

WISHING ALL OUR READERS A VERY HEALTHY
SINHALA & TAMIL NEW YEAR



Health & Views

Published monthly by Health writer- Dr Harold Gunatillake FRCS, AM (Sing), MBBS, FACS (US), FIACS



Photo taken by Stefan D'Silva

The boy on the buffalo was taken in Kuda Oya, about 15 minutes from Tanamalwila. The paddy had been harvested. It was late afternoon and the young fellow appeared to be playing with the buffalo. Amusing himself one might say.



Happy smiles with bunches of white lotuses just plucked from the marshy pond to wish you an enjoyable Sinhala and Hindu News Year, with blessings for a peaceful future.

A Place to visit



'Hammenhiel as seen from boats'
Wetterskour, C. Stinger, c.1710,
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

From the "Journal of the Dutch Burger Union of Ceylon of April 1940

The trend today in Sri Lanka is to visit Jaffna by road or air for a sight-seeing holiday of the war ravaged areas...

A place you must visit. The fort of Hammenhiel was built by the Portuguese in mid-17th century of quarried coral and was named Fortaleza Real (Fort Royal). The Dutch renamed it as Hammenhiel (Heel of the Ham) and was rebuilt by them in 1680. The fort is built around a small island between the island of Kayts and Karaitivu of Jaffna Peninsula.

Measure your Blood Pressure at Home



There is always a difference in readings when you record your BP at home and at the doctor's surgery. There is a syndrome called, "white-coat hypertension", when the BP reading in the doctor's surgery tend to be higher than the readings at home?

In the early 1990s, several thousand residents of the northern Italian town of Monza agreed to take part in a study. People in the study: had their blood pressure carefully measured in a doctor's office wore a device that recorded their blood pressure every 20 minutes for 24 hours. Measured their blood pressure at home in the morning and evening on several days.

These measurements showed that 16.1% of the volunteers had white-coat hypertension, 8.9% had masked hypertension, and 20.9% had sustained high blood pressure.

This important study underscores what we have been saying for years: it's a good idea to check your blood pressure at home, and not just rely on the measurements made in your doctor's office.

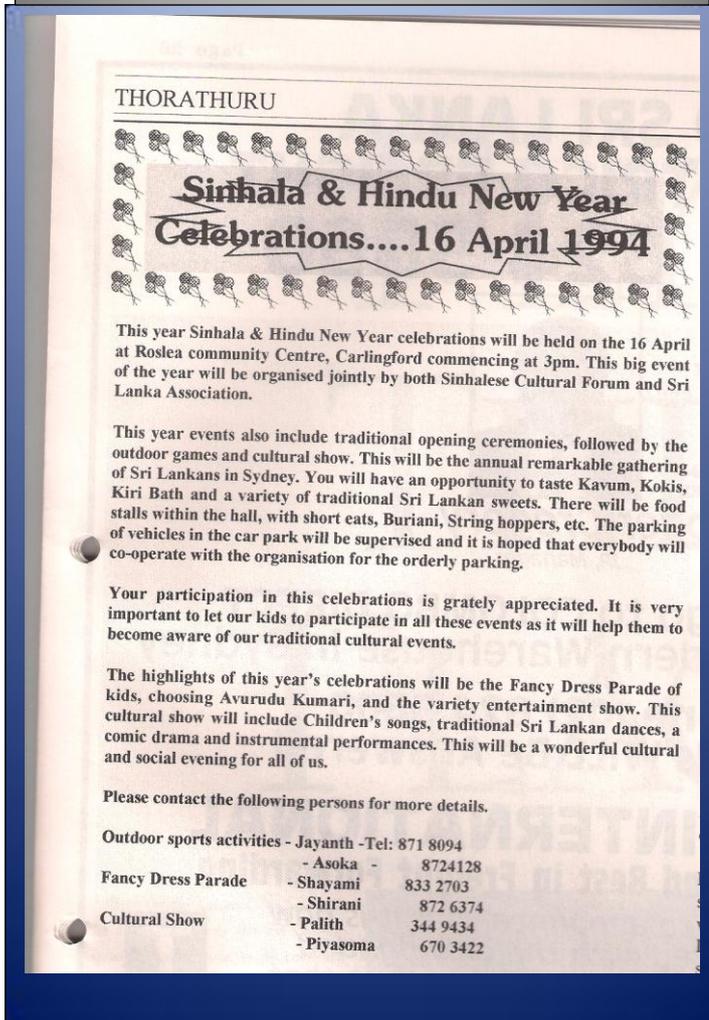
Please forward this Health Newsletter to your loved ones and friends.

We provide a wide range of updated information on Health material that will help your wellbeing and longevity.

- Memories of yester-years

“Thorathuru” (Sri Lanka Assoc. (NSW) Newsletter) Archives-
Notice of Sinhala & Hindu New Year Celebrations in 1994

This was the first year both Sri Lanka Association and Sinhalese Cultural Forum jointly celebrated the New Year. It was a great success.



Wear & Tear in your Eyes

Like your joints there is wear and tear in your eyes, too.

As you get older you will find difficult to focus on near objects. Your conjunctiva

(skin of the eye) can get dry due to

less secretion of tears from your tear glands hidden on the outer upper area of the eye socket. This can leave your eyes feeling irritated, sticky dry and gritty as if sand has got in. If there are no other problems with vision your ophthalmologist will prescribe artificial tears to be inserted a few times a day.

Your lens gets less elastic as you get older. Night vision may suffer, noticed while driving your car at night.

More serious problems are cataract, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy.

See your eye doctor once a year when you are 50 and older, unless you develop problems, earlier.



How to make Healthy Chips:

Potatoes resist the oil because they're full of starch, said Professor Fogliano. "A fundamental rule is that starch plays an

important part in sealing the food being fried and reducing the oil absorption. The starch in potatoes is particularly effective. There's a caveat or two, however. "Attention must be paid to frozen or pre-fried products," said Professor Fogliano, who spoke to the Italian newspaper La Stampa. "In these cases, the quantity of food absorbed increases significantly."

Unfortunately, that describes 95 per cent of the fries and chips in Australia, said the CEO of Melbourne's Lord of the Fries restaurants, Mark Koronczyk. "This is a European article, and this is how they cook their fries in Europe," he said. Locally, "95 per cent of people selling fries use a frozen product...they're full of preservatives, they use beef tallow...they also use whey powder."

Home-made chips from fresh potatoes are healthy.

- cut directly from potatoes
- don't use frozen, pre-fried or re-fried chips
- keep the skin on
- use sunflower oil, which is low in saturated fat and high in good fats (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated)

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/diet-and-fitness/chipping-away-at-fried-food-myths-20121203-2aqxv.html#ixzz2GN9MqfQA>



Does Green Tea burn Fat (fat oxidation)?

In a small but detailed study published this month in the journal Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise, scientists looked at its effects on a group of 31 healthy men who were monitored closely and put on similar

diets. Over a weeklong period, one group consumed a green tea extract supplement twice daily — the equivalent of eight cups of green tea a day — while another group was given a placebo. A third group was given a placebo for six days and then the extract on the seventh day. At the start and end of the week, the men cycled on stationary bikes at “an exercise intensity known to elicit maximal fat oxidation.”

Research suggests that green tea extract may not have any meaningful effect on the body's ability to burn fat.

The researchers took blood samples and did extensive testing, all of which indicated that the green tea extract did not improve fat oxidation.



Disclaimer: All material in this Newsletter is circulated in good faith and is distributed as an informative source only.

You must discuss your medical problems with your family doctor

How and why do we get Fat?



If we can find a clue to remain slim and healthy in spite of indulging in calorie dense foods, that would not only help the fattening nations but also the hospitality industry and the world would be fun and frolic to most affluent people. Today, people enjoy food with lot of guilt, concerned about cholesterol levels, weight problems, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, among others.

The doctors keep saying eat less saturated fats, less carbohydrates, more vegetables, and exercise daily. Most people find it difficult to adhere to good health habits, may be boring, or the brain is geared to the wrong foods. Another factor is stress involved in work, mainly among the business folk, they hardly have time to relax, spend more time with the family, other than drinking a couple of glasses of wine, eat well to the stomach's content, and go to sleep would be the routine. In Sri Lanka, the average wage owner would put in a tot of arrack to relax.

When you reach the "atherogenetic age" in life, over 60, with early warning signs, you tend to slow down and find the time for exercise and become health conscious.

The US physicist Gary Taubes has lobbed his theory, in two books he has written about obesity and nutrition. His premise? Is that the hormone insulin is responsible for obesity and levels of insulin spike when we eat carbohydrates, leading us to get fat. Eating fat, he says, does not have this effect on insulin and therefore is not the culprit in making people overweight or obese.

When people over eat calorie dense food daily they are eating too much of carbohydrates, fats and proteins in various proportions according to the cuisines they indulge in. Most people believe that this could be the balanced diet they are supposed to eat, not realising the calorie content.

Insulin secreted by the pancreas is blamed for storing glucose from the digested carbohydrates, in the fat cells as fatty acids called triglycerides. On the other hand eating fats and not carbohydrates will not have the same effect on insulin, according to Garry Taubes. So eating fatty food cannot be the culprit for people being overweight.

“Eating Fats do not influence insulin pump but does it for carbs only. So fats are not responsible for getting fat”

.....Gary Taubes-US physicist

When more fats are eaten they are stored in the fat cells due to the enzyme lipoprotein which helps to suck the fat inside the fat cells and stored as triglycerides. The body makes insulin only to carry glucose and the sugars are all metabolised for energy in the liver and other cells of the body. If we do not eat carbohydrates insulin will not be secreted and nevertheless still the fats will be stored in the fat cells and used as energy.

Robert Atkin's revolutionary diet was also worked on the same theory: eat fewer carbohydrates and eat more fat to get slim. Eating low GI foods by the people having diabetes has the same effect, an easy way of controlling the blood glucose levels. Even Australian nutritionists, who view Taubes as a conspiracy theorist because of his criticisms of those who pioneered the idea that fat causes obesity, admit his research has enough credibility and science behind it to be considered. So according to Taubes, it is inferred that eating fat does not make you fat.

The old acceptable theory about insulin is that glucose, amino acids or fatty acids in the intestines stimulate the pancreas to secrete insulin. Insulin acts on many cells in your body, especially those in the liver, muscles and fat tissue. Insulin stimulates to absorb glucose, fatty acids and amino acids. It also helps to build glycogen from glucose in the liver, Fats from fatty acids and glycerol, and proteins from amino-acids.

It is also possible for fat cells to take up glucose and amino acids, which have been absorbed into the bloodstream after a meal, and convert those into fat molecules. The conversion of carbohydrates or protein into fat is 10 times less efficient than simply storing fat in a fat cell, but the body can do it.

Whether you believe fat is to blame for rising obesity or not, it is clear the problem is getting worse.

Food has got a lot to do with obesity. During the world war 11, people were slim due to the scarcity of food. They say that Japanese were a small made nation during the war and immediately after. After surrender to the Americans, they started eating American hot food cooked in polyunsaturated oils, and gradually got huge like the Americans.

Today, people in most countries eat from food outlets without cooking at home, being cheaper and for convenience. These foods are cooked from processed flour, adding plenty of fat for taste and excess salt and as a result obesity has become a huge problem, even among the school going children. Most men are pot-bellied in their adulthood, and the incidence of heart disease and stroke, diabetes are rising uncontrollably.

Some researchers believe that obesity was nothing about eating too much or exercising too little, but rather was a hormonal regulatory defect just like any other growth disorder. . They said there was an excess accumulation of fat occurring, fat is regulated, and so therefore something was wrong with that regulatory system in fat people.



In China today, with the only one baby policy per family has created an enormous problem that these kids have become extremely overweight, though Chinese boasts about their slim flat belly bodies due to drinking green tea in large quantities daily. It may be that kids in China now rather drink American sodas' in place of green tea.

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/diet-and-fitness/the-fat-and-the-fiction-20121205-2avgo.html#ixzz2G34ZXMhY>

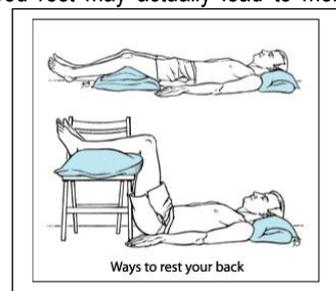
Home remedies for chronic or acute (non-specific) backache

In non-specific backache s the plain X-rays may not show serious damage to the spine, your doctor will diagnose the condition as “**Lumbar- sacral strain**”. You will then be referred to a physiotherapist for massages, manipulative therapy and short wave diathermy (SWD), and so on. You will be shown erecto-spinae exercises to do daily at home for a while. In most situations you improve within days to a few weeks. Bulging discs and pinched nerves may require traction treatment in addition and end up with disc surgery.

Basic treatment at home

You don't have rush to hospital with an acute back pain. Try some home remedies first.

- Wrap ice cubes in a damp tea towel and place it on the painful area of the spine for 20 minutes every two hours to reduce the traumatic inflammation. Avoid massaging at this stage. After 24 hours application of heat packs help ease much of the discomfort. Hot baths and hot water bottles help to ease muscle discomfort.
- Rest your back as most cases of back pain is due to muscle strain and further irritation can cause more damage. Bed rest is fine, so long as this only lasts two or three days. Prolonged bed rest may actually lead to more persistent pain.
- When resting lie down on your back, or sideways supported by pillows
- Avoid much in sitting position.
- Travelling in a car place a rolled towel or pillow behind at the lumbar region (small of your back)
- To reach your feet (for example, to tie your shoes), sit on a chair and cross one foot at a time over the opposite knee, or stand with one foot on a stool.
- Lifting an object can be problematic. If possible, first get down on one knee and lift the object to your waist; then stand up, holding it close to your body.
- When carrying packages, use two bags with handles packed as evenly as possible, and carry one bag in each hand. If you have recently had a vertebral fracture, limit the weight you carry to 10 pounds.
- Walk as little as you can, and gradually you can increase the distance
- Take some pain killer like paracetamol and codeine combination. Diazepam relaxes the back muscles.



After the muscle spasms have subsided exercises will be important to stretch and strengthen the back muscles. These exercises are referred to as “erectospinae exercises.” A physiotherapist will demonstrate these strengthening exercises. Lie on your back with knees bent, and feet flat. Place a small pillow under your head. Tighten your abdominal muscles by pulling your pelvis and ribs together while flattening your lower back towards the floor. Repeat this exercise daily for about 10 times.

Keep your Blood Pressure normal to keep Brain Function

Studies have shown that keeping a normal blood pressure reading is important to prevent stroke and heart disease. The importance is far beyond as all parts of the body depends on the circulation for their nutrients antioxidants and oxygen. Many organs can suffer from the impact of untreated high blood pressure. Brain seems to be at greatest risk with both low and high blood pressures.



Memory loss

In Alzheimer's disease we know that there is memory loss. Even without AD one could get memory loss with continued untreated high blood pressure, and takes a severe toll on the aging brains.

Cognitive Impairment: Cognitive means: reasoning, rational thinking and being intellectual. Mild cognitive impairment has been observed in those people whose blood pressure has been uncontrolled for a while. It would be a disaster to your wellbeing in such a situation.

New studies have shown that in such a situation you could go into dementia called 'vascular dementia' and even Alzheimer's disease.

Most investigations focus on older adults. For example, a study of 2,505 men between the ages of 71 and 93 found that men with systolic pressures of 140 mm Hg or higher were 77% more likely to develop dementia than men with systolic pressures below 120 mm Hg. And a study that evaluated blood pressure and cognitive function in people between 18 and 46 and between 47 and 83 found that in both age groups high systolic and diastolic pressures were linked to cognitive decline over time.

Cognitive decline cannot be reversed, and it is important to prevent by controlling your blood pressure, especially as you get older. European scientists reported that long-term therapy for high blood pressure reduced the risk of vascular dementia by 55%.

At the early stages you may be able to control your blood pressure without medication, by making lifestyle changes, such as losing weight, increasing activity and eating more healthfully.

Early stages high blood pressure has no symptoms, as the body gets used to and accommodates the increasing blood pressure. But when elevated blood pressure is accompanied by abnormal cholesterol and blood sugar levels, the damage to your arteries, kidneys, and heart accelerates exponentially. Fortunately, high blood pressure is easy to detect and treat.

Misuse of alcohol

You tend to neglect your health with alcohol addiction. Alcohol abuse can produce life threatening health conditions. Excess alcohol is one of the key factors that lead to vascular dementia and other cognitive defects. It also leads to excessive behavior problems such as gambling, unnecessary shopping, aggression, and fighting with the loved ones. Just stick to one glass of drink per day and check your blood pressure every six months.

Lowering your blood pressure through relaxing methods

Researchers with the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind-Body Medicine at Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital compared a stress management technique called the relaxation response with education about lifestyle changes such as sodium reduction, weight loss, and exercise. They found:

- Blood pressure decreased more in the relaxation response group
- 32% of the volunteers in that group were able to eliminate one blood pressure medication and still keep their blood pressure under control, compared with 14% of the lifestyle group.

The relaxation response, developed by Harvard's Dr. Herbert Benson, has been shown to reduce heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate, and muscle tension. Here's how to do it:

- Select a word (such as "one" or "peace"), a short phrase, or a prayer to focus on.
- Sit quietly in a comfortable position and close your eyes.
- Relax your muscles, progressing from your feet to your calves, thighs, abdomen, and so on, up to your neck and face.
- Breathe slowly through your nose, silently saying your focus word, phrase, or prayer to yourself as you exhale.

Keeping your blood pressure checked regularly and keeping within normal limits pays healthy dividends in the long run.

AuSLMAT Updates

Drs. Nilmini Wijemunnige, Suren Jayaweera and Michelle de Silva gave lectures to the medical staff and students at the Batticaloa Teaching Hospital and the Karapitiya Teaching Hospital Galle when AuSLMAT visited Sri Lanka in June last year. We will this year also have with us Dr. Roshan Gunaratne from Duke University U.S.A. who will speak on "Anti-thrombotic therapy" at Batticaloa and Galle.

AuSLMAT takes pride in improving the standard of medical care and capacity building in addition to the supply of medical equipment and consumables.

We will also have with us diabetic educators Coralie Cross and Preethi de Silva who will conduct teaching sessions at both Batticaloa and Galle. Blood tests for random sugar levels and HbA1c and urine tests for protein and sugar are also done at the general medical clinics we will conduct at Passikudah, Beralihela and Mirissa. Some of these clinics attract more than fifty patients who are also supplied with medications free of any charge.

We welcome anyone who can assist us in Sri Lanka.

Dr Quintys De Zylva

Aging increases the incidence of Alzheimer's disease.

Since the risk of getting the disease increases with age, the number of patients with the illness to be found in any community will depend on the proportion of older people in the group. Traditionally, the developed countries had large proportions of elderly people, and so they had very many cases of Alzheimer's disease in the community at one time. However, the developing countries are now undergoing a demographic transition so that more and more persons are surviving to an old age. For example in India, the 1991 census revealed that 70 million people were over 60 years. This number increased in 2001 to about 77 million, or 7.6% of the population. Similar demographic changes are occurring in other Member Countries of the SEA Region.

Some studies showed that consuming Turmeric in curries was responsible for the lower incidence of A.D. in India. It is now proved that such spices, may help other diseases, but has no link with the increased life expectancy and increased incidence of A.D.

In Sri Lanka, the life expectancy is 74.1 (with 9.6% of the population being over 60 years), which is the highest in the Region, followed by Thailand (life expectancy 70, with 8.7% of the population over 60 years). With this increased number of elderly people, there will be many cases of Alzheimer's disease. Thus, the time has come to discuss issues related to Alzheimer's disease in the Member Countries of the Region.

Time to check your Blood Pressure

When you first start to check your blood pressure at home, measure it early in the morning, before you have taken your blood pressure pills, again in the evening every day for a week. After that, follow the plan your doctor recommends, or check it one or two days a month. Each time you take a reading:

- Avoid caffeinated or alcoholic beverages, and don't smoke, during the 30 minutes before the test.
- Sit quietly for five minutes with your back supported and feet on the floor.
- When taking the measurement, support your arm so your elbow is at the level of your heart.
- Push your sleeves out of the way and wrap the cuff over bare skin. Measure your blood pressure according to the machine's instructions.
- Leave the deflated cuff in place, wait a minute, then take a second reading. If the readings are close, average them. If not, repeat again and average the three readings.
- Don't panic if a reading is high. Relax for a few minutes and try again.
- Keep a record of your blood pressure readings and the time of day they are taken.

Checking blood pressure at home won't cure hypertension, but it will help control the most common cause of stroke and a big contributor to heart attack, heart failure, and premature death.

(From Harvard Medical School)

Alzheimer's Disease-Gender Differences

It is generally believed that men and women are equally at risk of Alzheimer's disease. However, in developed countries, it is commonly observed that more women than men patients are to be found in old age homes and special care facilities. This is a reflection of the higher longevity of women as compared to men, and since this is a disease which strikes older people, there are more women patients than men. There is no evidence that women are at an increased risk of the disease than men, when the age factor is correlated in existing data. Also, women are better able to care for male patients than men are able to care for female patients. Thus, a woman with Alzheimer's disease has a higher chance of being put into an institution because of her husband's inability to take care of her. However, a man with Alzheimer's disease has a higher chance of his wife taking care of him at home. Thus, a greater number of women patients are found in institutions.



AYOMA NIRMALI NOW HAPPILY MARRIED

AYOMA NIRMALI was a schoolgirl at Gothami Ballika Maha Vidyalaya when she was injured in a bomb blast opposite the Maradana Railway Station on the 5th of March 1998. Her best friend beside her on a pedestrian crossing lost her life in that tragedy. Ayoma lost an eye and had several other injuries. With the assistance of the school Principal - Mrs Taldena - we were able to make contact with Ayoma shortly after her discharge from the General Hospital Colombo and the Deputy Australian High Commissioner in Colombo assisted us in transferring her to Melbourne for further treatment. She was treated at the Mercy Hospital in East Melbourne free of any charge and Dr. Rodger Davies an Oculoplastic Surgeon looked after her prosthesis.

Ayoma has since been well and has made several visits to Melbourne where she has become a close friend of Dr. Beth Wilson and Dr. Olga Mendis. Dr. Carlyle Perera looked after her post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Australia Sri Lanka Medical Aid Team meets her in Colombo regularly and we are proud to maintain that contact with her. She now lives with her husband Chanuka Karunaratna at Malabe and will meet the medical team again in July this year.

Quintus de Zylva

Question?

Doctor my husband is having early Parkinson's disease. What sort of diet should I give him?

During the early stage of PD no special diet is required, other than increasing antioxidants to scavenge the free radicals formed every minute in the body. Free radicals have a special affinity for cells that produce *dopamine*. The foods that contain lot of antioxidants are fruits, and veges, especially the dark green ones, such as spinach, broccoli, tomatoes, carrots, garlic, red kidney beans, blue berries, apples, plums and so on. Green tea and black tea contains lots of antioxidants. Red wine, too contain lots of antioxidants, and especially good for people having PD, to relax the muscles.

Fish containing omega 3 fatty acids, high in eicosapentaenoic acid and docosahexaenoic acid benefit brain cells.

Adequate nutrients containing calcium, magnesium vitamin D, E and K to strengthen bone and skin may benefit.

Hope this information will help.

When you get up one morning, if you become tottery on your feet and tends to fall, and your writing becomes scrawly, the picture is suggestive of Parkinson's disease.

When you wake up in the morning, if you feel spinning suddenly and cannot control your balance when walking, think of "Positional Vertigo" (Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo), not uncommon as one gets older.

