

## A NOTE ON NUTRITION

**BY CHOWDHURY  
TASNEEM HASIN**  
Chief Dietician, United Hospital Ltd.  
Organizational and Press Secretary,  
Association of Nutritionist and  
Dieticians (AND)



# Make food safe again

Eid-ul-Azha is just around the horizon. However, preservatives, various additives, tainted animal feed, and antibiotics have been inundated in the news, making people think twice about what's on their plates on this holy occasion. Antibiotics are widely used in animal agriculture to treat disease and promote growth. Excessive antibiotic use can increase bacterial resistance, making antibiotics less effective for both animals and humans. If an animal is carrying antibiotic-resistant bacteria, it can be passed on through meat that is not handled or cooked properly. We can also encounter these bacteria by consuming food crops that have been sprayed with fertilisers containing animal manure with antibiotic-resistant bacteria. While food safety controls are being tweaked, here are some tips to making our food safer, from the market to the table.

- Wash cutting boards: They shouldn't have any cracks and crevices where bacteria can lurk. Countertops, refrigerators, pots, and utensils need to be regularly cleaned with hot, soapy water, especially after they have been in contact with raw meat, poultry, and seafood. Use different cutting boards to prepare raw meat and any food that will be eaten without cooking.

- Wash thoroughly after cutting meat, fish or poultry properly with running water and soak in lukewarm water for at least 40 minutes, which will remove a good portion of the antibiotics, preservatives or any additional toxins.

- Cooking meat to the proper temperature should kill

any harmful bacteria.

- At the grocery store, bag fresh fruits and vegetables separately from meat, poultry, and seafood products.
- Bring an ice chest to keep frozen or perishable items if it will take more than an hour to get those items home.
- Sponges and dishcloths can house bacteria, so wash them weekly in hot water in the washing machine.
- Refrigerate frozen and perishable items as soon as possible. Set the refrigerator temperature to 40° F, set the freezer to 0° F. Store leftovers safely. Refrigerate leftovers in tight containers as soon as possible and use them within three days.
- Before handling food, lather up with soap and hot water, wash your hands for at least 20 seconds. Repeat after handling produce, meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs.
- Wash fruits and vegetables in running water. A small scrub brush may help, but doesn't use soap or other detergents to wash produce.
- Thaw food in the refrigerator, and not on the counter-top. It may take longer, but it's safer.
- Eating locally grown food is becoming more popular, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's safer than super-market produce. Select fresh produce that isn't bruised or damaged. Check that eggs aren't cracked. Look for a clean meat or fish counter and a clean salad bar. Don't buy bulging or dented cans, cracked jars, or jars with loose or bulging lids.

## INTERVIEW

## Words with Cardiologist Dr Ong Sea Hing

Dr Ong Sea Hing is a Cardiologist from Farrer Park Hospital, Singapore. His subspecialty is in coronary artery angioplasty and stenting, including complex coronary interventions. He is also trained in structural heart interventions.

He recently visited Bangladesh thanks to the International Medical Consultants (IMC), a unique healthcare assistance centre in Bangladesh.

In an interview with Dr Ong Sea Hing, he has shared his views about lifestyle facts related to cardiac diseases and about living a healthy life exclusively for the readers of Star Lifestyle. The major takeaways of the interview are as follows:

**What are the main risk factors of cardiovascular disease? The ones that are the most common?**

Cardiovascular disease is a prevalent and common group of diseases including heart attacks and strokes. Technically it's a disease of the blood vessels of the heart that supply blood to the organ. There are five main risk factors of cardiovascular disease which include family history of heart disease, diabetes, tobacco smoking, hypertension and high cholesterol.

To minimise the risks of the particular disease is to manage the risk factors. I believe the family history, the genetic one, is the strongest one, the one we cannot control but the other four we can. We sometimes call these 5 the "royal flush" in jest.

**How can each of these risk factors lead to cardiovascular disease?**

The problem with cardiovascular disease is that over time, blood cholesterol infiltrates into the wall of the blood vessels supplying the heart muscle, slowly accumulating and eventually causing narrowing of these blood vessels and reduction in blood flow to the heart muscle.

These major risk factors lead to disease because they damage the integrity of the blood vessel walls allowing cholesterol to infiltrate into the wall itself. We call this damage to the wall "endothelial dysfunction." The blood vessel



walls are damaged due to genetic pre-disposition, toxins from tobacco, high sugar in diabetics and physical stress from high blood pressure.

**What are the dietary and lifestyle habits we should follow/avoid?**

One of the major steps towards reducing the risk of heart diseases is through taking proper diet. By taking low carbohydrate and high fibre diets. In addition, we recommend patients to exercise for at least two and a half hours a week.

They are asked to undergo moderate intensity exercises. Basically getting their heart rate above 70 to 80% of their maximum heart rate. Pick the number 220 and deduct your age, and you get the expected maximum heart rate. So, you need to get to those heart rates for above 150 minutes a week in order to have the bona fide benefits of exercise.

Exercise enhances your heart and lung power and further assists in reducing calories, carbohydrate and sugar. In short, exercises and diets help you maintain cholesterol and diabetes. Another advice is to avoid smoking tobacco.

Vegetables with high fibre are strongly recommended. Brown rice, wholemeal bread and oats are better higher fibre options for carbohydrates.

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