolamine patch should not be given to children, pregnant women, or the elderly, or those with a history of glaucoma or urinary or pyloric obstruction. Sedatives should be avoided while wearing the patch. Severe motion sickness may be treated with promethazine, which is more likely on average than the previously mentioned regimens to cause decreased alertness.

Motion sickness is unusual in children under two years of age, but may occur in older children. Promethazine (Phenergan) may be useful.

Tips for getting rid of motion sickness

If you find that you are feeling pretty crummy whenever you are cruising in a car or train, rocking in a boat or journey by bus you might want to keep a few tips in mind:

Get to the middle of things. Whatever you are riding in, find the place with the least amount of movement. This means sitting closer to the center or in the middle of a boat or bus - rather than at the sides or the front, where you are more likely to feel seasick.

Put your best face forward. Always sit facing forward. Do not face backward in your seat or sit in a seat that faces backward. Sitting forward helps keep the motion sensed by your eyes and ears the same.

Examine the great outdoors. Look outside. If you are in a bus, you might want to sit in the front seat and look at the distant scenery (looking at scenery up close as it zooms by will probably make you even dizzier). Or if you are seasick on a boat, go to the top deck (in the middle of the boat) and look far out into the horizon. This way, your eyes will not be fooled into thinking you are not moving when you actually are.

If motion sickness bothers you no matter what you try to do when you travel, your parent may be able to give you a medicine that can sometimes help. If you are feeling super-sick really easily with any movement, though, it's a good idea to go to the doctor. You could be getting motion sickness because there is a problem with any of the body parts that help sense movement.

So before you get dizzy and all in a tizzy the next time you take a road trip, remember to relax, look outside (no reading!), and face forward. Your head and your stomach will thank you later.

Medium-firm mattress best for back pain

If lower back pain is making life a misery, a medium-firm mattress could provide some relief.

Although a firm mattress offers better support and is recommended by most doctors, Spanish researchers said a less rigid mattress is best for a pain in the back.

"A medium firmness mattress is better than a hard mattress for back pain," said Dr Francisco Kovacs of the Kovacs Foundation, a medical charity in Palma de Mallorca, Spain.

Lower back pain is one of the most common ailments and affects most people at some point in their lives.

The pain, which can last for a few days, months or years, is usually caused by trauma from an injury, lifting, an accident or muscle dysfunction.

A study compared the impact of hard and medium-firm mattresses on 313 people who suffered from chronic lower back pain.

The patients were randomly selected and given either a firm or medium firm mattress and were asked to report on the amount of back pain they suffered while lying in bed and rising in the morning.

After three months people who slept on the medium-firm mattress reported greater pain relief and less disability than the other group.

"The use of a mattress of medium firmness improves the clinical course of low back pain in a higher proportion of patients than the use of a firm mattress," Kovacs said in a report in The Lancet medical journal.

He believes that if the mattress is too strong it may not adapt to the natural curves of the spinal column.

Jenny McConnell, of the Center for Sports Medicine Research and Education at the University of Melbourne in Australia, said the findings will come as a relief for doctors with patients suffering from lower back pain.

"After the study of Kovacs and colleagues, clinicians may be confident in recommending a mattress of medium firmness rather than previously recommended hard bed for patients with chronic low back pain," she said in a commentary in the journal.

Source: http://www.reuters.com

Genes in medicine

It may seem ridiculous that, even when we know as much about a disease and its genetic basis as we do for cystic fibrosis, for example, we still cannot provide a cure. So, what then is the point of genetics in medicine?

Even if curing genetic disease is still mostly the dream of researchers, current understanding of our genes does give us the chance to do quite a lot to prevent illness, understand why a child is not well, and advise parents on how to reduce the risk of passing genetic conditions on, as well as starting treatment to alleviate symptoms and keep someone as healthy as possible even if it does not cure.

Genetics is also giving doctors and scientists a way to learn how human beings evolved and provides very important clues to how the human body functions, and what new approaches could be made to developing treatments.

Genetic counselling services have been running for many years now, offering people help and advice, providing diagnoses and, by looking at inheritance of a condition, giving useful information about how the condition is passed on.

When doctors think about genes

There are certain triggers which lead doctors to look for a genetic factor in illness, for example:

When a child is born with a recognisable syndrome or collection of health problems.

When patterns of illness or unusual characteristics (such as being born with fused fingers or an unusual shaped face) repeat themselves within one family.

When certain diseases develop which are known to have a genetic cause.

When a disease is already known to run in a family (e.g. breast cancer.)

When parents know they are carriers of a genetic condition.

When someone has an unusual reaction to medication (e.g. a reaction to an anaesthetic drug.)

Clues in family history

Once a genetic problem is suspected, the most important step is then to slowly and painstakingly put together a detailed family history. The first step is to draw up a family tree, marking in as many members of the family as possible.

Then a whole series of questions will be asked of those people in the family who agree to help. These will include questions on:

Current illness under scrutiny: who has had this illness or health problem, what was the course of the illness, has it been previously diagnosed in any family members (and if so, how?)

Previous illness: what illnesses have you had, when did they begin, how were they treated, what was the outcome?

Deceased members of the family: what did these people die from? Were autopsies done? Were they known to have had any major illness or health problems?

Have any family members had problems with miscarriages or stillbirth? Were autopsies done on the babies?

Lifestyle: including questions on smoking, drinking, occupation, exposure to known health hazards.

As the picture is built up, tests may be offered to analyse the DNA of samples of blood or other cells (e.g. from **inside the mouth**), in order to confirm the diagnosis. Testing can only usually be done when the gene or chromosomal problem causing the condition has been identified or narrowed down to one of a few possibilities.

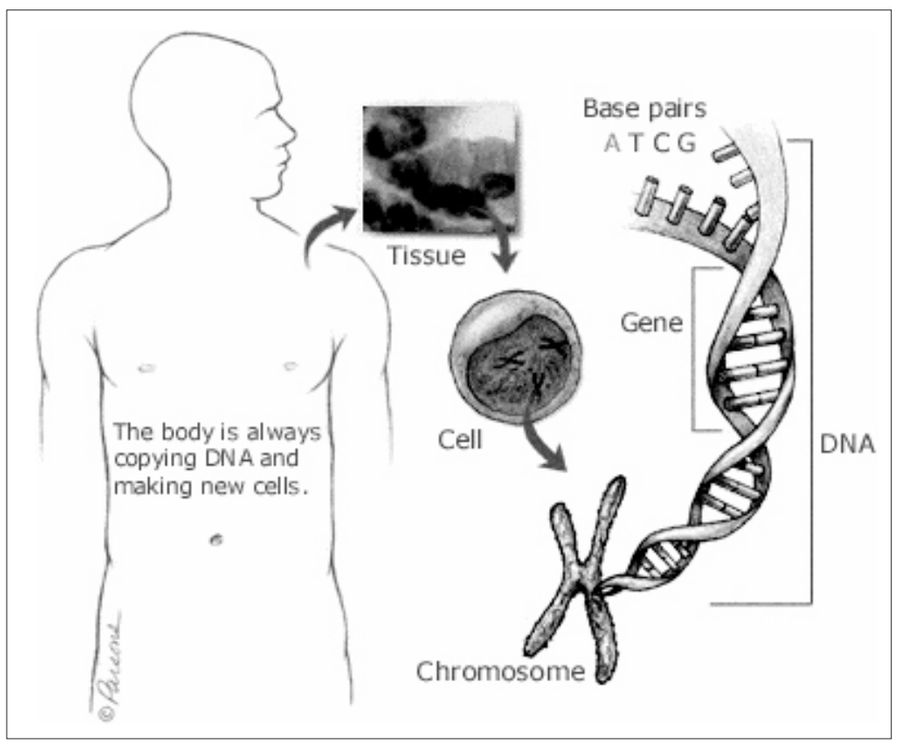
When a disease is present in several family members it may be possible to examine DNA samples from each to look for genetic abnormalities which recur in every affected person, even if the gene has not previously been identified. In this way many new genes are identified.

All the information will be examined by clinical geneticists and then discussed with the family members. Plans may be made for future tests, or referral to appropriate specialists. It may be possible to give some prediction of the course of the illness and vulnerability to other illnesses, as well as implications for future children of those affected.

Chart your own family history

Why not chart your own family health history? Find out which trends and diseases are in your family and look at the inheritance patterns through the generations.

Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk



How to take care of your skin

If you are like most people, a weekly facial does not fit in your budget. But healthy, glowing skin does not have to be the exclusive possession of those who can afford professional skin care. Developing a routine that keeps your particular skin clean, hydrated, and protected can help you look your best. A good daily skin care routine should not take more than 10 minutes a day.

Following is a list of some steps you should incorporate into your daily skin care routine that will help to keep your skin looking and feeling healthy, clear, and youthful.

Determine your skin type and pick appropriate products

λ*Normal* - Skin is velvety, with small pores, and no visible acne.
λ*Oily* - Skin has enlarged pores with shiny patches. Frequent breakouts may occur on the face, back, arms, and possibly the chest.
λ*Dry* - Skin has very small, invisible pores with possible dry and itchy patches. The cheeks, arms, legs, chest, and belly may be particularly dry.
λ*Combination*- Skin is dry across the cheeks and oily on the forehead, chin, and nose. Arms may be dry and back may be oily.
λ*Sensitive*- Skin is either oily or dry with irritated and itchy patches. Skin may also be blotchy and reddened with frequent breakouts.

If you are not sure what type of skin you have, ask your dermatologist or a skin care professional. Note that skin on the body may be a different type than facial skin.

Once your skin is classified, you should choose products formulated for your skin type and use them in your daily routine. The four steps in your daily skin care routine should be *cleansing, toning, moisturising,* and *protecting.*

Step 1 - Cleansing

For the face, any type of soap works fine to remove dirt, but may not work as well to remove make-up. Instead, choose a facial cleansing agent in cream, water-based emulsion, lotion, or gel form that is formulated for your particular skin type. There are many different products on the market so you may want to try a few brands before you settle down on one that works best for you. Those with drier skin may want to choose cream or lotion products; those with oilier skin may want to use gel or water-based products. Those prone to breakouts may wish to use medicated soaps or lotions designed to reduce breakouts.

First, splash your face with warm water to open the pores. Apply your cleansing product to the skin in gentle upward strokes (to avoid stretching the skin and aggravating wrinkles), rinsing thoroughly with warm water for several minutes. If you use a product that must be applied with cotton balls or a cleansing towel, again, use gentle upward strokes and rinse thoroughly with warm water. Finish with a splash or two of cold water to close the pores.

This routine is same for the body. Cleanse your skin in the bath and shower with a cleansing product formulated for the body. Rinse with warm water and finish up with a dip or splash of cold.

Step 2 - Toning

Follow-up your cleansing routine

with a facial toner, which removes any residual greasiness still left on the skin from your make-up or your cleansing product. It also closes the pores, stimulates circulation, and gives the skin a porcelain-like quality. There are a variety of toners on the market so try to choose one that is formulated for your skin type. Apply the toner with a cotton ball, using the same gentle, upward strokes that you used to apply your cleanser.

Only those with very oily skin need to use a toner on the body. If you have oily skin and breakouts on areas of your body, try using a toner formulated for use on the body. Otherwise, skip to moisturising.

Step 3 - Moisturising

All skin types, even oily skin, need a moisturiser everyday. But like toners and cleansers, there

are different types of moisturisers for different types of skin. If you have dry skin you should choose a moisturiser containing oil (such as petrolatum); if you have oily skin you should choose water-based creams and oil-free formulations. You may also wish to choose different moisturizers for the face and body; facial moisturisers tend to be more expensive and complex for your most delicate skin.

Many moisturising creams contain alpha-hydroxy acids (AHAs), which are fruit- and milk-based acids that help to remove the dull layer of surface skin and expose fresh skin below. AHAs can reduce the appearance of pores and fine wrinkles. If you have sensitive skin, you may wish to avoid these products since they can cause breakouts.

If you have sensitive skin you should look for hypo-allergenic products, which are usually free of perfumes and dyes that can cause skin irritation. If you go out in the sun daily, it's a good idea to choose a moisturiser containing a sunscreen.

The moisturiser should be applied to the face in upward strokes. Apply to the body in gentle strokes, applying the most moisturiser to your belly, chest, calves, thighs, and forearms.

Step 4 - Protection

The most important step you can take to protect your skin is to apply a sunscreen everyday. Use at least an SPF 10 to your face and exposed areas of your body whenever you are going to be out in the sun. Many moisturizers contain SPF 10-15 sunscreen, or you may wish apply a separate product that is specifically a sunscreen with a higher SPF level. Whichever option you choose, make sure you buy a sunscreen suitable for your skin type.

Feeding the skin

A critical step required to get healthy and glowing skin is to eat a balanced diet containing plenty of Vitamins A, C, D and E. Vitamins C and E help to prevent skin damage from free radicals which can cause visible lines and wrinkles. Vitamin C also helps the body to produce and maintain healthy collagen levels. Vitamin A helps to prevent sun damage and Vitamins C and D (which is applied topically) help with skin healing. The following table lists some common food sources that contain these essential vitamins for your skin.

Source: http://www.health.yahoo.com

Fish oils reduce athletes' lung troubles

Athletes who experience shortness of breath and other asthma-like symptoms after exercise may benefit from fish oil capsules, researchers report.

In a small study, elite athletes who normally experienced asthma-like symptoms after exercising had less severe symptoms after adding fish oil capsules to their diet.

"If you experience asthma-like symptoms after exercise, such as breathlessness and a tight chest, then taking fish oil supplements which contain omega-3 fatty acids may help you breathe better during and after exercise," Dr. Timothy D. Mickleborough of Indiana University in Bloomington told Reuters Health.

For many people with asthma, exercise can trigger wheezing, chest tightness, cough and breathlessness, but these symptoms may also occur in people who do not have asthma.

In fact, research suggests that elite athletes are more likely to experience asthma-like symptoms after exercise than less accomplished athletes and the general population. Why this is the case is uncertain, but prolonged exercise may increase exposure to allergens and substances that can irritate the airways as well as increase inhalation of cold, dry air.

In most cases, asthma-like symptoms that occur after exercise are treated with medications, but there is some evidence that making dietary changes can reduce symptoms.

Because substances called omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) that are found in fish oils can produce anti-inflammatory effects, there has been interest in seeing whether PUFAs may improve asthma symptoms.

So far, the evidence on the effect of PUFAs in people with asthma is mixed and the one study that looked at the effect of fish oil supplements on asthma did not show any benefits.

The study included 20 elite athletes, half of whom experienced asthma-like symptoms after exercise but who did not have asthma. For three weeks, participants were randomly assigned to take fish oil capsules or placebo capsules that contained olive oil. After a two-week washout period, volunteers switched groups.

Before exercise, there were no significant differences in lung function between the fish oil and placebo groups, the researchers reported.

But the decline in lung function that normally occurred after exercise was reduced by almost 80 percent in athletes on the fish oil diet. These athletes also needed less asthma medication when taking fish oil supplements.

Fish oil supplements did not seem to affect lung function at all in athletes who did not usually experience symptoms after exercise.

Several pieces of evidence suggest that the airway narrowing that occurs in some elite athletes differs from symptoms that affect people with asthma after they exercise.

Source: http://www.reuters.com