Look After Your Heart

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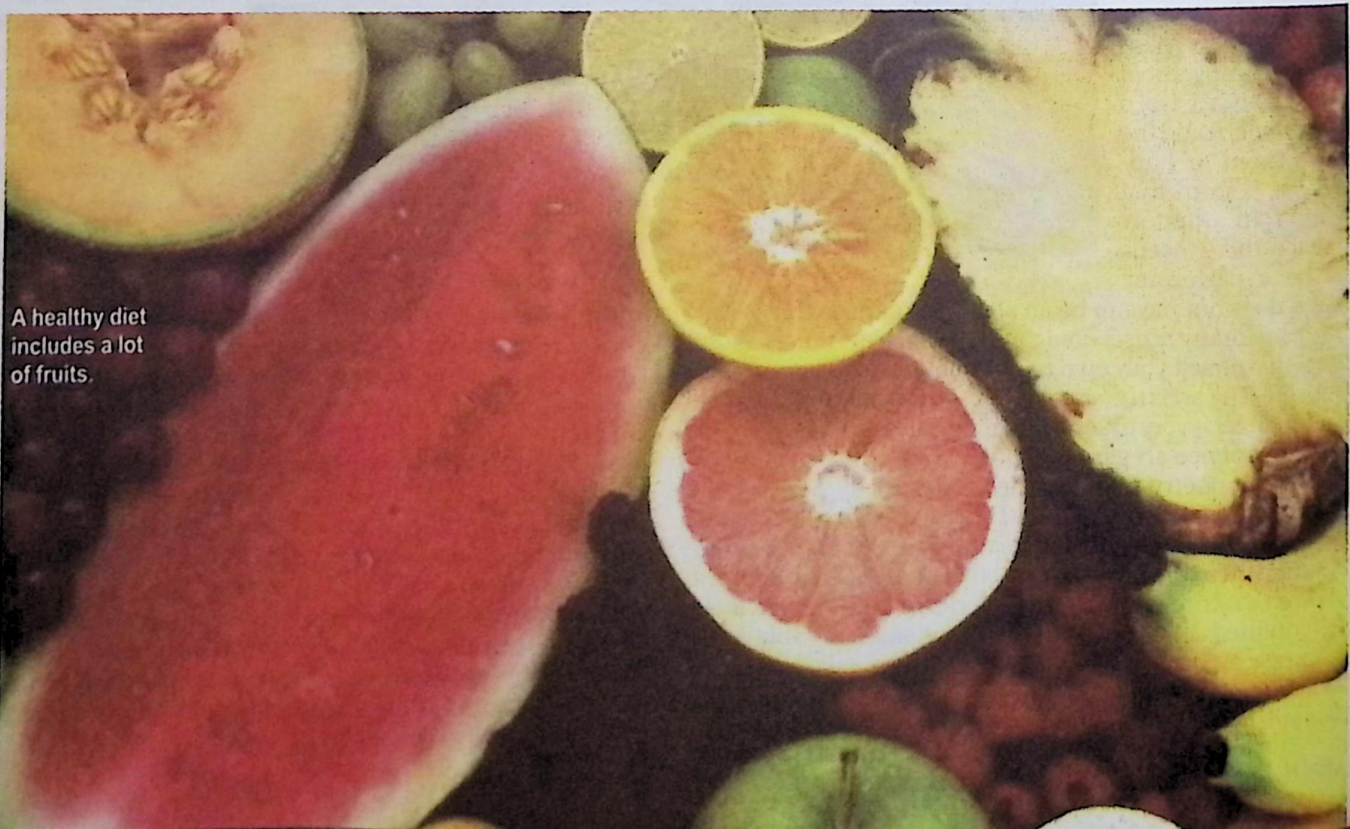
Heart disease is one of the commonest causes of illness and death (morbidity and mortality) in our country. Because heart disease is one of the most frequent causes of 'early' death globally, we must start looking after our hearts from an early age to prevent complications in the future. If you suffer from heart disease or know someone who does, you will have seen how the disease can make simple activities of daily life difficult and stop one from taking part in normal activities due to fatigue, exhaustion and, in advanced cases, suffer from heart pain and oedema (swelling of the legs and hands). So what causes heart disease and how can we prevent it? In this article, we will learn about the causes of heart disease and ways we can help ourselves look after our heart and keep it healthy for life.

Heart disease is caused by:

1. Not eating a healthy balanced diet
2. Smoking
3. Not taking regular exercise
4. High blood pressure (if it is not well controlled)
5. Being overweight
6. Diabetes (if it is not well controlled)

The heart is a marvellous organ from the time we are in our mother's womb to the day of our death, the heart continues to beat away without rest! The heart is a very resilient organ indeed. Heart disease does not develop over days or months, but over many years of constant harm to the heart caused by the reasons listed above. However, it is never late to start looking after your heart. You can reduce the risk of heart disease from today, whatever your age, by considering the following points:

1. Eating a healthy diet: Many people groan when the words 'healthy diet' is mentioned to them. This is because of the misconceptions they have about the actual meaning of a 'healthy diet'. When medical professionals talk about a balanced diet, they do not mean one needs to subsist on boiled or bland food only. A healthy, balanced diet is one that includes five portions of fruit and vegetables a day (apples, oranges, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc.), breads and cereals (for energy and to keep your intestines healthy), moderate amounts of rice and/or potatoes (for energy), meat/fish/beans/pulses (for protein) and milk/dairy products. You can cook the food any way you like, but make sure you use only vegetable oil (sunflower or olive) in low quantities and moderate salt (maximum of 6g a day). Fish is very good for the heart, and you should try to make it a regular dish during your meals. Sardines and tuna are thought to



A healthy diet includes a lot of fruits.