

melomag

Free Health Guide!

Autumn 2013 | Issue 12

The real deal
on chickenpox

What is
your magic
number?

Emphysema:
all you need
to know



TIPS TO

Beat flu



GIVE-AWAY
Melomed is giving away
a 5-in-1 travel bag
to one lucky reader!
See page 3 for
competition details!



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CONGRATULATIONS!

Well done to **Nomaphelo Nolisi, Janet Kleinhans** and **Patricia Thompson** the winners of the Melomed cooler bag give-away featured in our previous *Melomag* issue 11.

We trust that they will enjoy their prizes.
Look out for this issue's give-away on **page 3**.



Health Bytes

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTE

Frugality is the key to this year's resolution ...

Despite the temptation of placing luxuries at centre stage, the economic realities suggest that this year, however, were tempted by a focus on frugality. With a plethora of budgetary concerns already on our plates, we thank you, Mr Pravin Gordhan. This is where Melomed's vision of quality, affordable health care truly comes to the forefront of our community's needs as we continue to provide health care of international standards to our patients at affordable costs.

With that being said, we wish to welcome our new specialists who recently joined the Melomed Group – more specifically Dr Naseera Allie (Gynaecologist and Obstetrician), Dr Shukri Raban (Paediatrician and Neonatologist) and Dr Neil Hendricks (Cardiologist). We are truly grateful to add doctors of such high calibre to our already praiseworthy list of medical practitioners in our Melomed family.

Our Melomed24 Ambulance Service recently transported Sir Ranulph Fiennes, a distant cousin to the British Royal Family in England and more famously known as an explorer and holder of several endurance records (as well as a prolific writer, of such novels as *Killer Elite* and *The Feather Men*, to name but a few). Sir Fiennes was transported by the Melomed24 crew from the airport to receive medical attention after he sustained injury whilst on one of his adventures in Antarctica. He was reportedly very impressed with the superb and exceptional services received from Melomed24, commenting on the professional manner in which the crew assisted him during his encounter.

Our main features in this issue of *Melomag* includes "Fighting Flu as we approach winter", "Emphysema", "Chickenpox" and "Renal Care". Each of the mentioned articles was written by a resident medical practitioner within the Melomed Group.

We wish to thank each and every one of our doctors who have so graciously contributed to raising awareness and enlightening our patients regarding these common illnesses prevalent in our communities.

Happy reading!



EBRAHIM BHORAT
CHAIRMAN
MELOMED GROUP

ARE CAFFEINE ENERGY DRINKS SAFE?



The popularity of caffeine-loaded energy drinks has soared ever since it appeared on store shelves in 1997. Along with this success comes the growing concern that these products may be harmful to consumers.

What's in energy drinks?

Caffeine is the most common ingredient in energy drinks. It stimulates the nervous system and can boost energy and alertness. More than 200mg of caffeine can cause insomnia, nervousness, headaches, heart palpitations and nausea.

Sugar is usually in the form of sucrose or high-fructose corn syrup. Some energy drinks contain up to 54g (about a ¼ cup)

of sugar per serving! Consuming too much sugar over a long period of time is associated with insulin resistance, diabetes and obesity.

Guarana and ginseng are plant extracts. Guarana has more caffeine than any other plant in the world. A 2010 study showed too much ginseng can cause low blood pressure, swelling, headaches, vertigo, fever and heart palpitations.

Other safety concerns

- + Many people do not "sip" energy drinks. Fast drinking can increase blood concentrations of caffeine quickly, which can increase the risk of side effects.
- + Energy drinks are marketed to teens. Because many teens weigh less than adults, they end up with a higher concentration of caffeine in their bodies.
- + Caffeine-loaded energy drinks have not been proven safe and are not recommended as part of a healthy diet.

Source: www.mindhealth.com

SMOKERS TAKE MORE SICK DAYS

- + Smokers take on average three more sick days from work every year than non-smokers, according to a recent review published in the journal *Addiction*.
- + Although quitting smoking reduces absenteeism, those who never smoked generally took the least number of sick days of all the groups.
- + Occupational Care South Africa (OCSA) estimated that productivity lost due to absenteeism cost the South African Economy R12 billion in 2009. Source: Health-e.org.za

HEALTH TIPS

Research suggests spending on experiences like holidays

— especially those shared with others is more likely to make you happy in the long term than spending on material possessions.

GET A GOOD PAIR OF SNEAKERS

Is your energy lagging? Though it may be the last thing you feel like doing when you're tired, exercise, even a brisk walk, can be more effective than a nap or cup of coffee at fighting fatigue.

KNOW THE FACTS OF CANCER MYTHS

The Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) focused on dispelling damaging misconceptions about cancer by sharing a list of common myths with the correct facts during this year's World Cancer Day in February.

As more than 30% of cancers can be prevented, it's important to make people aware of the risk factors and ways to reduce their cancer risk. "So many South Africans have preconceived ideas of what cancer is and whom it affects, and we want to change that. It's very important for the public to know the truth about the disease," says CANSA CEO Sue Janse van Rensburg, a cancer survivor of almost 30 years.

One of the biggest myths we are faced with, is that cancer is a death sentence. The truth is that many cancers that were once considered a death sentence can now be treated and managed more effectively and even be cured. Cancer can be treated more effectively if diagnosed early. Be sure to make smart choices and go for regular screening. We're aware that those facing a cancer diagnosis and their loved ones are often desperate for a cure. Unfortunately, there are many myths doing the rounds regarding possible cures and treatments that are not based on scientific evidence. This gives loved ones and cancer patients false hope. Be sure to visit the CANSA website, www.cansa.org.za, for all the cancer myths and facts, or follow CANSA on Twitter or Facebook.



GET ACTIVE, LIVE LONGER

As if you needed another piece of motivation to strap on those sneakers, a new study found that people who got just 75 minutes of moderate exercise (brisk walking or the equivalent) per week – as in, about 10 minutes of physical activity per day – lived an average of 1.8 years longer than their less-active counterparts. Here's what else a 10–20 minute daily sweat session gets you:

- + 5% increase in "good" cholesterol
- + 10% lower chance of dying of any kind of cancer
- + 14% decrease in coronary heart disease risk
- + 18% reduction in your likelihood of getting breast cancer
- + 50% lower risk of depression from job burnout
- + 60% reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and other age-related cognitive problems

Source: Health.com

GIVE-AWAY

We're giving away a Melomed 5-in-1 travel bag to one lucky reader!

To stand a chance to qualify, SMS your answer to the following question and your name to 34298 (R2 per SMS). Competition closes 10 June 2013. Prize sponsored by Melomed. What is perfect happiness to Dr Austin Goliath? (See our Housecall article).



Give-away terms and conditions: The winner will be the first correct entry drawn after the closing date. In the event of the judges not being able to get hold of winners on details supplied, alternative winners will be selected. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. The winner must be prepared to be photographed for publicity purposes. The prize is not transferable and may not be converted into cash. Prize may differ from picture. Image is for visual purposes only.

MAGIC

NUMBERS

Do you know your numbers? Take a look to see whether yours add up to a healthy you.

Ask anyone, and they are likely to be able to tell you their weight. But people tend to be less clued up about their BMI or resting pulse. Empower yourself by finding out all you can – these numbers can indicate your risk of developing various diseases. Here are 10 healthy numbers you should know:



24.9

Maximum body mass index (BMI) The healthy range for body mass index or BMI is 18.5 to 24.9. The BMI measures your weight in relation to your height. People with a BMI over 25 are overweight. If you have a BMI of 18.5 or below you are considered underweight.

100

Maximum blood glucose level (mg/dl) A fasting blood sugar level of less than 100mg/dl is healthy. At between 100 and 125mg/dl you'd have borderline diabetes, and an increased risk of heart disease. A level of 126mg/dl or higher, measured on two different days, indicates diabetes with a risk of damage to the eyes, kidneys, blood vessels, heart and nerves as well as dementia.

120/80

Normal blood pressure

A normal blood pressure is 120/80 or below. The first number measures the pressure in your arteries when your heart contracts. The second number indicates the number when your heart is relaxing. High blood pressure is anything above 120/80! Having too high a blood pressure puts you at a greater risk of developing heart disease.

Minimum number of years you should maintain a steady weight

A 2004 study in *The Journal of the American Dietetic Association* suggests that women who keep a consistent weight have stronger immune systems.

5

Maximum total cholesterol level (mg/dl)

Total cholesterol levels (the amount of fat in your blood) should be below 200 milligrams per decilitre. If your level is too high (240 mg/dl and above) you are at a greater risk of having a heart attack or stroke.

200

Maximum percentage of daily fat intake

Your daily fat intake should be less than 30% of your total kilojoule intake, with less than 10% coming from saturated fats. Check food labels, and stick to monosaturated and polyunsaturated fats, found in plant oils, including olives and avocados.

30

88

Maximum number of centimetres your waist should be, if you're a woman

More than that and you'll up your risk of heart disease. (For men, the maximum measurement is 102cm.) Excess abdominal fat can contribute to high blood pressure and cholesterol.

Minimum number of kilograms of pressure you should be able to squeeze with one hand

A healthy grip strength is between 25 and 30kg. This is a key indicator of your overall muscle strength and may be a sign of how likely you are to develop osteoporosis. To measure your grip strength, squeeze a device called a hand dynamometer, available at some gyms. To improve your grip strength eat more calcium.

25

48

Maximum number of hours you should wait between workouts

Researchers at the University of Missouri in Columbia found that when you're inactive longer than two days, the kilojoules normally burnt during exercise start to be stored as fat. Fat cells in lab rats can increase in size by 25% after 48 hours of missed workouts.

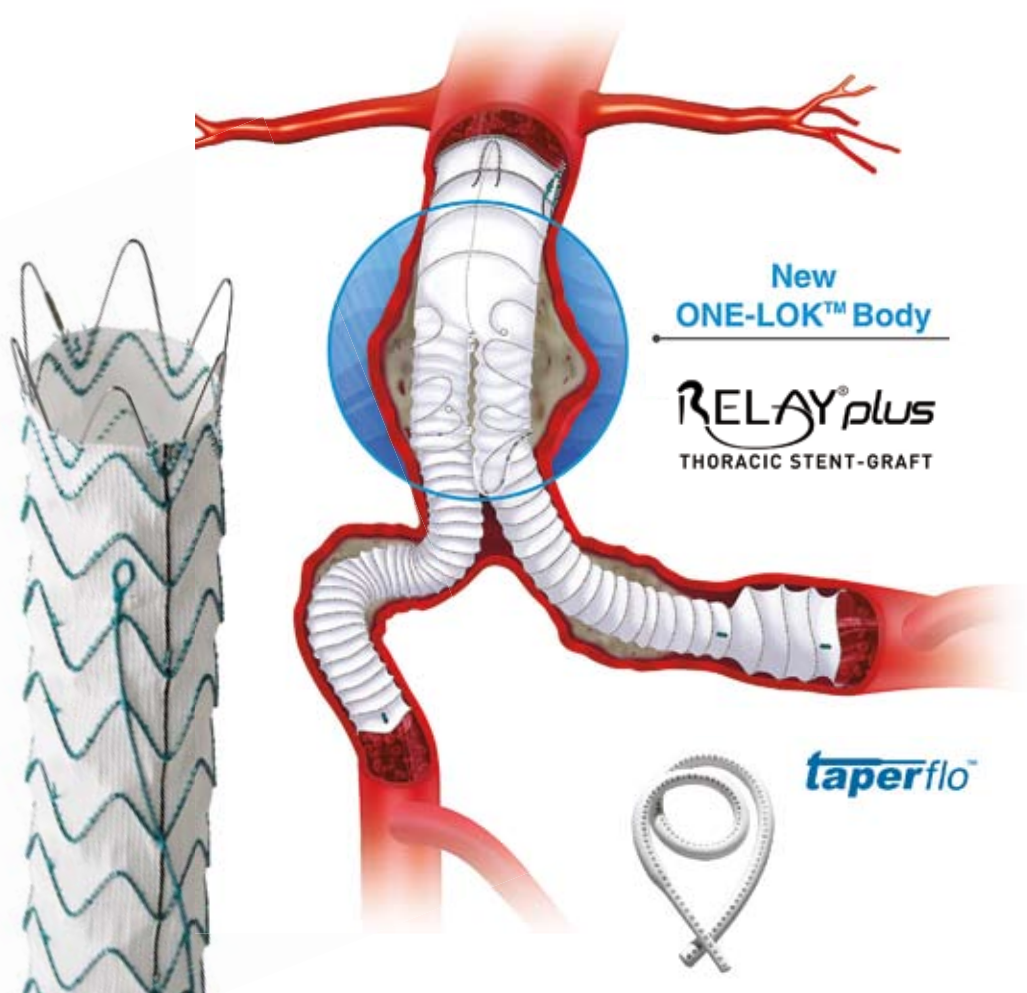
Number of times per minute your heart should beat at rest

Extremely fit athletes may have a lower rate, but anything under 60 beats per minute (especially if accompanied by dizziness) can indicate an irregular heartbeat or a thyroid disorder. A rate above 100 is a sign of poor fitness. Take your pulse while resting (count the beats for 10 seconds and multiply by six).

60-80



Taking care of vascular





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7

TO DO'S FOR
OPTIMAL
KIDS' HEALTH

We live longer than at any other time in history. Children born today have every hope of living to their 80s, 90s and even beyond. So our children (and we parents) should be in the greatest physical shape ever, but are we? By Health Bytes Publishers

1 BREASTFEEDING IS BEST

Breastfed babies and their mothers experience many health benefits while they are a nursing duo. These benefits often continue far into the future. Breastfed children are smarter and keep their IQ advantage into adulthood. For the infant, long-term effects of breastfeeding include reduced risk of coeliac disease, diabetes, obesity, some childhood cancers, Crohn's disease, urinary tract infections, atopic disease, and in female infants reduced endometriosis later in life. For the breastfeeding mother, there is reduced risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis.

2 SLEEP

Or lack of it – is probably the

most-discussed aspect of child care. Still, sleep is very important to a child's well-being. When kids are tired, they can become hyperactive, disagreeable and display extreme behaviours. Here are some approximate numbers based on age.

- + Newborns: Sleep pattern irregular because their internal clocks aren't fully developed yet. Sleep or drowse for 16 – 20 hours a day, divided about equally between night and day.
- + 6 months: Sleep about 3 hours during the day and 11 hours at night.
- + Ages 1 – 3: Most toddlers sleep about 10 – 13 hours at night. Don't force your 2- or 3-year-old child to nap

during the day unless he/she gets cranky, because kids can have a harder time sleeping if they're overtired.

- + Ages 3 – 5: Preschoolers should sleep about 10–12 hours per night. A 5-year-old who gets adequate rest at night no longer needs a day-time nap. Instead, a quiet time may be substituted.
- + Ages 6 – 9: Kids of this age need about 10 hours of sleep a night.
- + Ages 10 – 12: These children need a little over 9 hours of sleep a night. However, it's up to parents to judge the exact amount of rest their children need and to see that they're in bed in time for sufficient sleep. ▶▶

3 LIVE HEALTHY

In South Africa, one out of four children struggles with weight. Your role as parent is very clear: eat healthy foods and stay active to be a good role model for children in your care. Change the way your family operates – it’s a lifelong gift to your children. Choose a variety from the main food groups every day. Provide small meals and snacks that are nutritious and low in salt and sugar.

4 THE DRINK OF CHAMPIONS

Children should be limited to having regular soft drinks, energy drinks, sports drinks and fruit drinks once a week only. All of these can lead to obesity and tooth decay. If you choose flavoured water, flavoured milk, 100% fruit juice or diet drinks, limit intake to 250ml in total per day. Plain water and reduced-fat milk are the best drinks for children. Avoid drinks high in caffeine, which is a diuretic.

5 FISH IS BRAIN FOOD

Fish is a good source of omega-3 fatty acids – very important for brain function. Eat oily fish two to three times a week. Eat seeds (especially flax and pumpkin seeds) daily. Also include three to six eggs (especially omega-3-rich) a week, as well as a supplement rich in EPA, DHA and GLA daily.

6 WASHING HANDS

Good hand washing is your first line of defence against the spread of many illnesses. Wash hands regularly in warm water using soap (it doesn’t need to be antibacterial), especially before handling food, after using the toilet and after touching animals.

7 BRUSH AWAY

Proper dental care begins even before a baby’s first tooth appears. At birth your baby has 20 primary teeth, some of which are fully developed in the jaw. Run a damp washcloth over your baby’s gums following feedings to prevent buildup of damaging bacteria. Never put your baby to sleep with a bottle as this can harm the teeth. Brush first teeth with a child’s soft toothbrush or rub them with gauze at the end of the day. Start flossing as soon as your baby has two teeth that touch. Your child’s first visit to the dentist should take place by

the first birthday. Check with your dentist whether you should give your child fluoride supplements once all primary teeth have come in, as it helps to prevent decay. The general rule is to brush at least twice a day and to floss regularly.

Supplementation

Children are often picky eaters, so supplementation is a reliable way of ensuring they get all the vitamins and minerals they need. In the early 1980s, a study on the effect of an optimal intake of vitamins and minerals on the intelligence of schoolchildren was done. After eight months, the non-verbal IQs of those taking the supplements had risen by nine points! Since then, 10 out of 13 studies have shown IQ-boosting effects from giving children multivitamins.



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Fighting Flu



AN APPLE A DAY MIGHT KEEP FLU AT BAY ...

Whether young or old, for many, the prospect of the looming cold brings about a fear of

winter's worst "side effects" – influenza.

By GP, Dr Darren Pedro

GP practices are being inundated with questions on how to prevent contracting "the flu" and avoid the endless sniffles, muscle aches and fatigue that comes along with it.

WHAT IS INFLUENZA?

Influenza (flu) is an illness caused by the influenza virus – of which there are numerous strains. Person to person transmission occurs through droplets created when someone with the infection sneezes or coughs. Touching surfaces where the virus has been deposited can also put you at risk.

Symptoms include fever, cough, rhinorrhoea (runny nose), muscle aches, headaches and extreme fatigue. The illness usually lasts between two to ten days and most people recover completely. However, at times, complications develop such as pneumonia and this is more

common in young babies, pregnant woman, people with lowered immune systems and those with underlying disease (especially heart or lung disease).

ANTIBIOTIC MISCONCEPTION

Influenza is caused by a virus as are many common infections of the nose, throat, sinuses, ears and chest. Your immune system is generally good at fighting off many types of viral infections.

Hence an antibiotic is not needed if a virus is causing an infection, for the following reasons:

- + Antibiotics do not kill viruses.
- + Antibiotics may cause side effects such as diarrhoea, rashes, etc.
- + Bacteria can become resistant to certain antibiotics if they are used incorrectly. Which means the antibiotic might not be effective when needed.

TIPS TO PREVENT INFLUENZA

1. Lather up

Contaminated hands spread an estimated 80% of infectious diseases. Thorough hand washing is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.

Our hands touch so many publicly used items every day like doorknobs, shopping carts and work desktops, get





Good handwashing technique

- + Remove all rings or jewellery and wet your hands with running water.
- + Put a small amount of liquid soap in the palm of one hand. Bar soaps are not as hygienic as liquid soaps as they stay moist and attract germs. If bar soap is the only option, store it on a rack so that it doesn't sit in water.
- + Rub your hands together for at least 15 seconds and lather up. Be sure to scrub between your fingers, under your fingernails and the backs of your hands.
- + Rinse your hands with clean running water for at least 10 seconds. Close the taps with paper towels.
- + Dry your hands with a dry, clean or disposable towel

F L U

S H O T

in the habit of washing your hands regularly. Children should also wash their hands after playing with toys shared with other children.

2. An apple a day ...

Help boost your immune system by loading your plate with extra fruits and vegetables. Colourful varieties are not only appealing to the eye, but these fruits contain the necessary fibre, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants to boost your immune system.

3. Snooze so you don't lose

Given the current high demands of daily living, to many a good night's sleep is considered a luxury and a good old "40 winker" has become the norm. Getting enough sleep is an essential component to your overall health and a key component in disease prevention.

4. Exercise: you don't have time to

During winter months the only exercise we do is lifting that snugly duvet to cover ourselves. Regular exercise can radically reduce stress, improve our immunity and general well-being and gives our bodies that much-needed energy to fight off unwanted germs.

5. Call the shots ...

According to the WHO (World Health Organisation) flu vaccines are the most effective way to prevent influenza. Unfortunately they do not prevent you from contracting other viral infections which can cause coughs and colds. The misconception that getting the flu vaccine will give you the flu – is not true. But you might develop flu-like symptoms for a variety of reasons, such as:

- + **Reaction to the vaccine** – general muscle aches and fever develops a day or two after receiving the flu shot. This is most likely as a result of your body producing protective antibodies.
- + **Two-week window** – it takes approximately two weeks for the flu shot to take full effect. So if you are exposed to the flu virus shortly before or during this time period, you might get the flu.
- + **Mismatched strains** – because the influenza virus evolves so rapidly the virus used for the vaccine might be different to the viral strain circulating in the region.
- + **Other illnesses** – many other diseases also produce flu-like symptoms. So you may think you have the flu when you

actually don't.

The WHO recommends annual vaccination for (in order of priority):

- + nursing-home residents (the elderly or disabled)
- + elderly individuals
- + people with chronic medical conditions (HIV/AIDS, asthma or other lung conditions, kidney or liver disease, diabetes, diseases of the nervous system)
- + other groups such as pregnant women, health care workers, those with essential functions in society, as well as children from ages six months to two years.



Dr Axel Brüning, Pulmonologist
/ Specialist Physician: MBBCh (Wits)
FCP (SA) FCCP.

EMPHYSEMA

Emphysema is the medical term for destruction of the alveoli, also called air sacs. For all intents and purposes, the only cause is smoking. This is an incurable illness and giving up smoking is the only treatment that will not cause progression of the illness. By Dr Axel Brüning

The lungs have millions of air sacs. This is where oxygen mixes with the blood. Each alveolus is surrounded by a bed of blood vessels which are separated from the oxygen by only one layer of cells. The alveoli are very fragile structures and are easily damaged. Another important function of the alveoli is to get rid of carbon dioxide from the blood when one exhales.

Emphysema is usually part of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). **In other words, emphysema is closely allied to chronic bronchitis.** Chronic bronchitis is damage of the lung bronchial tubes which is also usually due to cigarette smoking. There are other causes, for instance, industrial exposure to various

dusts, gases, previous TB and other illnesses. However, in most cases, chronic bronchitis and emphysema are cigarette-smoking induced. Chronic bronchitis is treatable with inhaler medication and, if caught early enough and the patient gives up smoking, can in fact be reversed and cured.

Smoking of dagga and Mandrax can also cause emphysema. This is especially because of the smoking technique of these substances, i.e. the very deep inhalation with breath holding. Smoking "light" cigarettes has also been shown to cause emphysema as persons smoking such cigarettes usually inhale more deeply and

hold their breath for longer so as to inhale enough nicotine. In other words, people need to give up smoking completely. Smoking "light" cigarettes is useless.

Not every smoker develops emphysema. There seems to be a genetic predisposition as well as the smoking technique as mentioned above.

Persons with emphysema will become short of breath on minimal effort and even too short of breath to do any activity of daily living. They are then confined to a chair or bed at home and will need continuous oxygen which is very expensive. Oxygen cannot be given to people who are still

If you're a smoker, quitting will either prevent emphysema or slow its progression.

active smokers. They will often be thin and wasted.

People with predominantly chronic bronchitis and some emphysema will have wheeziness of the chest and a productive cough in addition to the above symptoms. As mentioned, the treatment for chronic bronchitis would again be smoking cessation. Asthma inhalers and a variety of newer medications can help reverse some of the damage caused and can be reversed altogether if caught early enough.

An interesting part of emphysema and chronic bronchitis is that, in many instances, the damage continues despite a person having given up smoking. The cause of this is being intensively investigated and new medication is being developed to try and prevent this ongoing inflammation with lung destruction.

There are also effects of emphysema outside of the lung. Most people with emphysema will die of heart disease and many will die of cancer. They will definitely die, on average, at least 11 years before the end of their normal lifespan.

In summary, smoking is a big culprit. In the Cape Flats, specifically Ravensmead, the highest incidence of smoking in the world has been documented. Fortunately, South Africa



DID YOU KNOW?

has very progressive antismoking legislation but the message needs to get through to grassroots level, i.e. never start smoking and, if you do, stop as soon as possible.

If you think you have emphysema, please consult a health care worker. You will then require a physical examination, lung function testing, an X-ray of the chest and possibly a lung scan. Then make sure you give up smoking!

If you have emphysema, you require an annual flu vaccine as well as vaccination against pneumococcal pneumonia. These reduce the risk of life-threatening infections. Consult your doctor for more information about the treatment options appropriate for you.



When to call a professional

Call your doctor if you develop:

- + New shortness of breath
- + A persistent cough, with or without phlegm
- + A decrease in your usual ability to exercise
- + Frequent respiratory infections
- + Weight loss.

If you smoke, and you wish to quit, enquire from your doctor about methods available

in assisting to quit. It is advised to see your doctor if anyone in your family has been diagnosed with alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency.

While there is no cure for emphysema, it can be controlled, which can result in an improved quality of life. Remember, research shows that people with emphysema who carry on smoking reduce their quality of life significantly, and cut at least 10 years off their life span.

**Emergency NUMBERS**

Melomed 24 Ambulance:
0800 786 000

Melomed Gatesville Trauma Unit
021 637 8100

Melomed Bellville Trauma Unit
021 948 8131

Melomed Mitchells Plain Trauma Unit
021 392 3126

FIRST AID**& EMERGENCIES**

Severe vomiting can be very serious, particularly in children and the elderly, who are more vulnerable to the accompanying risk of dehydration. The loss of circulating body fluid can lead to life-threatening shock.

CAUSES

Likely causes of vomiting include: food poisoning; viral infections such as gastroenteritis, and sensitivity to a new or unusual food. Vomiting can also accompany some medical conditions such as concussion and compression and other injuries.

SEE A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER IF NEEDED

Get medical care if the person has any of the following symptoms:

- + Can't keep down liquids or foods for more than 24 hours
- + Fever with abdominal pain
- + Signs of dehydration (dizziness, decreased urination, fatigue)
- + Unable to take medication the person normally takes

- + Nausea or vomiting is due to surgery, anticancer drugs, motion sickness, pregnancy, or vertigo.

Medication may be a possible treatment.

SELF-CARE FOR NAUSEA AND VOMITING

- + Have the person drink small amounts of water, sports drinks, or clear liquids.
- + Don't give the person solid food until vomiting has stopped.
- + If the person can keep it down, give the person light, bland foods like bread and crackers.
- + When the person can tolerate food, try small amounts of the BRAT diet: Bananas, Rice, Apple (grated apple or cloudy apple juice), and Toast.

CALL AN AMBULANCE IF THE PERSON HAS ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:

- + Pain in the middle or lower right side of the abdomen
- + Headache or stiff neck and light hurts the eyes
- + Vomiting blood or black, tarry stools
- + Confusion or lethargy

HOME BREW ISOTONIC DRINKS

These drinks replace vital fluids and important minerals and sugars in the body. Available to purchase ready-made, you can also make your own:

ADD: 1 tsp salt and
1 tsp sugar

To 1 litre of water, diluted orange juice or cold tea

This drink should be taken in short sips as needed.

Adco-Mom

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10 ways

TO BOOST IMMUNITY

Stop colds, flu and even depression in their tracks

— before you even get sick. By Healthbytes Publishers

Your immune system is your body's natural defence system. It protects you against bacteria and viruses, and when you're ill, it fights infection and helps you to get better. As cold temperatures set in, runny noses and sniffles are everywhere. What if, this winter, you discovered a simple way to boost your immune system so you wouldn't get sick? **What if there were 10 ways? Pick three or more of the suggestions from this list, stick to them, and you will improve your immune strength.**

1 NUTRITION

Think variety. Eat a wide range of fruits and vegetables (five servings daily), and go for seeds, cold-pressed oils, garlic, protein-rich foods, whole grains and fish. Salt-water fish provides not only protein, but also ome-

ga-3 fatty acids, and fish oil reduces inflammatory reactions. Don't overdo it, though. Too much omega-3 will actually suppress your immunity. It's all about regularly getting the right quantities. Package guidelines may help, but if you're unsure, speak to a dietician.

2 EXERCISE AND LIGHT

Exercise supports the immune system by decreasing stress hormone production. Just 30 minutes five times a week will do wonders. But don't go overboard. 45 minutes of exercise four times a week is healthy, but anything over an hour a day could make you more vulnerable to illness. Exercising outdoors increases your exposure to natural light. Light does more than produce vitamin D.

3 GET A FULL NIGHT'S SLEEP

A good night's sleep helps one cope with stress. Your body may need anywhere from 6 to 10 hours a night. Whatever your personal requirement is, get it! Sleep has been linked to balanced hormone levels, keeping weight down, clear thinking, and improved mood.

4 DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

Without it your system becomes sluggish, to say the least! Most headaches occur because, despite the number of reminders, people still aren't getting enough water.

5 STOP DRINKING COFFEE

Cut down on caffeinated drinks. Instead, drink lots of water, unsweetened fruit and herbal tea. If you drink coffee, make sure you add an additional two glasses to your water intake per cup.

6 BRUSH AND FLOSS

Dental health is essential for a strong immune system. Keep your gums healthy as oral bacteria may enter your bloodstream through small ulcers that develop in the gum tissue.

7 TAKE ANTIBIOTICS WISELY

If taking antibiotics then supplement with probiotics and/or eat lots of yoghurt with live bacteria. Look on the label for “live” or “active” yoghurt cultures.

8 FIND THE RIGHT REMEDIES

Remember multivitamins are no substitute for a healthy diet. Ensure your supplement includes vitamin A, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, vitamin D, vitamin E, folic acid, magnesium, selenium, zinc, chromium, copper and iron. A good, balanced supplement should contain 100–120% of RDA (recommended daily

allowances – see the package insert). Any dosage greater than that will either be lost in urine, or will build up in your system, which can be dangerous.

9 STOP SMOKING

Smoking damages your immune system and puts you at risk of cancer and heart disease. If you have to smoke, do it away from other people, especially children.

10 NURTURE YOURSELF

Laugh, meditate, play music, dance and make love (not all at the same time!) Make sure you take time to yourself, spend some time with friends, and indulge yourself in a massage or a hot bath. Create a space within yourself for harmony, self-love and joy (giving thanks helps). When you're happy, you're far less likely to get sick.

OTHER DISEASE FIGHTERS

- + **Carotenoids** (in yellow, orange and red fruit and vegetables) act as antioxidants that kill invaders.
- + **Vitamin B6** (in nuts, spinach and potatoes) promotes the production of white blood cells.
- + **Folates** (in pulses and lettuce) also increase white blood cell activity.
- + **Vitamin C** (in fruit and vegetables) is a powerful antioxidant and raises antibody levels.
- + **Vitamin E** (in wheat germ, whole grains and vegetable oil) stimulates immune responses.
- + **Selenium** (in tuna, eggs, wholemeal breads) is another antioxidant that attacks invading bacteria.
- + **Zinc** (in seafood and eggs) promotes healing and is a defence against the common cold.
- + **Garlic** is a natural antibiotic and antioxidant.



IMMUNE-BOOSTING SMOOTHIE RECIPES

Smoothies are a quick way of getting a boost. You can play around with ingredients. Try adding spirulina, barley grass, honey, flax seed oil, alfalfa sprouts, nuts, dried fruit, herbs, herbal teas, or spices such as turmeric.

IMMUNE BERRY BOOSTER

- + 150g low-fat live yoghurt
- + 100g berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and blackcurrants)
- + 1 tablespoon wheat germ
- + 1 tablespoon mixed seeds (sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds, linseed, sunflower seeds)

Mix all the ingredients, blend in a food processor and serve. Makes four servings.

PAW-PAW SMOOTHIE

This smoothie is packed with immune-boosting vitamins A and C, and folate. For variety, replace the paw-paw with a mango.

- + 1 paw-paw,
- + peeled, seeded and cut up
- + 240ml natural yoghurt
- + ½ banana
- + 10g fresh pineapple chunks
- + ½ teaspoon dried mint or 12 fresh leaves
- + 4 ice cubes, slightly crushed

Combine all the ingredients in a blender and process until smooth. Makes four servings.





Dr Priya Walabh is a Paediatrician /
Paediatric Gastroenterologist: MBChB (UCT)
DCH (SA) FCPAED (SA) CERTGIT (SA)

Chickenpox

in children ❖❖❖

What to do if your child gets chickenpox?

By Paediatrician Dr Priya Walabh

While chickenpox is a highly infectious disease, it's usually mild. Most children will catch it before they're 10 years old, but the virus that causes it, *Varicella zoster* (VZV), remains dormant in the body and can cause shingles in later life. The virus is spread by droplets from coughing or sneezing, or from direct contact with the rash.

SYMPTOMS

The red, itchy rash that usually starts on the tummy or back and face is the classic tell-tale sign of chickenpox. This rash goes on to spread to most of the body, including the scalp and extremities. At first it looks like insect bites, but highly contagious blisters filled with fluid soon develop on the redness. After about 12 hours, the blisters break down and crust over within one to four days. It takes the crust a week or two to fall off, and new blisters keep appearing for several days.

Before the rash appears, the child suffers mild, flu-like symptoms such as fever, sore muscles, headache, sore throat and loss of appetite.



More than 90% of children exposed to the virus (which becomes airborne with coughing or sneezing) will develop chickenpox within 21 days.



A dry cough may suggest pneumonia caused by the chicken pox's super-added viral or bacterial infection. Abdominal pain may also be present as a result of enlarged lymph nodes in the abdomen.

CONTAGIOUSNESS

Chickenpox has an incubation period of 7 to 21 days. More than 90% of children exposed to the virus (which becomes airborne with coughing or sneezing) will develop chicken pox within 21 days. If your child becomes ill with chickenpox, expect any siblings to get chickenpox too, around two weeks after the first child.

The contagious period is from about two days before the rash appears and lasts until all the blisters are crusted over. Keep your child out of school until all blisters have dried, usually about one week. In the meantime, frequent hand washing is the best defence against further contagion.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO RECOGNISE WHEN A CHILD HAS CHICKENPOX?

COMPLICATIONS

Complications related to chickenpox are rare in children, but newborns, people with weak

immune systems and adults are at high risk. The most common complications are skin infections and scarring (80% of cases), ear infections (20%) and pneumonia (10%).

Other more serious complications include encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) that can have severe consequences, e.g. seizures and developmental delay.

Pregnant women are also at risk, with stillbirth, birth defects or infection of the newborn arising. Even if you have no symptoms, see your doctor if you are pregnant and have been in contact with chickenpox patients. ▶▶



PREVENTION

Vaccination has been shown to provide approximately 90% immunity against varicella, the virus that causes chickenpox. The vaccine is a live attenuated vaccine that is indicated for active immunisation in children older than nine months. Vaccination doesn't always prevent infection in children and children can still get chickenpox, but in a milder form.

The varicella vaccine is contraindicated in

children with:

- + a low white cell count or other evidence of immunocompromise;
- + illness accompanied with severe fever; and
- + known hypersensitivity to neomycin.

The varicella vaccine can prevent chickenpox, but not necessarily shingles.

Call your doctor if you think your child has chickenpox. Your doctor can guide you

in watching for complications and in choosing medication to relieve itching. When taking your child to the doctor, let the practice know in advance that your child might have chickenpox. It's important to ensure other children in the practice are not exposed — for some of them, a chickenpox infection could be serious.



The contagious period is from about two days before the rash appears and lasts until all the blisters are crusted over.

TREATMENT

Because chickenpox is caused by a virus, antibiotics don't help. But if the blisters become infected, an antibiotic may be necessary. In most cases, the child recovers completely with just bed rest.

Relieve symptoms by:

- + Using children's parasetamol that may help reduce fever.
- + Taking cool or lukewarm baths. Try this every three to four hours for the first few days. Add finely ground oatmeal or baking soda to the bath to soothe the skin.
- + Patting the body dry (don't rub). Put the towel in the wash immediately.
- + Applying calamine lotion to itchy areas, but not on the face.
- + Drinking plenty of fluids. Children over the age of four can have ice blocks or ice lollies.
- + Providing cold, soft and bland foods. Sores in the mouth may make eating difficult. Avoid for instance chips (too salty) and orange

juice (too acidic).

- + Asking your doctor or pharmacist about pain-relieving creams to apply to sores in the genital area.
- + Giving your child acetaminophen or ibuprofen regularly to help relieve pain if your child has mouth blisters.
- + Sedating antihistamines to relieve severe itching in children older than one year.
- + Dressing in loose, smooth cotton clothing if the skin is itchy and sore.
- + Keeping fingernails clean and trimmed short to prevent deep scratching, as this increases the risk of secondary bacterial infection. Young children may need to have their hands covered with mittens or socks at night to prevent scratching during sleep.

Antiviral treatment

Specific antiviral medication called acyclovir is especially important in children at risk of severe disease and complications. Acyclovir is available in oral and intravenous forms and is most effective if started early

in the course of the illness. Side effects of acyclovir are mild headaches, dizziness, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Acyclovir as treatment for chicken pox should be given to:

- + children younger than one, especially in neonates;
- + immuno-compromised children with HIV, on steroids, with chronic lung disease, cardiac disease, renal diseases or with malignancies on chemotherapy; or
- + children with severe underlying skin disorders, e.g. eczema.

CHICKEN-POX TIPS

- + Treatment is about relieving symptoms and stopping the child from scratching the spots to prevent the risk of infection.
- + Keep your child cool to minimise the itch.
- + Keep fingernails short or put cotton socks over their hands at night to prevent scratching.



NEVER GIVE CHILDREN ASPIRIN, BECAUSE ASPIRIN HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH REYE'S SYNDROME, WHICH CAN LEAD TO LIVER FAILURE AND EVEN DEATH.

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HOUSE CALL



Meet one of our dedicated Specialists, **Dr Austin Goliath**, who is a General Surgeon at Melomed Mitchells Plain.

MBCHB (Stell) MMED (Surg) (Stell)

VITAL STATISTICS & QUESTIONS

I am ... Dr Austin Goliath.

Where were you born?
I was born in Ceres.

Who do you share your house with?
My family, wife and two lovely sons.

What would people be surprised to know about you? Nothing, I'm just an ordinary guy.

If you weren't doing what you do, you would be ... a pilot.

I can't go a day without ... prayer!

My friends and I like to ... play golf.

What music are you listening to? Jazz.

Perfect happiness is ... serenity.

Success to me means ...
satisfied patients.

Everything in moderation BUT ...
don't hold back.

I'd like to be remembered as ...
a friendly doctor.

“ **One of my life mottos is:** Treat people the way you wish to be treated. ”

LIKES

- Efficiency
- Spending time with family
- Exploring / travelling



DISLIKES

- Unfriendly people
- Not following the rules
- Beurocracy



MY BEST PLACES

Musica and any restaurant with good food and ambiance.

Oxtail stew



30 mins to 1 hour preparation time | Over 2 hours cooking time

What you will need

- | | | |
|---|-------|---|
| 1.3kg oxtail, cut into chunky pieces | ••••• | 4–5 sprigs fresh thyme
(or ½ tsp dried thyme) |
| 3 tbsp plain flour | ••••• | 2 bay leaves |
| salt and freshly ground black pepper | ••••• | 300ml red grape juice |
| 3–4 tbsp sunflower oil | ••••• | 500ml beef stock |
| 2 medium onions, sliced | ••••• | 2 tbsp tomato purée |
| 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped | ••••• | 1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley,
to serve (optional) |
| 2 medium carrots, diced | ••••• | |
| 2 celery stalks, diced | ••••• | |



Method of preparation

1. Preheat the oven to 150°C.
2. Wash the oxtail pieces and pat dry with kitchen paper. Trim off as much excess fat as possible. Put the flour in a freezer bag and season well with salt and pepper. Put half the oxtail pieces into the seasoned flour, toss well to coat, then put aside on a plate. Repeat with the remaining oxtail pieces.
3. Heat two tablespoons of the oil in a large non-stick frying pan. Brown the oxtail over a medium heat for about 10 minutes. You may need to add extra oil if the pan looks dry at any point during the browning step. Put the browned oxtail into a flameproof casserole dish. (You may need to do this in batches.)
4. Return the frying pan to a low heat and add the onions, garlic, carrots and celery. Add a little extra oil if necessary. Cook gently for 10 minutes, or until softened and lightly browned, stirring occasionally.
5. Tip the vegetables on top of the beef and add the thyme and bay leaves. Stir in the red grape juice, beef stock and tomato purée. Season with salt and pepper, put the casserole on the heat and bring to a gentle simmer. Cover the casserole dish with a lid and cook in the centre of the oven for 3 hours. Stir after 1½ hours, turning the oxtail in the sauce.
6. After 3 hours, the meat should be falling off the bones and the sauce should be thick. Remove the casserole dish from the oven and transfer the oxtail pieces to a plate, set aside and keep warm.
7. Skim any fat that has pooled on the surface of the sauce.
8. Sprinkle with the chopped parsley (if using) and serve with mashed potato or rice and fresh vegetables or salad.

Sleep?



You've long made peace with the idea that you'll lose out on quite a bit of sleep once your baby's born, but you probably weren't expecting the sleeplessness that comes with pregnancy ...

While your bladder is under pressure from the developing baby, holding it in just doesn't happen like before. What's more, your kidneys are working harder as they filter not only your blood, but the baby's too, which means, you guessed it, extra urine production. So what is a girl to do? **Here are some tips:**

- + Quit caffeine. That means not only coffee but also cola and chocolate.
- + Get your quota of exercise early in the day. Yoga, swimming and walking are great, but remember exercise is energising, so you don't want to do it too close to bedtime.
- + Don't drink too close to bed time. You still need six to eight glasses a day (water is more essential now than ever to prevent constipation).
- + Relax. Try visualisation techniques or yoga relaxation at bed time.
- + Have a light snack, preferably something that includes protein and a complex carb, such as a slice of wholewheat toast with cottage cheese. This will prevent you waking up hungry in the middle of the night.
- + Build a nest. Pillows are your friend. Arrange them any way that will make you comfortable.
- + Make sure the temperature is right for you. This could mean opening the window a bit wider or turning on the fan. Just do it before you get into bed.
- + Don't stress about it. If you don't fall asleep right away, read a little, whatever will take your attention away from the fact that you're not sleeping (yet).

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Matters of the Heart!

We understand cholesterol ratings, we recognise the Heart Foundation's emblem, but do we really understand the unexpected matters of the heart?

By Health Bytes Publishers



Although hubby smokes a few ciggies a day, he is fit, lean and regularly goes to the gym; his cholesterol count is 3.3, his sugar is fine – “fit as a fiddle”, to quote the doctor! Christmas and New Year are long gone. Life is hardly at its most stressful. But one night our lives change forever.

He gasps for air... rubbing his chest. His first comment: “I ate too fast, must be indigestion.” Ten minutes later he is battling to breathe... he is hot, cold, hot again. When he sinks to his knees outside on the patio, I realise this is serious. I bundle him into the car and speed to the emergency rooms. After stabilisation, they ask all the obvious questions, and agree it is a digestive problem.

Fortunately, a cardiologist vis-

iting another emergency patient ambles over to our cubicle. The first two ECG reports have shown nothing wrong, as have the blood tests. However, the third ECG causes the experienced cardiologist to utter a little murmur of concern. He suggests that hubby be placed in the heart unit intensive care for 12 hours’ observation. WOW... Now I really take note.

By the next morning, it is clear – hubby had suffered a heart attack! ECG reports and further blood tests are positive. (A heart attack often does not show up in blood tests for a few hours... and the ECG may not record a difference either. Remember this – it may save your loved one’s life!) Early the next morning he goes for an angiogram (the only effective method to determine

what is going on inside his heart).

The result: my lean and fit husband is living on borrowed time – his diagnosis is commonly referred to as the widow maker. A withering of the artery that feeds the left ventricle has stopped almost all blood flow to this ventricle. His heart is dying. I am in shock. The team is preparing hubby for a quadruple bypass. I surrender myself into the hands of the medical profession and the Man above. Six hours later he is wheeled into recovery. Every day we see progress and know we are lucky. We are grateful that he had low cholesterol at the time of the attack, grateful for the cardiologist on duty, grateful for all the special people at the hospital.



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