

WORLD VOICE DAY

## Let your voice be heard

PROF DR M ALAMGIR CHOWDHURY

Although the voice is used as an everyday basis of speech, most people realise its importance only when a voice problem arises. Increasing public awareness of the importance of the voice and alertness to voice problems are the main goals of the World Voice Day, which is celebrated yearly on April 16th.

The aim of the day is to raise awareness among the people about the importance of voice and voice disorders, plus methods of voice preservation and enhancement. The message, "Let your voice be heard" prompts us to consider ways to preserve and protect our voices.

The voice is a window to the soul. The voice can reveal moods, age or illness. We can be charmed by someone's voice; the voice can be used to calm, but also to provoke or scare. Many abuse their voice by smoking, shouting, drinking, or poor speaking technique. When problems occur, treatment is often ignored, leading to more significant

problems. We generate a voice from the vibration of two vocal cords situated at the larynx (also called Voice box) in our throat. The airstreams expired by our lungs passes between the vocal cords and sets them vibrating.

### Things that can injure your voice

Do not smoke or have hot drinks. In addition to being a potent risk factor for laryngeal cancer, smoking causes inflammatory changes in the larynx that have a negative effect upon voice quality, pitch, and endurance.

Do not be a screamer or shouter. These kinds of vocal behavior put excessive wear and tear on the vocal folds and can lead to injury. Think about non-verbal ways to communicate across a distance or to a crowd, such as using a whistle, waving or clapping, or flipping a light switch. Wave the flag of your favorite team rather than shouting at a big game like cricket or football.

Avoid eating habits that can promote acid reflux, such as going to bed with a full stomach or consuming caffeinated beverages. Elevating the head of your bed



and not wearing tight-fitting clothes can also help prevent reflux, which can damage the vocal cords.

### Be careful of everyday opportunities for vocal strain

Do not talk over background noise without considering

how it affects your voice. In these situations it is important to note how your throat feels, not only how it sounds. You may not hear how loudly you are talking, but you will feel the strain and irritation in your throat as a warning that you should reduce your vocal intensity or risk injury.

Think about how much you use your cell phone. Remember when riding in a car or train was a time for vocal rest? Remember when lunch was spent with a book or magazine rather than on the phone? Use of cellular phones is convenient, but they represent major oppor-

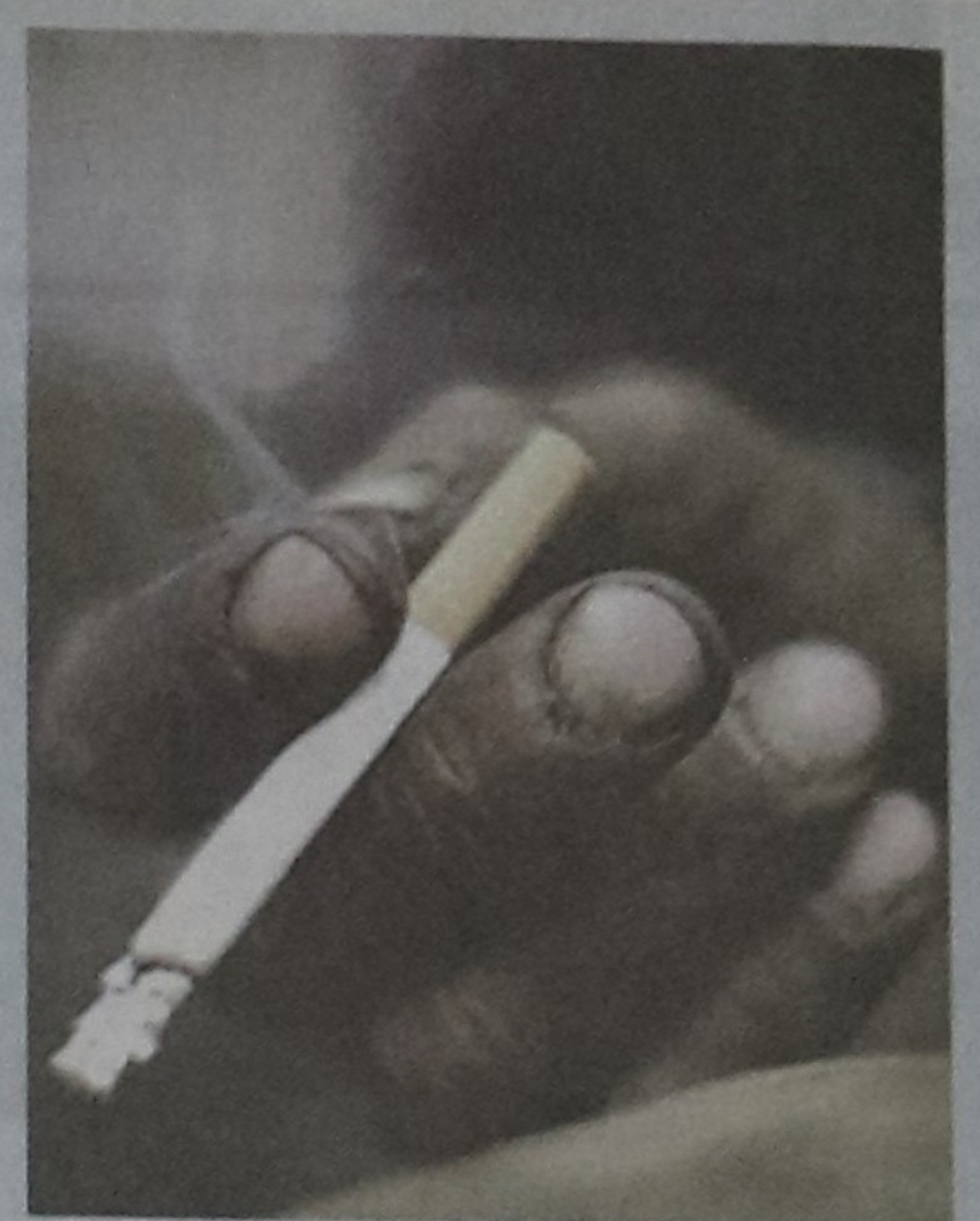
tunities for voice overuse or abuse. Think about whether you really need to make that extra call, particularly on a bad connection or in a place with background noise.

There are many ways to warm up your voice, and one of them is listed below to get you started.

### Breath Relaxation

Releases tension often associated in the breathing mechanism that can interfere with effective voice production. Ordinarily, if there is tension when breathing, that tension radiates to the voice box muscles. Take a normal breath and then exhale. Make sure your shoulders and chest are low and relaxed. Repeat many times making sure that your breaths are focused low in the abdomen and that there is not associated chest, neck, or shoulder tension while breathing. You can place one hand on your abdomen to remind you to keep the focus low and away from the chest and shoulders. Hold an "s" sound like in hiss when you exhale.

The writer is the Professor and Head of the Department of ENT, Medical College for Women and Hospital, Uttara, Dhaka.



## Triple therapy boosts quit rates in sick smokers

REUTERS, New York

In smokers with chronic illnesses, a combination of a nicotine patch, a nicotine inhaler and an antidepressant increases quit rates compared with standard therapy with a nicotine patch only, a study shows.

"Medically ill smokers are often highly addicted and at great risk for complications from continued smoking," study chief Dr Michael B Steinberg, of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, said in a prepared statement. "Our trial demonstrates that intensive treatment with a triple combination of medications could work well for them."

"The simultaneous use of nicotine medications with bupropion addresses tobacco withdrawal through different mechanisms of action," Steinberg's team points out in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, while the combination of a patch with an inhaler "to be used in response to cravings allows more individualized delivery of medication as needed."

"Even though persons with medical illnesses smoke at high rates, they are often not prescribed intensive smoking cessation pharmacotherapy because of concern about adverse events," the investigators point out. The current study, they say, is one of only a handful that has looked at interventions for these high-risk patients.



## Report warns of problems with multivitamins

REUTERS HEALTH, New York

More than 30 percent of multivitamins tested recently by ConsumerLab.com contained significantly more or less of an ingredient than claimed, or were contaminated with lead, the company reports.

ConsumerLab.com, based in White Plains, New York, is privately held and provides consumer information and independent evaluations of products that affect health and nutrition. According to the company, it is neither owned by nor has a financial interest in any companies that make, distribute or sell consumer products.

Several multivitamin products tested, including three for children, exceeded tolerable upper limits established by the Institute of Medicine for ingredients such as vitamin A, folic acid, niacin and zinc, according to the report posted on www.ConsumerLab.com.

For example, the Institute of Medicine sets a recommended daily allowance (RDA) of 1,300 international units (IU) of vitamin A for children ages 4 to 8 years and an upper tolerable limit of 3,000 IU. However, one multivitamin tested provided 5,000 IU of vitamin A.

In the short term, too much vitamin A may cause nausea and blurred vision, and, in the long-term, may

lead to bone softening and liver problems.

Upper tolerable limits for niacin and zinc were also exceeded by some of the supplements for young children tested. Excess niacin may cause skin tingling and flushing and high levels of zinc may cause immune deficiency and anemia.

Tests turned up problems with some men's multivitamin products as well. Two of three men's multivitamins failed to pass testing. One contained too much folic acid, which may increase the risk of prostate cancer, while another was contaminated with lead.

Among four women's multivitamins tested, one provided only 66 percent of its claimed vitamin A; one of five seniors' multivitamins selected contained only 44 percent of its vitamin A; and among three prenatal vitamins, one was short on vitamin A.

Two out of five general multivitamins were short on ingredients: one provided only 50 percent of its claimed folic acid and the other was missing 30 percent of its calcium.

A vitamin water tested by ConsumerLab.com had 15 times its stated amount of folic acid, so drinking one bottle would exceed the tolerable limit for adults; less than half a bottle would put children over the limit, the company warns on its website.

## DIABETES AND EXERCISE

# When to monitor your blood sugar

DR TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

Diabetes and exercise go hand in hand, at least when it comes to managing your diabetes. Exercise can help you improve your blood sugar control, as well as boost your overall fitness and reduce your risk of heart disease and nerve damage.

But diabetes and exercise pose unique challenges, too. Remember to track your blood sugar before, during and after exercise. Your records will reveal how your body responds to exercise and help you prevent potentially dangerous blood sugar fluctuations.

### Before exercise: Check your blood sugar before your workout

For the best health benefits, experts recommend 2.5 hours a week of moderately intense physical activities. Examples include fast walking, lap swimming or bicycling. Be sure to check with your doctor to see if these recommendations are safe for you.

If you are taking insulin or medications that can cause low blood sugar (hypoglycemia), test your blood sugar 30 minutes before exercising and once again immediately before exercising. This will help you determine if your blood sugar level is stable, rising or falling and if it is safe to exercise. Consider these general guidelines relative to your blood sugar level.

**Lower than 100 mg/dL (5.6 mmol/L):** Your blood sugar may be too low to exercise safely. Eat a small carbohydrate-



containing snack, such as fruit or crackers, before you begin your workout.

**100 to 250 mg/dL (5.6 to 13.9 mmol/L):** You are fit to go. For most people, this is a safe pre-exercise blood sugar range.

**250 mg/dL (13.9 mmol/L) or higher:** This is a caution zone. To make sure it is safe to exercise, test your urine for ketones — substances made when your body breaks down fat for energy. Then you should wait to exercise until your urine ketones test kit indicates a low

level of ketones in your urine.

**300 mg/dL (16.7 mmol/L) or higher:** Your blood sugar may be too high to exercise safely, putting you at risk of ketoacidosis.

### During exercise: Watch for symptoms of low blood sugar

During exercise, low blood sugar is sometimes a concern.

Stop exercising if:

-Your blood sugar is 70 mg/dL (3.9 mmol/L) or lower

-You feel shaky, nervous or confused

-Eat or drink something to raise your blood sugar level, such as:

-1/2 cup (118 milliliters) of fruit juice

-1/2 cup (118 milliliters) of regular (not diet) soda

-Five or six pieces of hard candy

Recheck your blood sugar 15 minutes later. If it's still too low, have another serving and test again 15 minutes later. Repeat as needed until your blood sugar reaches at least 70 mg/dL (3.9 mmol/L).

### After exercise: Check your blood sugar again

After exercise, check your blood sugar right away and then several times during the next few hours. Low blood sugar is possible even hours after exercise.

If you do have low blood sugar after exercise, eat a small carbohydrate-containing snack, such as fruit or crackers, or drink a small glass of fruit juice.

Exercise may seem like enough work on its own. But testing your blood sugar before, during and after you exercise may be just as important as the exercise itself.

## Top 5 causes of skin aging

### 1. The sun

The no. 1 saboteur of healthy, youthful skin is the ultraviolet light of the sun. UV rays induce skin-aging inflammation and generate free radicals, which make the sun the biggest threat to skin's collagen, not to mention the fact that UV exposure puts you at a dramatically increased risk for developing skin cancer. UV light also worsens and causes hyperpigmentation.

**The solution:** Protecting your skin from the sun requires a combination of avoidance and vigilant sunscreen-application. Try to stay out of the sun when it is strongest, at midday, and wear sunscreen every day, even if you are not planning a lot of outdoor time. Incidental sun exposure — on the way to lunch, as you walk to and from your car, while you are waiting for the bus — adds up.

And if you are going to be in direct sunlight, invest in hats and sun-protective clothing.

### 2. Smoking

If you need another great reason to quit smoking, here is one: Smoking breaks down collagen, one of the most critical structural proteins in your skin. The result is premature aging in the form of lines, wrinkles, and loss of skin firmness. Smoking also decreases blood flow to the skin, which leaves the complexion sallow and less radiant, and allows damaging toxins to build up.

**The solution:** Talk to your doctor, research stop-smoking aids, or enlist the support of your friends... just do what it takes to quit smoking!

### 3. Genetics

Yes, to some extent each person's aging process is the unavoidable result of the genes they inherited.

### 4. Pollution

The exhaust-belching cars and other pollutants in our modern environments are

among the major causes of free radicals in the skin. Free radical means in a nutshell, an oxygen molecule that has been stripped of one of its electrons... meaning that it is on the hunt for replacement electrons. As a result of that hunt, free radicals attack vital skin components like collagen, resulting in skin aging.

**The solution:** Chances are, you cannot take off for the less-polluted climate of a pristine desert island, but antioxidants can help mitigate the damage that pollution causes. Antioxidants calm free radicals by delivering the electrons they seek - and as a result, they also stave off free radicals' aging effects. Get them through your diet (through green tea, dark chocolate, and lots of fruits and veggies, particularly berries and pomegranates) or topically with skin-care ingredients like coenzyme Q10, green tea, coffeeberry, and idebenone.

### 5. Lack of moisture

Dry skin is not just uncom-

fortable — it is also a sign that your skin is not holding on to enough water to allow its repair enzymes to work properly. That means that your skin is less able to naturally heal the inflammation caused by external attackers like the sun, excess sugar intake, and pollution.

**The solution:** Moisturise! Not all creams and lotions are created equal, though: Ideally, a moisturiser should not only temporarily hydrate, but also strengthen skin so that it can retain moisture more effectively. Check ingredient lists for ceramides, cholesterol, and fatty acids (stearic acid is the one you will see most often) — those are the very lipids found naturally in your skin barrier, a layer of the epidermis that keeps moisture in and irritants out. Deliver those powerhouse moisturisers topically, and you will bolster skin's ability to prevent further dryness.

Compiled by Mr Sojib, a pharmacist.



## Baby broccoli may help prevent stomach cancer

REUTERS, Hong Kong

Eating two and a half ounces of baby broccoli daily for two months may protect against a common stomach bug that is linked to gastritis, ulcers and even stomach cancer, a study in Japan has found.

Fresh broccoli sprouts contain plenty of sulforaphane, a natural biochemical that appears to trigger the production of enzymes in the gut that protect against oxygen radicals, DNA-damaging chemicals, and inflammation.

In an article published in the *Journal of Cancer Prevention Research*, scientists found that eating two and a half ounces of baby broccoli daily may help stave off some serious health problems.

"We identified a food that, if eaten regularly, might potentially have an effect on the cause of a lot of gastric problems and perhaps even ultimately help prevent stomach cancer," wrote Jed Fahey, nutritional biochemist in the Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Cancer Chemoprotection Center at

the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

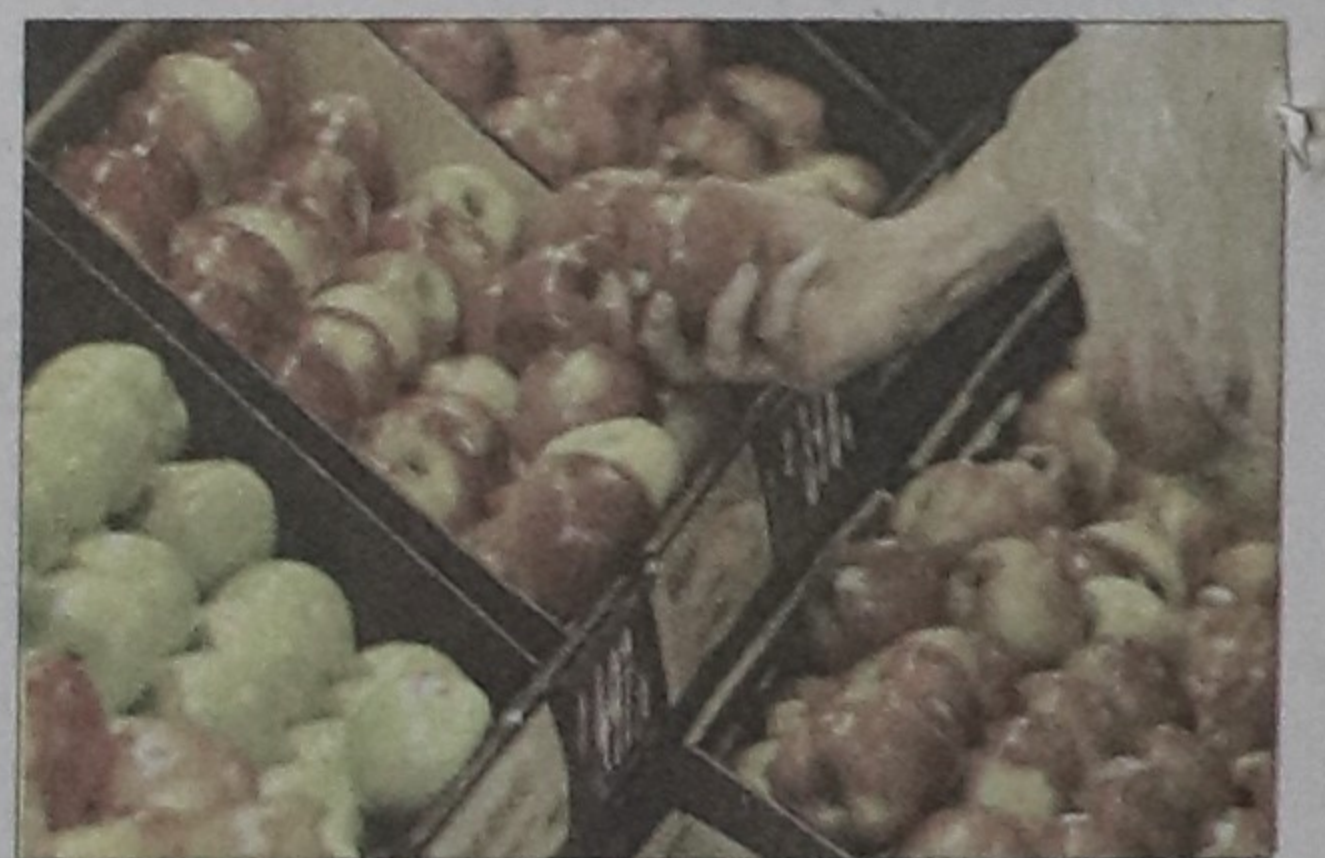
It has long been known that sulforaphane is a potent antibiotic against *Helicobacter pylori*, a bacterium that causes gastritis, ulcers and stomach cancer. But this is the first trial showing the effects of the compound on people.

"Broccoli sprouts have a much higher concentration of sulforaphane than mature heads (broccoli)," Fahey explained.

"We know that a dose of a couple ounces a day of broccoli sprouts is enough to elevate the body's protective enzymes," Fahey said. "That is the mechanism by which we think a lot of the chemoprotective effects are occurring."

"But the fact that the levels of infection and inflammation were reduced suggests the likelihood of getting gastritis and ulcers and cancer is probably reduced."

The WHO classifies *Helicobacter pylori* as a carcinogen. It thrives in the lining of the stomach.



DID YOU KNOW?

## Fruits, veggies slash breast cancer risk

Certain breast cancer survivors who load up on fruits and vegetables, eating far more than current U.S. guidelines, can slash their risk the tumors will come back by nearly a third, according to a U.S. study released recently.