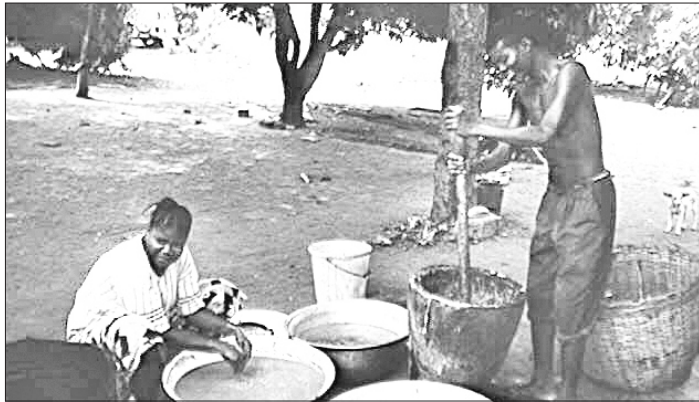


Did you know?

Sterilisation services are provided free of charge in government institutions. Guidelines have been issued from time to time by the government covering various aspects of sterilisation.

# WHO warns of trans fatty acid dangers



A way to produce zero trans products is to use palm oil as the source of hard fats.

DR AHMAD IBRAHIM

The world was recently gripped with almost hysteric fear. A new pneumonia like disease, now widely known as severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome SARS, created panic among the general public in many countries notably China, Hongkong, Taiwan and even as far away as in Canada. So far it has claimed more than 600 lives. scientists so far could not

find any cure. And no less than 9,000 people are known to have contracted the deadly virus, apparently a close cousin of the coronavirus associated with the common cold. The WHO has been at the centre of efforts to contain the spread of the disease. In a way the disease has demonstrated how vulnerable the global community can be to any such kind of virus attack. As a custodian of global health, the WHO has over the

years embarked on various initiatives not only to find solution to such infectious and communicable diseases, but also to educate the world on preventive measures for chronic diseases including heart ailments, cancer, diabetes and the like. Many studies have shown that diets do play an important role in the development of such chronic diseases. So every few years, the WHO has come out with recommendations on a healthy lifestyle to ward off such diseases including proper dietary guidelines. Such recommendations are often always used by member countries as policy instruments on health. In April, the WHO came out with one such report. An earlier report released in 1989 was not well received especially from the tobacco and sugar business. The report then came out with strong recommendations against smoking and high intake of sugar. Fat is the other category of food products which has always been singled out for mention. This is because excessive intake of fats have been found to give rise to cardiovascular diseases. How-

ever, while in the 1989 report the focus was on saturated fats, this time around the WHO has produced disturbing evidence on the deleterious nature of trans fats. These are fats produced when soft oils like soyabean and sunflower are partially hydrogenated in the manufacture of products like margarine, bakery fats and allied products. In this latest report which was prepared by a fairly extensive expert consultation comprising 30 international high caliber nutritionists, the WHO has come out with serious warning on the dangers of trans fats. For the first time, this world body has concluded that trans fatty acids are injurious to the heart. In fact, the report has produced convincing evidence on the fact that trans fat is much worse than saturated fats. While saturated fats raises both the bad and the good cholesterol, trans fats raises the bad Low Density Lipo-protein (LDL) and suppress the good High Density Lipo-protein (HDL) cholesterol, making it even worse. They have now recommended that the intake of trans fats in the diet should be re-

stricted to less than 1 per cent of the energy consumed by the body which works out to be less than 2 to 3 grams a day. Earlier, the Institute of Medicine, US Food and Nutrition Board came out with an even stricter intake limit for trans fat. They called for "zero tolerance" of trans meaning trans fats should be avoided at all costs. Such conclusions by the WHO will obviously have implications on the international trade in oils and fats. In countries like the US and Brazil where soyabean and sunflower oils are available in large quantities, it is common practice for makers of margarine and shortening to use such partially hydrogenated oils as the hard fat ingredient. Now that trans fat is hailed as a dangerous precursor of heart ailments, such practice is hard pressed for change. In fact lately many food manufacturers have started to look at alternatives to circumvent the trans route. Of course, for those in the palm oil industry, such development should come as a pleasant surprise. This is because in the

manufacture of such solid fats products like margarine and shortening, the only way to produce zero trans products is to use palm oil as the source of hard fats, in place of partially hydrogenated soyabean or sunflower oils. This is basically the reason why in countries like the EU, China, Pakistan, Egypt and India where palm oil is widely consumed, their solid fat items are virtually free of trans. There is no doubt that this latest announcement on the dangers of trans fats by such international body as the WHO will have far reaching implications on the fate of partially hydrogenated oils. Palm oil is set to reap tremendous commercial benefits from such finding. If all these years, palm oil has been at the receiving end of much ill advised ridiculing by the soft oils, it looks like this new revelation has put palm oil in a truly envious position. Palm oil may well be having the last laugh!

The writer is Director of Marketing and Promotion, Malaysian Palm oil promotion council, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

## Trans fatty acids and risk of coronary heart disease

Trans fatty acids are either manufactured or found naturally in products from ruminant animals. As it became known that saturated fats cause increased levels of blood cholesterol, the food industry was pressured to replace saturated fats in foods. However, polyunsaturated fats are unstable and go rancid at room temperature, so a process called hydrogenation is used to prevent this, which produces trans fatty acids. Current trans fatty acid intake contributes between 0.5 per cent and 2.1 per cent to total energy intake in western Europe. Studies show a two per cent increase in trans fatty acid intake increases the risk of coronary heart disease by approximately 25 per cent. It is therefore advisable to follow the current recommendation that trans fatty acids contribute no more than 2 per cent of

energy (about 5 g a day). Trans fatty acids are found in natural foods such as milk, cheese, eggs and meat; in manufactured products such as oils, margarine and baked goods; and in deep-fried foods. Although studies found that the effect of trans fatty acids from manufactured and natural sources to be similar, the majority of trans fatty acids are consumed from either manufactured or deep fried foods. It would therefore be prudent to reduce consumption of these to decrease the risk of coronary heart disease. Trans fatty acids are not listed on food ingredient labels, but hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils are, and so these are the ingredients to look for and either avoid or use sparingly.

<http://www.jr2.ox.ac.uk/bandolier/booth/hilvin/gfachd.html>

# Acid Survivors Foundation in the forefront

The trend of acid throwing has been changing. From what it was ten years ago, it has now drastically changed due to social awareness and stringent laws.

TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

Executive director of Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF), Monira Rahman, talked to the Star Health Desk last week and shared her views on the problems and future plans of the Foundation. When did you join ASF and how it came into being? I joined ASF in 1998. There was a proposal to British High Commission from Spain to organise a trip with a group of acid survivors from Bangladesh for their treatment. Dr John Morrison, the first executive director of ASF, who was initially involved with the project, realised while organising the trip that there was no scope for rehabilitation for acid survivors and no one to provide support. He then felt the necessity of establishing the Acid Survivors Foundation with the aims to offer free treatment services and also provide social and psychological support. Why did you join and how do you think you can contribute in the field? Before joining the foundation I worked at a non-government organisation for the welfare of the society. I always felt the necessity to do something positive for our community from my social commitment. In 1999 I attended a seminar on child rights and witnessed two acid survivors. Seeing the severe physical disfigurement of some of the survivors I became quite shocked. But when I talked to them I found the profound inner mental strength that moved me to do something for them.

Regarding acid throwing, has this trend declined or has it been increasing and why? The trend of acid throwing has been changing. From what it was ten years ago, it has now drastically changed due to social awareness and stringent laws. Usually women are the ones who suffer the dreadful casualty in life. But recently we have noticed that men are also being attacked. Acid attacks on males were 36 per cent in 2000. The causes of acid throwing are increasing. In these days acid throwing in family and land disputes is increasing enormously. I think the reasons for the increase in the number of attacks are lack of adequate social awareness and lack of implementation of legislation. What is being done to prevent this dreadful act in society? The social work for the prevention of acid throwing is very negligible. Advocacy programmes are inadequate and laws are not implemented to the spirit. So the rate of acid attack is still increasing alarmingly. What role are ASF and government playing to support the survivors? There is very scanty support for the rehabilitation of acid survivors from the government. ASF is putting its best efforts for the rehabilitation of acid survivors. The main problem is the lengthy procedure to implement various projects. We have talked with the ministries of health, law, home, women and children's affair and ministry of social welfare. The ministry of law has modified the Act on Prevention of Women and Child Abuse (95)

to 'Acid Control Act 2002' and 'Acid Crime Control Act 2002'. Government should increase the support to the NGOs to work with them. We are working on four aspects with the acid survivors. We work for the treatment of victims, provide legal support to the survivors, arrange rehabilitation and protection of acid throwing. We have a 31 bed nursing care unit in the capital. We work for the survivors with a nationwide networking system incorporating different NGOs and our volunteers. We help the victims to take legal action against the accused. ASF also offers all necessary facility for further treatment like re-constructive surgery, skin grafting and plastic surgery. Furthermore, we work for the advocacy to prevent acid throwing and try to change social values regarding acid throwing. Compared to other countries where do you put ASF's initiative? I am very pleased to inform that ASF is the leading foundation that works for acid survivors in the sub-continent. I do not know of any other organisation working on principles the way ASF is working. Although in countries like Hong Kong, China, Indonesia there are reports of acid violence but many consider ASF a model in providing a comprehensive support to the survivors. When we started ASF there were so many hurdles for us as there were no statistical information on the violence for us. We started



it through trail and error method. At the initial stage we did not realise that the problem was so big. We have only one burn hospital under construction. Do you think this is enough to address the problem or do you feel there should be more such hospitals? This is obviously insufficient to deal with the increasing incidents of acid throwing. The construction of the hospital is taking a long time to be completed. In future there should be more such specialised hospitals dealing with acid burn cases. About rehabilitation of the survivors, are you happy with the present support programme? The present support programmes are not enough to manage the present crisis. We do not even have a specialised hospital exclusively for the acid burn cases. There is a burn operation theater at Dhaka Medical College Hospital and there are only eight beds allocated for the patients of plastic surgery, reconstructive surgery and burn cases. Sir Salimullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital also has an eight-bed unit for plastic surgery. The facility is very poor in comparison with the demand. We need blood, eye and skin for grafting for the treatment of the acid survivors. But our blood banks and eye banks cannot provide us with enough. Moreover, we do not have a tissue bank. We must develop these facilities to improve the services for the acid survivors. Who are your partners and how do you describe in general people's response to support survivors? We work with UNICEF and different NGOs based at home and abroad. At home we work with BRAC, Jatiya Mahila Sangstha, BSEHR and some other organizations having common focus. Adequate human resources are needed for the treatment of the acid survivors. What the people can do is to promote the social values to prevent acid throwing. To change the mentality of our community is very much necessary to prevent the dreadful crime.



# Oral hazards during pregnancy

DR SHAH JAMAL MOLLA

Pregnancy is a charming spell of every woman's life. By this incidence a new born comes to this world and which is a right of human embryo to discover him self or herself. So, during pregnancy period every mother should take care of herself as well as her coming new born. During this period a slight mistaken step may result in a fatal outcome to the mother as well as new born, where he or she may suffer fatal injury inside mother's uterus or born with both physically and mentally defects. During pregnancy we observe some oro-dental tissue changes like -

- !pain in the tooth bearing region
- !uneven gum swelling
- !foul mouth breathing
- !bleeding from gum during tooth brushing or biting on a hard object
- !sloughing out of oral tissues look like reddish circular depression (oral aphthae)
- !abnormal growth of gum and tongue tissue (pregnancy epulis)

anism of the body. If the above symptoms are felt by mother don't worry. These symptoms will disappear gradually within few months or after delivery. If the symptoms persist and mother can't tolerate, she should immediately consult an oro-dental surgeon. Here oro-dental should give only a conservative treatment like; !give oral hygiene instruction (OHI), as regular twice daily tooth brushing after breakfast and before bed at night, !scaling and polishing for removing dental plaque and calculus cautiously, !give anti-bacterial mouth wash for gargling. It is better not to prescribe

drug to the mother, if oro-dental surgeon wants to prescribe any drug, the dental surgeon must consult with her gynecologist. We should always remember that first and last three months of pregnancy is the most critical time for both mother and new born because major growth and development of new born takes place at this time. So, any type of drug taken by mother directly goes to the new born and may retard growth and development of new born because mother and new born are connected to each other by a channel called placenta. If the above requirements are full-filled to the mother, we may welcome a sound and healthy newborn.

# Healthy eating during exam time

Feed your brain

If you are about to take exams, now is the time to think about whether you are eating the right foods to help your brain function properly. Yes, it is true. What you eat can make a difference to your performance in an exam. The right foods can help your levels of concentration, ensure you sleep more soundly and lower your anxiety levels. So get eating! What sorts of food will help? The brain is powered by energy and this comes from food when it's broken down. The main source of energy for the brain is glucose which comes from carbohydrate-rich foods like cereals, breads and pasta. The brain's energy storage is also very small, so in order to keep it functioning at its best, it needs constant glucose replacement. That is why it is important not to diet during revision and to try and eat healthily. Snack attack

- nervous stomach to digest.
- ! When you feel as though you need a snack, make sure you leave the room and take a proper break to rest and feed your brain. Try;
- ! fresh or dried fruits
- ! a sandwich
- ! a bowl of soup

in information and doing mental arithmetic, also suffering from fewer headaches. Keep a glass and jug of tap or bottled water on your desk while studying, and if you can't stand ordinary water, the second-best option is flavoured with a little pure-fruit squash. Sugary drinks are better avoided as they can cause your



- ! a piece of cheese
  - ! unsalted nuts
  - ! yoghurt
  - ! a fresh-fruit smoothie
- Drinks to help
- Keep yourself hydrated. Studies have shown that kids who drink plenty of water have an easier time concentrating, taking

energy levels to drop soon after drinking them. Try and drink plenty of water on the morning of an exam, but allow enough time for it to work its way through your system before going in to your exam, so you don't need the loo all the way through! Stress busters

Source: Internet