



Keep your eyes safe in summer

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As like the awful impact on our skin, summer can be a trouble for our eyes too. With the increasing temperature, eye allergies increase many folds causing severe itching, redness and much discomfort in eyes. Ultraviolet (UV) rays in summer can damage our unprotected eyes. Dry eyes, conjunctivitis are also common in summer. But with little precaution, we can have fun in the sun with no trouble with our eyes.

Eye allergies, usually secondary to pollen, dust, wind and air pollutants cause itching, redness, watering and swelling of the eyes. Avoiding allergy is the best option. By washing eyes frequently and wearing a sunglasses can help protected.

Sunlight is another known enemy of our eyes. Frequent exposure to bright sunlight this summer may increase the risk of developing cataracts, damage retina and

growths on the eye, including cancer.

The longer the exposure to bright light, the greater the risk is. Excessive exposure to UV light reflected off sand, snow, water or pavement can damage the eye's front surface.

Like our skin, our eyes never recover from UV exposure. So, sunglasses are as essential as sunblock. For summer the ideal sunglasses are those with a wrap around frame. It keeps the sun and the dust out and the cool in. Look for sunglasses that offer good protection. Sunglasses should block out 99 to 100 per cent of both UVA and UVB radiation and screen out 75 to 90 per cent of visible light. In addition to sunglasses, wearing a broad-brimmed hat help protect our eyes and skin around it.

Sunglasses should be worn whenever outside. It is especially important to wear sunglasses in the early afternoon and at higher altitudes,



where UV light is more intense. Remember, the sun's rays can pass through haze and thin clouds. Sun damage to eyes can occur anytime.

Everyone is at risk, including children. Protect their

eyes with hats and sunglasses. In addition, try to keep children out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the sun's UV rays are the strongest.

It is not only the skin that dries out in summer but

even our eyes. Lubricating drops are for those experiencing dry eye is helpful. Ideally the drops should be preservative free. The drops keep the eyes comfortable and quiet. In addition, drink plenty of water throughout

the day, it protects your eyes from puffiness and swelling and splash cool water on your eyes at regular intervals, this relaxes stressed eyes and keeps your eyes hydrated.

Eye infections are also seen with increased frequency — styes, bacterial and viral conjunctivitis are more common in summer.

Maintaining good eye hygiene with repeated eye washing with clean water is important. Do not share handkerchiefs or towels and avoid handshaking. Antibiotic eye drops and eye ointments prescribed by an ophthalmologist work well for this ailment.

Bright, sunny days and trips to the seaside are all part of summer fun. But the trouble is they can put your eyes at risk. Simple and inexpensive precaution can safeguard your eyes in summer.

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Potato is square

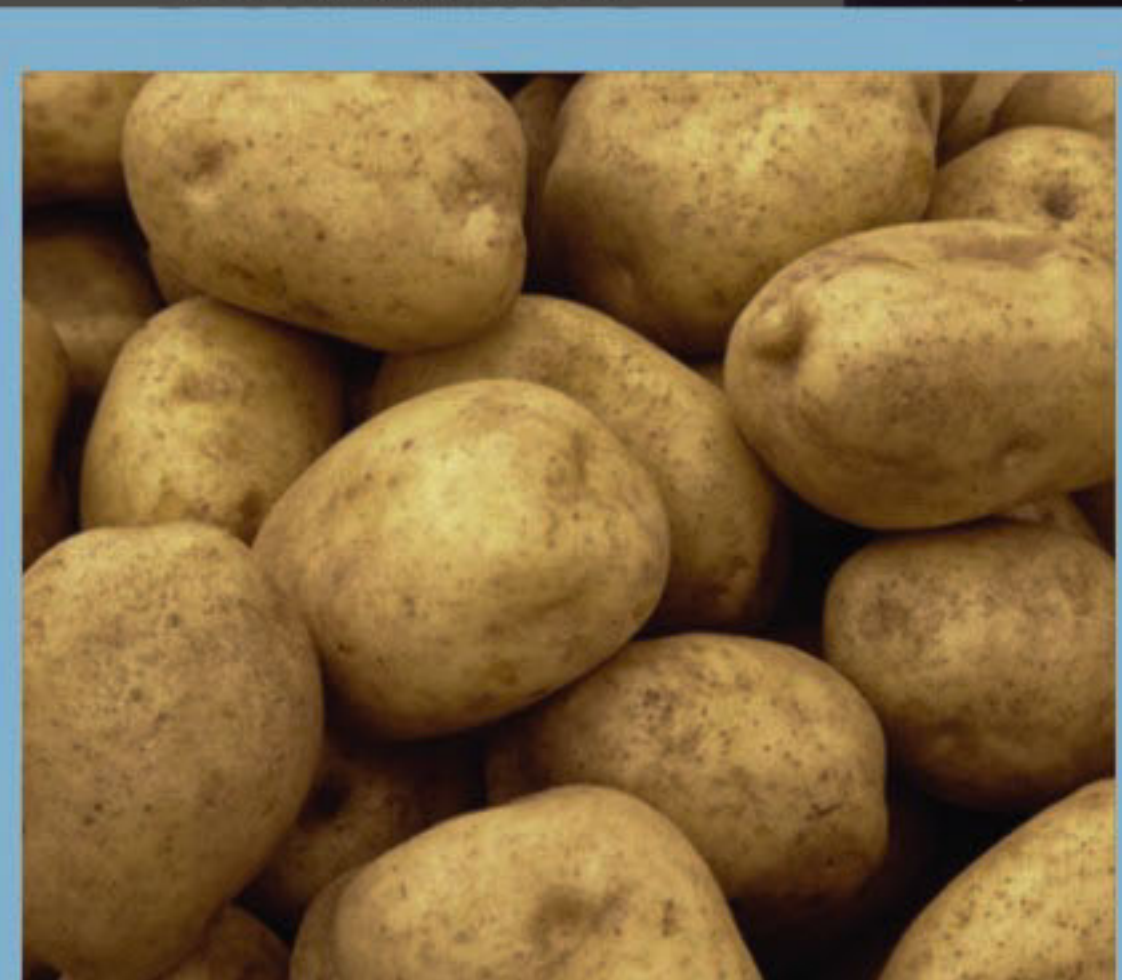
Although it looks like either round or oval in shape, but regarding its quality it is square. Well, potatoes are good as long as you prepare them in a healthy manner. Boiled and baked potatoes are good; but french fries and potato chips are two worst foods of this century. Boiled potatoes are a good source of vitamins, minerals and fiber, especially if you eat the skin. In fact, 60 per cent of the potassium contained in the potato lies so close to the skin that it cannot be saved if the potato is peeled.

Regarding calories, a baked potato has less than half as many as bread and fewer calories than rice. A medium size potato (6.5 ounces raw, about 5 ounces after baking) with its skin, has just 130 to 140 calories, virtually no fat, and 4 grams of fibre.

It is one of the best sources of potassium, beating bananas closely. But when loaded with toppings, most of those health benefits begin to fall. When potatoes have a green tint to their skin, they may actually have a sun-burn. The light exposure causes the potatoes to develop a higher level of an irritating chemical called solanine. This causes the potatoes to taste bitter and some people believe that arthritis sufferers should avoid this food.

For South Asian countries, this can be a miracle crop; because these are both nutritious and inexpensive. Today potatoes are the world's economically most important vegetable. It is a superior food maintaining balance of alkalinity and acidity in the body and rich in vitamins A, B, C and potassium.

But do not forget to stop eating potato chips and french fries or potatoes dropped into a deep fryer. And do not buy potatoes that have green skin and store them in a dark place in your pantry or kitchen.



Twice a day tooth-brushing reduces risk of heart disease

People who brush their teeth twice a day have a significantly lower risk of heart disease compared to individuals who have poor oral hygiene, says a research paper recently published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ).

Over the last couple of decades, there has been a growing interest in the link between heart and gum disease. While it has been agreed that inflammation in the body (including mouth and gums) plays an important role in the accumulation of clogged arteries, this is the first study to examine whether the number of times individuals brush their teeth has any impact on the risk of developing heart disease, says the researchers.

The results showed that individuals who reported less frequent tooth brushing had a 70 percent higher risk of heart disease compared to individuals who brushed their teeth twice a day, although the overall risk remained quite low. Participants who had poor oral hygiene also tested positive for inflammatory markers such as the C-reactive protein and fibrinogen.

Source: British Medical Journal (BMJ)



Caffeine does not make you more alert!

Caffeine makes us more alert is more imagined than real, a UK-led new study published recently in the journal Neuropsychopharmacology suggests.

While frequent coffee drinkers may feel alerted by coffee, the study suggests that this is just a sign of reversing the fatigue effect of caffeine withdrawal, and given that caffeine also increases anxiety and blood pressure, there is no net advantage. The fact is the frequent coffee drinkers develop a tolerance to both its stimulatory and anxiety-producing effects.

Researchers found that little variance among their levels of alertness when they consumed either caffeine or a placebo after not consuming it for given 16 hours.

The results showed that the medium/high coffee consumers who had the placebo reported a decrease in alertness and an increase in headache. Neither of these symptoms were reported by medium/high coffee consumers who had the caffeine, yet their post-caffeine levels of alertness were no higher than the non/low consumers who had a placebo.

The researchers opined that the caffeine just brought the medium/high consumers back to normal.

They said perhaps a slight increase in anxiety is part of the pleasurable buzz that caffeine gives. With frequent consumption, substantial tolerance develops to the anxiogenic effect of caffeine, even in genetically susceptible individuals, but no net benefit for alertness is gained, as caffeine abstinence reduces alertness and consumption merely returns it to baseline.

Burger diet linked to higher childhood asthma risk

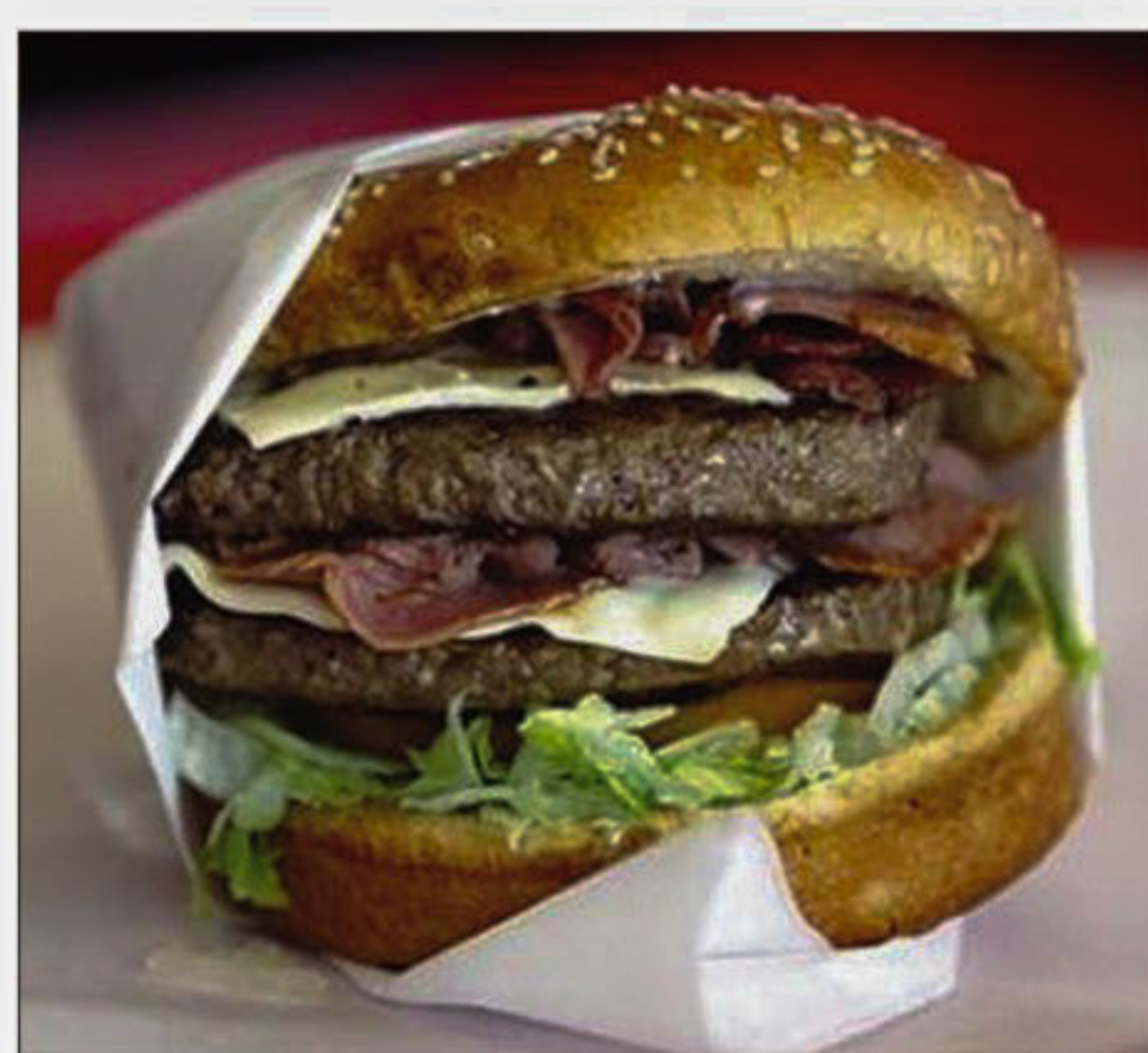
REUTERS, London

Children who eat three or more burgers a week may be at a higher risk of asthma and wheezing, but a healthy diet rich in fruit and fish seems to stave off the risk, according to a large international study.

Researchers from Germany, Spain and Britain who studied data on 50,000 children across the world found the link between burgers and asthma was strongest in rich nations where diets with high levels of junk food are more common.

A meat-heavy diet itself has no bearing on the prevalence of asthma, according to the scientists who conducted the study. Yet, frequent burger eating could be a signal for other lifestyle factors which raise asthma risk.

"This is a sign that the link is not strongly related to the food itself, but that burgers are a proxy for other lifestyle



and environmental factors like obesity and lack of exercise," said Gabriele Nagel of the Institute of Epidemiology at Ulm University, Germany, who led the study.

She added, however, that there were "biologically plausible" links for the positive effects of a healthier

diet, which could be down to the antioxidants found in fruit and vegetables, and the omega 3 polyunsaturated fatty acids in fish, which have anti-inflammatory properties.

"Fruit and vegetables contain antioxidants and other biologically active

factors which may contribute to the favorable effect...in asthma," Nagel said.

In particular, she added, foods rich in vitamin C have been linked to better lung function and fewer asthma symptoms.

Nagel's team looked at data on 50,000 children aged between 8 and 12 years from 20 rich and poor countries around the world.

While diet was not linked to children being more prone to allergies in general, it did seem to influence the prevalence of asthma and wheezing, they found.

"Overall, more frequent consumption of fruit, vegetables and fish was associated with a lower lifetime prevalence of asthma, whereas high burger consumption was associated with higher lifetime asthma prevalence," they wrote in the study, which was published in Thorax, a British Medical Journal title.

Tips to avoid daytime sleepiness

STAR HEALTH DESK

It is not unusual to feel sleepy during daytime, especially after lunch. But excessive sleepiness during daytime affects daily work and many times leaves important works undone. The condition called hypersomnia that is the recurrent sleepiness makes people want to nap repeatedly. Poor sleep habits are often the cause of daytime sleepiness. The following tips can help you avoid daytime sleepiness.

1. Get adequate nighttime sleep
That may sound obvious, but many of us succumb to shaving an hour or two off our sleep time in the morning or at night to do other things. Most adults need seven to nine hours a night and teenagers usually need a full nine hours. Block out eight or nine hours for sleep every night.

2. Keep distractions out of bed
We should not read, watch TV, play video games, or use laptop computers in bed. They may leave you sleepless.

3. Set a consistent wake-up time
People who have problem sleepiness are often advised to go to bed and get up at the same time every day, including on weekends. But randomly setting an ideal bedtime can lead to more frustration if you suffer from insomnia and already have trouble falling asleep. This process of always getting up at the same time helps to anchor the circadian rhythm.

4. Gradually move to an earlier bedtime

Another approach to getting into a consistent schedule is to try going to bed 15 minutes earlier each night for four nights. Then stick with the last bedtime. Gradually adjusting your schedule like this usually works better than suddenly trying to go to sleep an hour earlier.

5. Set consistent, healthy meal-times

Regular mealtimes, not just regular sleep times, help regulate our circadian rhythms. Eating a healthy breakfast and lunch on time rather than grabbing coffee in the morning or a late sandwich on the run — also prevents energy deficits during the day that will aggravate your sleepiness. Plan to finish eating meals two to three hours before bedtime.

6. Exercise

Regular exercise (30 minutes a day on most days) offers multiple benefits for sleep. Exercise, especially aerobic exercise, generally makes it easier to fall asleep and sleep more soundly. Exercise also gives you more daytime energy and keeps your thinking sharp. And if you exercise outside in daylight, you get still more benefits. Sleep experts recommend 30 minutes of exposure to sunlight a day because daylight helps regulate our sleep patterns.

Problem sleepiness can also be caused by certain illnesses and medications and mental conditions such as depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and anxiety are very commonly linked to sleep problems. Consult a doctor specialised in sleep who can design the right treatment for you.



Myths about physical activity



Engaging in physical activity costs a lot. Going into a gymnasium, using equipment, special shoes, clothes are all about money and time. These are the common myths persist among the people that discourage people to be active physically. But the truth is that physical activity can be done almost anywhere and does not necessarily require equipment!

Carrying groceries, bag, books or children are good complementary physical activities, as is climbing the stairs instead of using the elevator. Walking is perhaps the most practiced and most highly recommended physical activity and it is absolutely free. It is not imperative to go to a gym, pool or other special sports facility to be physically active.

Myth: I am very busy. Physical activity takes too much time. It only takes 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity five days per week to improve and maintain your health. However, this does not mean that physical activity must always be performed for 30 minutes at a time. The activity can be accumulated over the course of the day: a 10 minute brisk walk, three times a day; or 20 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes later that day. These activities can be incorporated into your daily routine — at work, school, home or play. Simple things like taking the stairs or getting off the bus one stop before your final destination and then walking the rest of the way can accumulate over the day and can form part of your regular daily activities.

Myth: Children by nature have so much energy. They hardly sit still. There is no need to spend time or energy teaching them about physical activity. They are already so active. It is estimated that less than one-third of young people are sufficiently active to benefit their present and future health and well-being. Physical activity levels are decreasing among young people in urban area especially in Dhaka. Fewer children walk or cycle to school and excessive time is devoted to watching television, playing computer games, and using computers — often at the expense of time and opportunities for physical activity and sports. Physical education and other school-based physical activities have also been decreasing. Each day school-aged youth should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity to ensure healthy development.

Myth: Physical activity is for people in the prime of life. At my age, I do not need to be concerned with it. Regular physical activity has been shown to improve the functional status and quality of life of older adults. It is recommended that older adults engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity 5 days per week. Many noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) prevalent in older adults can benefit from participation in regular physical activity (cardiovascular disease, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, hypertension, falls prevention). Physical activity has also been shown to improve mental health and cognitive function in older adults and has been found to contribute to the management of disorders such as depression and anxiety.

Myth: Physical activity is needed only in industrialised countries. Developing countries have other problems. At least 60 per cent of the world's population fails to complete the recommended amount of physical activity required to induce health benefits. Physical inactivity is an independent modifiable risk factor for common NCDs that caused more than 35 million deaths in 2005. NCDs are now the major cause of death and disability worldwide. Importantly, 80% of deaths from common NCDs occur in low- and middle-income countries. Consequently, NCDs associated with physical inactivity are the greatest public health problem in most countries around the world.

Source: World Health Organisation