Chuckle n' Chat

Health Benefits of Hobbies

Hiccup, brain freeze, sneezing... Why do we have these bodily reflexes?

How Long Do Childhood Vaccines Really Last?

Varicose veins: Two vitamin deficiencies that could affect blood clotting

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Contents

Body Language	4
Midgets	11
Health Watch	18
Did You Know?	20
Chuckles	29

editor's comment

Dear Readers

When it seemed that the world was just barely beginning to recover from the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine began and new economic challenges arose. Russia's actions in Ukraine have disrupted people's lives around the world with higher gas, electricity prices and causing even everyday basics such as flour, sugar or oil to become much more expensive. Supply restrictions have caused prices to rise in less than a year in some countries. Inflation is affecting all countries around the world and reducing the purchasing power of households, and at the moment there doesn't appear to be an end in sight.

There is a race against time to find alternative energy sources to Russian gas exports.

Inflation will permanently affect all wallets and we must find practical solutions to deal with a loss of purchasing power and product shortages.

Here are some tips to maintain your standard of living in these trying times.

Put your computer on standby mode, unplug your devices and put your internet off when not in use.

Be careful to control your consumption of heating water to mitigate the increase in your electricity costs. Watch for leaks and consider replacing your shower head with a more efficient model that can reduce consumption. Use cold water as often as possible!

Cover pots when you boil water.

Fueled by rising commodity prices, fuel prices have also skyrocketed in recent months. Limiting your trips is an important lever for saving money. Also, consider carpooling! (sharing a car journey so that more than one person travels instead of one person travelling in the same direction).

If you really can't live without your car, there are several techniques to reduce your fuel consumption: go to the pump early in the morning and fill up when the tank is half full to reduce costs, drive smoothly and at a moderate speed, and maintain high tire pressure.

Rising prices force us to take a look at how we spend our money. Prioritise the purchases you have planned, between those that are urgent and necessary, those that you can postpone and those that you can simply forego for the time being.

For the purchases that you intend to make in any case, you can save by buying the same product but made by a less expensive brand.

Review all your contracts (bank, telephone etc.): switch to a less expensive service provider or renegotiate certain contracts to reduce your costs.

The rise in prices is also an opportunity to get back to the basics and good old-fashioned homemade food. Cooking with fresh produce takes more time but is often much cheaper than consuming ready made meals. Plus, it's better for your health!

We at MASCA would like to wish all our Members, Member Firms and Service Providers, a happy Christmas holiday season and our sincere thank you for your loyalty and support throughout the year 2022.

Until next time Bye, Bye.

Maria

BODY LANGUAGE

Hiccup, brain freeze, sneezing... Why do we have these bodily reflexes?

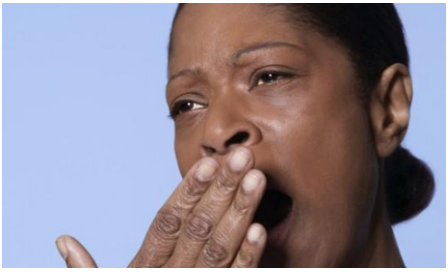
Why do we have these reflexes?
Whether they are involuntary, automatic, or unconscious, reflexes allow us to protect ourselves from dangers. But what are our most common reflexes?

Why do we get brain freeze?
Many of us have suffered this terrible headache after eating very cold ice cream. It feels like our brain has frozen for a little while.

When our sinuses cool too quickly
In reality, this pain is caused by the blood capillaries in the sinuses cooling too quickly. The brain immediately activates pain neurotransmitters and we suffer while the sinuses return to their normal temperature.

Why do we feel tingling in the legs?
When we adopt a posture that hinders the proper circulation of blood, the brain reacts by sending a nerve signal that is numbness.

Our brain gets confused
Once we've changed position and circulation is restored, the brain receives contradictory information that we know as 'tingling.'



Why do we yawn?
Yawning is one of the most common behaviours of living things. It has been the subject of many studies, yet it remains shrouded in mystery.

Yawning sends oxygen to the brain
Some associate it with the sleep cycle, others consider it a sign of boredom. Among the researchers who have studied the subject, some think that it

is a big puff of oxygen sent to the brain to stimulate it.

Why do we get teary-eyed without crying?
Sometimes tears flow without us being sad. They are like 'automatic tears.' For our eyes' protection caused by irritation, fatigue, or bright lights, they are the result of an instinctive discharge of the lacrimal glands which release their overflow.

Why do we get the shivers?
In principle, shivers are associated with hypothermia. Some people also shiver with emotion, such as fear or pleasure.

Contraction of the muscles
In reality, all these feelings and experiences have the same effect on our body: the muscles contract very quickly (about ten contractions per second) to warm up the body.

Why do we get goosebumps?
This reflex is linked to feeling chilly. By contracting, the muscles at the base of the hairs cause goosebumps. The function of this reflex is to lift the hairs and thus forming a layer of insulation between the body and the outside.

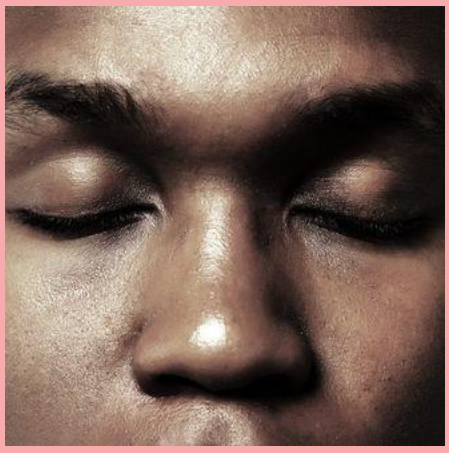
Goosebumps or shivers from emotion
Of course, some of us also get goosebumps from sudden emotions. It works very similarly to the reflex of the shivers.

Why do we have muscle spasms?
Muscle spasms are involuntary and uncontrollable muscle contractions. Sometimes it happens right when we are falling asleep.

Falling into deep sleep too fast
According to researchers, this is a reflex due to the fact of having fallen into REM (Rapid Eye Movement)

sleep without going through the preliminary stages.

What's the function of our eyes blinking?
The eye blinks when it dries up. By lowering, the eyelid moistens the eyeball, which avoids an unpleasant sensation of dryness for us. Blinking also serves to clean the dust that settles on the membrane.
At times, we blink nearly once per second!



On average, the eye blinks from 7.5 times to 50 times per minute, depending on the activity we are doing.

Why do we have hiccups?
Hiccups are caused by the irritation of the diaphragm. This, in turn, is caused by a combination of digestive, respiratory, and psychological factors.

Digestive, respiratory and psychological causes
An involuntary reflex, a hiccup signals a transient problem to expel air. It can often happen after a good meal when the stomach is full.

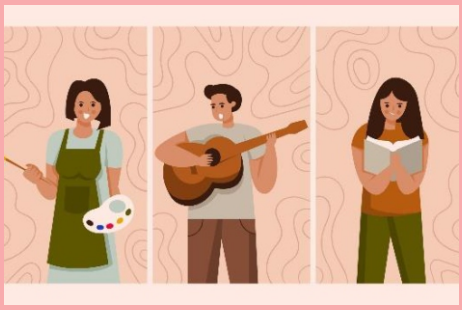
What's the use of sneezing?
The sneeze has the obvious objective of clearing any impurities from the nose. However, some people sneeze when they see a bright light. This is called the 'photic-sneeze reflex.'

Reaction to bright light
The photic-sneeze reflex (PSR) is caused by a benign congenital anomaly that affects certain nerve signals. While researchers don't know all the details of the mechanism, they agree that it's nothing serious, just a little annoying for those who often have to deal with it.

If you have a hobby, you probably love doing it. Hobbies give you a chance to get involved in activities that you enjoy and help you take a load off your mind! Very often, you'll find yourself looking forward to indulging in your hobby after a stressful day or week at work.
Your hobby could be anything, but just having something that you enthusiastically wait to do fills you with a sense of happiness. Even better, taking time to indulge in what you love doing boosts your physical and mental health.

That said, being a part of a modern society that praises professional achievements could leave little time to pursue hobbies that appeal to you.

This is a major reason why many people find it tough to consistently dedicate time to doing things that they like.

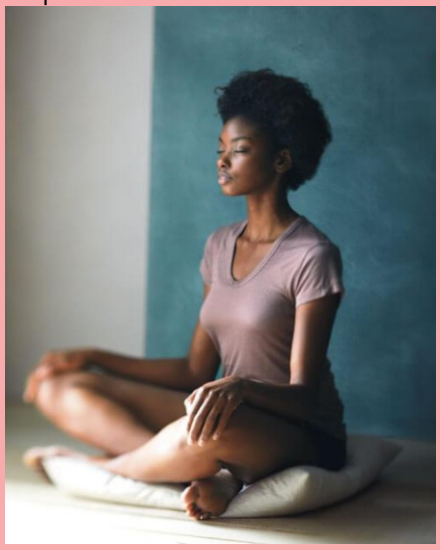


What Is a Hobby?
A hobby is any activity that you frequently do for pleasure during your leisure time. This could include creative, athletic, and intellectual activities.

People take up different types of hobbies that interest them, such as dancing, singing, skating, or gardening. Others like quieter activities such as meditation or spending some time closer to nature by taking long walks.

Health Benefits of Hobbies
Research shows that when you take time to do activities that make you happy, it helps improve mental health. Giving quality time to activities that you enjoy also helps your performance in your professional life. It improves your creative problem-solving abilities and helps you build

better relationships with your co-workers and makes you more empathetic.



Improves Overall Well Being

A study found that participating in activities that bring out your creative side leads to an increased sense of well-being that is good for you in the long term. The people who were involved in the study felt a sense of positivity and upliftment after a few days of creative activity.

Studies have also shown that individuals that regularly take time off for their hobbies are less likely to feel low or depressed. In fact, such activities can make you happier and more relaxed.

Reduces Stress

Keeping yourself engaged during your leisure time lowers your stress levels. Researchers have found that adults who took out time to practice art found the time they spent to be relaxing, enjoyable, and helpful. They also shared that the session led to an increased desire to continue improving their skills.

More importantly, the cortisol levels of the participants who took part in this study were measured before and after these sessions. The study found that there was a noticeable decrease in cortisol levels after the sessions. Cortisol is the human stress hormone, and your body's stress response is linked to a spike in cortisol levels.

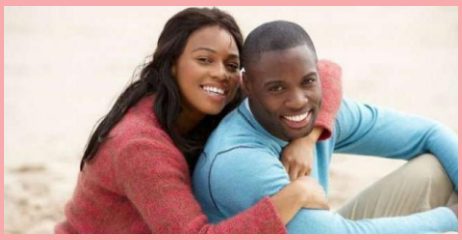
Promotes Mental Health

Having a hobby leads to improved mental health. If your hobby involves physical activity, it'll lead to reduced stress and a lower blood pressure and heart rate. A study that measured both positive and negative psychological stress found that those who took time frequently to do leisure activities that they enjoyed had lower blood pressure, waist circumference, and BMI (Body Mass Index).

Taking your physical activity outdoors or, better still, closer to nature has many benefits such as improved mood and better focus. You can achieve this by spending just 10 minutes outdoors.

Another study found that those who took part in physical activities went through fewer days of poor mental health compared to those who did not exercise.

Meanwhile, challenging your brain by taking up intellectually rewarding activities not only helps improve your brain activity but also increases your confidence. Learning new skills such as wood crafting or quilting also helps you contribute to people's lives by sharing your expertise with others.



Improves Relationships

Finding like-minded people who enjoy doing the same activities as you could have added benefits. Research shows that doing activities in groups such as team sports or volunteering for a cause that you care about helps enhance your communication skills and build healthy relationships with others.

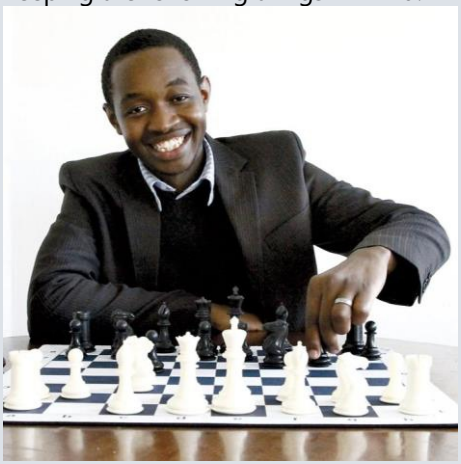
Many people go through a sense of loneliness at different phases in their lives. While this feeling is not too problematic, having it for a prolonged duration is unhealthy and could lead to poorer physical, mental, and cognitive health. It's also linked to other medical conditions such as obesity, blood pressure, and high cholesterol. A study found that a lack of social activity for a long duration is almost as bad as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

One of the main reasons why hobbies are important is that they can provide the benefits of doing group activities, especially those that you enjoy doing. This could help overcome any sense of loneliness and also reduces your chances of mortality by as much as 50%.

How to Make Time for Hobbies

A common reason given by many for the inability to take up hobbies is a lack of time. Most people are inclined to prioritise their work over hobbies

whenever there's a choice between the two. It's important to make time for activities that you love, though, by keeping the following things in mind:



- Instead of trying to take out time every day to do an activity that you like, it's better to take a long-term approach and find gaps in your schedule that you can fill. Even if you're unable to do it every day, allocate a few hours every week or every month for such activities.

- There's increasing research that supports taking multiple small breaks during your work to improve productivity. You can indulge in activities that you enjoy, such as reading, tending to your garden, or listening to your favourite podcast during these breaks.

- Many times, when you work, the hours tick along without you noticing, or you spend a lot of time on social media or television. Understand what's taking up most of your time and whether you can utilise some of it to do things that you truly enjoy doing.

MIDGETS

How Long Do Childhood Vaccines Really Last?

Childhood vaccines are a routine part of paediatrician visits as a child. But, with vaccines in the news so much lately from polio, monkeypox, and Covid-19, you probably have some questions. A big one: How long do childhood vaccines last, and do you still have protection?

It's important to point out that every person's response to childhood vaccines and any vaccine is different. But, in general, it's thought that your childhood vaccinations will last for a certain period of time. Here's what you need to know.

So, how long do childhood vaccinations last?

It depends. Each childhood vaccination is unique and has a certain duration of protection. Again, there is some variability here but, in general, infectious disease experts and paediatricians say you can expect these timelines for protection from your childhood vaccines:

- **Hepatitis A**: 20 years
- **Tetanus:** 10 years
- **Hepatitis B**: more than 30 years
- **Whooping cough (pertussis):** 5 years
- **Rotavirus**: 2 to 3 years (Stomach and intestine infections)
- **Chickenpox (varicella):** 10 to 20 years
- **Haemophilus influenzae (Hib):** unknown
- **HPV:** 10 years
- **Pneumococcal**: 5 to 10 years
- **Meningitis:** 5 years
- **Polio**: unknown
- **Flu:** 6 months
- **Diphtheria**: 10 years
- **Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)**: potentially lifelong

In the case of vaccines that don't last a lifetime, that typically won't impact your overall health. Meaning, you don't need to rush to get a booster or anything. Instead, the vaccines and vaccine schedule is designed in a way to help protect you from certain viruses and bacteria when you need it most.

It may not be necessary for certain infections to have protection throughout your life because the risk period may have passed. A good example: Rotavirus is considered the most risky for children under 3, per The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), so having immunity wane by the time you're two or three shouldn't be a problem.
If you follow the recommendations, then you should be reasonably covered.

The Centre for Disease Control really are targeting when you're at greatest risk for acquiring certain infections.

But, certain vaccines like the flu and tetanus shots "require vaccination throughout adulthood.

When do you receive your childhood vaccinations?
There's a recommended timeline for receiving your childhood vaccines, and The Centers for Disease Control breaks it down as follows:

- **Hepatitis A**: 12 to 15 months
- **Hepatitis B**: birth, 1 to 3 months, or 6 to 15 months
- **Rotavirus**: 2 months, or 4 months
- **Haemophilus influenzae** (**Hib)**: 2 months, 4 months, or 12 to 15 months
- **Pneumococcal**: 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, or 12 to 15 months
- **Polio**: 2 months, 4 months, 6 to 18 months, or 4 to 6 years
- **Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (DTaP)**: 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 15 to 18 months, or and 4 to 6 years
- **Chickenpox**: 12 to 15 months, or 4 to 6 years

- **Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)**: 12 to 15 months, 4 to 6 years
- **HPV (Human Papillomavirus)**: 2 to 3 shots, starting at 9 years
- **Meningococcal**: 11 to 12 years, 16 years
- **Flu**: 6 months, then annual

Keep in mind, that you may need to get some of these vaccines again when you're older. Some high-risk jobs require increased amounts of vaccination compared to other people, noting that people in the military may be required to get more vaccines that those who aren't in such a service.

What should you do if you're unsure of having got your childhood vaccine

There are a few steps you can take if you're not sure if you had all of your childhood vaccines.

If you're an otherwise healthy adult, you may not need these vaccines anymore. But, if you really want or need to know, you can get blood tests for antibodies to see if you're protected. If you've got antibodies, you're protected.

If you plan to travel and you're unsure of your vaccination status, it's fine to get vaccinated again. Whenever there's a question about whether you had the vaccines or not and you're going to a part of the world where there is polio or another disease, you could go ahead and get a vaccine vial from a chemist so your doctor can administer it.

PHARMACY IN ACTION

Vitamin D3 and B12 deficiency is a silent epidemic; linked to your immune system, brain and hormonal health

Vitamins and minerals are essential for our body and overall wellness and there is absolutely no doubt about it. We often pay little attention to our body. We are reminded of the 'silent epidemic' that endangers our body in several ways, which is Vitamin D3 and B12 deficiency.

We invest time in identifying the root cause behind every symptom and disease. There is one root cause that seems to be a commonality in almost every other person that the pharmacist consults. It is like a silent epidemic plaguing everyone, maybe you too. It's deficiency of Vitamin D3 & B12.

According to pharamcists, many people tend to take these deficiencies lightly, because it has become so common. A cumulative build-up of this deficiency can lead to innumerable problems.

Role of Vitamin D3

There are two main forms of vitamin D, 'the sunshine vitamin' - vitamin D2 and D3. While the former is naturally found in some

plants, the latter is naturally found in animals and is produced by the skin when it's exposed to sunlight. Every cell in our body, from the brain to bones, has vitamin D3 receptors on its surface. These vitamins regulate the functions of several genes in our body. Hence its deficiency can lead to a range of symptoms and conditions. Sometimes, upping the levels of these two vitamins is all you need to feel better.

As per the lifestyle coach, the role of vitamin D3 goes beyond bones. The pharmacist lists down some of the roles and benefits of the vitamin D3:

1. WBC (White Blood Cells) production
2. Training a smart immunity (T-cells)
3. Production of hormones including thyroid and sex hormones
4. Brain health and memory
5. Absorption of calcium, phosphorous (bone health)
6. Insulin resistance and more

Vitamin D3 is not just a vitamin. It acts like a hormone

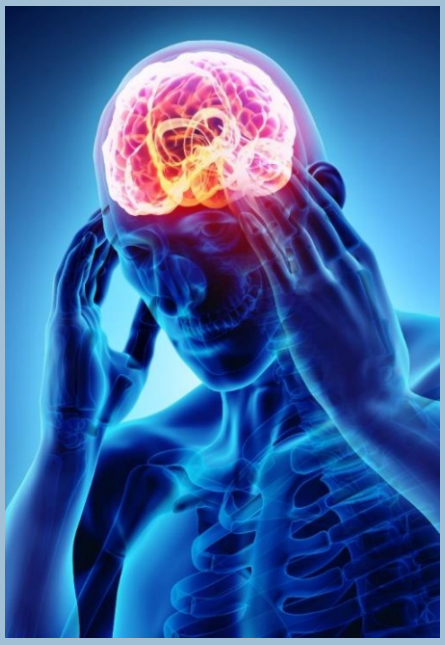
Many experts believe the same. Since it is mostly produced in the skin in response to sunlight and is also absorbed from certain vitamin D-rich foods, it is said to be a hormone too.

The body synthesises it (vitamin D3) after sun exposure, and it's activated by the liver and kidneys. That activated form again acts like a hormone to regulate calcium metabolism.

Role of Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 is also an important nutrient that our body needs. Some of the functions of this vitamin include:

1. Energy production
2. Carbohydrate metabolism
3. Gut health
4. RBC (Red Blood Cell) production
5. Nerve health (including optic nerves)
6. Brain health and memory
7. Mood regulation and more



Warning signs of Vitamin D3 and B12 deficiency

A drop in vitamin D3 and B12 levels can give rise to several health issues.

From a body ache, brain fog, fatigue, to hormonal imbalance, brittle nails and memory loss, deficiency of both these vitamins can cause serious health concerns. There is enough medical science that links vitamin D3 and B12 to almost everything right from your immune system to hormonal and brain health.

Whether you have PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome), Cancer, Alzheimer's, weak bones, low energy levels, any autoimmune condition, or are on heavy treatment, you need adequate levels of these two vitamins.

The factors that are to blame

Several factors can cause vitamin D3 and B12 levels to fall in the body.

Long term use of antacids and other medications, heavy treatments like chemotherapy, poor gut health, chronic stress, low stomach acids, crazy diets and going completely fat-free can lead to such deficiencies. Having Crohn or kidney disease may also inhibit vitamin D3 and B12 absorption.

Atrophic gastritis, which is the thinning of the stomach lining, pernicious anemia, can make it

hard for your body to absorb vitamin B12 too.

Best food sources of vitamin D3 and B12

Some of the natural sources of D3 include sunlight, whole eggs, mushrooms and fatty fish.
As far as vitamin B12 is concerned, fermented foods, organ meat, brewer's yeast, ethically sourced dairy are good natural sources of the vitamin.

All you need to know about supplementation

A person experiencing very low levels of vitamin D3 and B12 can resort to supplements prescribed by your doctor.

'Vitamin toxicity', means to overdose on the vitamins. One should aim to keep their levels within range but close to the upper range.

Important points to know

Vitamins are essential nutrients which the body needs to complete its functions. The major source of vitamins is food; however, depending on the type of food one consumes many people often miss out on getting essential vitamins which are required for their body.

When opting for a supplement instead of food, one should be careful about the doses. Though an overdose does not pose a greater risk, it does no good to the body either.

HEALTH WATCH

Under-active thyroid: Early warning signs especially noticeable in the morning

An underactive thyroid usually does not present itself in visual signs which is why it is often described as an "invisible illness". However, there are some signs which should not be ignored as the disease could lead to further dangerous health consequences. One way to identify an underactive thyroid is through a sign which usually strikes in the morning. That is feeling extremely tired. Timely identifying the warning signs and seeking treatment can help in improving your health and preventing any long term consequences.

What is an underactive thyroid?

The thyroid gland is a small gland in the neck that is located in front of the windpipe. It releases hormones that regulate several key functions of the body, such as metabolism. Now in case of an underactive thyroid, which is also called hypothyroidism, there is a deficiency of the thyroid hormone. This is usually caused by autoimmune Hashimoto's thyroiditis, a disease in which the immune system itself attacks the thyroid gland. If left untreated, hypothyroidism can disturb how the nerves carry information to and from the brain, spinal cord and body.

Fatigue as a sign of hypothyroidism

Fatigue is one of the key symptoms of hypothyroidism. It is often described as bone-numbing fatigue, caused due to improper regulation of your thyroid levels. Since fatigue is also a sign of other

serious or temporary health problems, it is best to see your doctor and get tested, otherwise you may neglect it and not become aware of having hypothyroidism. This fatigue can develop slowly or come on suddenly. According to health experts, it usually strikes in the morning and the person experiencing it is barely able to lift their head off their pillow in the morning. This is clearly a problematic sign, as if you are healthy and well-rested, you should be feeling refreshed in the morning.

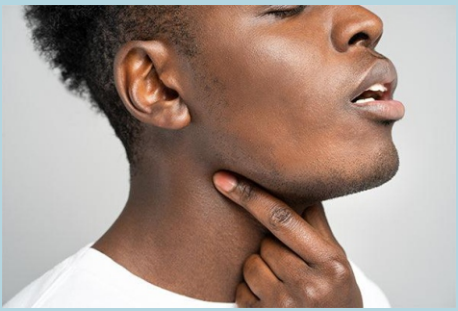
Other symptoms of hypothyroidism

Along with fatigue and tiredness, other common symptoms of hypothyroidism include:
-Constipation
-Slow movements and thoughts
-Shivering
-Weight gain
-Depression
-decreased appetite

Long-term consequences of hypothyroidism

Hypothyroidism can also lead to other serious impacts on health such as a slow heart rate, hoarse voice, hearing loss, thinned or partly missing eyebrows and a puffy-looking face.

Hypothyroidism, if not treated over time, can increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases and hypercholesterolemia, which means high blood cholesterol levels.



What can I do to prevent hypothyroidism?

The best way to prevent this is to get tested, especially if you notice any of the above mentioned signs. A thyroid function test looks at levels of thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) and thyroxine (T4) in the blood. Consult your doctor for treatment in case the results are too low or too high than the normal range.

DID YOU KNOW?

Varicose veins: Two vitamin deficiencies that could affect blood clotting

Varicose veins or varicosities affect the veins in the leg, leading to twisted, enlarged veins. They occur due to the improper functioning of the veins and are characterised by swollen, bluish-purple or red veins close to the skin's surface. This vascular disorder is most prevalent in women and is said to affect about 50% of the women population and 25% of all adults. While it can cause slight discomfort and can be unappealing to look at, varicose veins do not cause any serious life-threatening risks, but can signal other concerning circulatory issues. That said, there are a lot of things that can affect the healthy functioning of the veins including deficiency of certain vitamins. Experts have highlighted two vitamin deficiencies that could affect the blood clotting mechanism and induce vascular problems.

Vitamin K is essential

Vitamin K is an essential nutrient that is necessary for blood clotting, healing wounds and for bone health. It stops bleeding after an injury, cuts or scrapes. Additionally,

this special vitamin can also help strengthen blood vessel walls, which further prevents them from bulging and breaking.

Lack of vitamin K2 makes bones long and thin so increasing height through generations is due to poor nutrition and not improving nutrition.

Low levels of vitamin K2 result in calcification of elastin, the cause of double chins, piles and varicose veins.

Most common symptoms of vitamin K deficiency include excessive bleeding. However, there are other signs to watch out for.

These include:

1. **Frequent and easy bruising**
2. **Small blood clots under the nails**
3. **Bleeding in the mucous membranes that line areas in the body**
4. **Dark black stool, with blood sometimes**

Vitamin D deficiency can also cause varicose veins

According to the researchers when vitamin D levels are low, your veins will struggle to do their job correctly, and vein issues may arise.

Vitamin D helps to keep your arteries and blood vessels loose enough and relaxed enough to support proper blood flow.

Vitamin D usually plays a significant role in regulating the absorption of calcium and phosphorus in the body. It improves immune functions, battles infections and illnesses and helps facilitate the development of bones and teeth.

However, insufficient or lack of vitamin D has also been associated with unhealthy functioning of the blood vessels.

Beware of vitamin D deficiency symptoms

Vitamin D deficiency can cause your bones to become thin, brittle or misshapen. It is associated with fatigue, weakness, mood changes and muscle cramps and aches. A lack of vitamin D can lead to bone deformities such as rickets in children and bone pain caused by a condition called osteomalacia (softening of the bones) in adults.

Best sources of vitamin K and D

Foods such as green leafy vegetables such as spinach, kale, lettuce, and broccoli, vegetable oils, fruits like blueberries and figs, eggs, cheese, meat including liver, chickpeas, and soya beans are great sources of vitamin K.

As far as vitamin D is concerned, the best source is sunlight. Foods like oily fish such as salmon, sardines, herring and mackerel, red meat, liver, egg yolk and fortified foods are good food sources of vitamin D.

One can resort to dietary supplements if they think they're not receiving enough from natural products. However, talking to your doctor is recommended at all times.

What Your Gut Bacteria Say About You

For years, we thought of bacteria as organisms to avoid. It turns out our bodies are already loaded with trillions of bacteria. They help digest food and play an important role in our well-being.

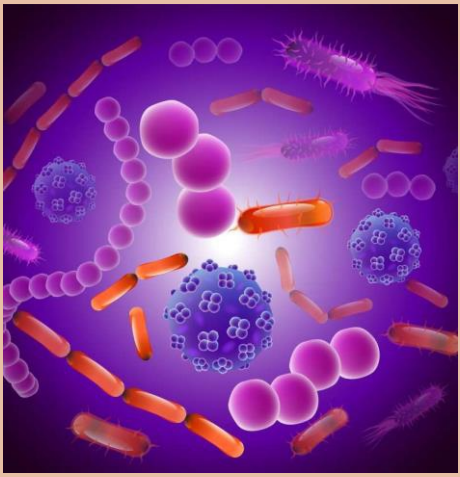
Research suggests our gut bacteria are tied to our probability of things like diabetes, obesity, depression, and colon cancer.

What Are Gut Bacteria?

Living inside of our gut are 300 to 500 different kinds of bacteria containing nearly 2 million genes. Paired with other tiny organisms like viruses and fungi, they make what's known as the microbiota, or the microbiome.

Like a fingerprint, each person's microbiota is unique: The mix of bacteria in your body is different from everyone else's mix. It's determined partly by your mother's microbiota the environment that you're exposed to at birth and partly from your diet and lifestyle.

The bacteria live throughout your body, but the ones in your gut may have the biggest impact on your well-being. They line your entire digestive system. Most live in your intestines and colon. They affect everything from your metabolism to your mood to your immune system.



Gut Bacteria and Disease

Research suggests the gut bacteria in healthy people are different from those with certain diseases. People who are sick may have too little or too much of a certain type. Or they may lack a wide variety of bacteria. It's thought some kinds may protect against ailments, while others may raise the risk. Scientists have begun to draw links between the following illnesses and the bacteria in our gut:

Obesity, type 2 diabetes, kidney disease, and heart disease: Our gut bacteria affects our body's metabolism. They determine things like how many calories you get from food and what kinds of nutrients you draw from it. Too much gut bacteria can make you turn fiber into fatty acids. This may cause fat deposits in your liver, which can lead to something called "metabolic syndrome", a condition that often leads to type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.

Inflammatory bowel diseases, including Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis: People with these conditions are believed to have lower levels of certain anti-inflammatory gut bacteria. The exact connection is still unclear. But it's thought that some bacteria may make our body attack our intestines and set the stage for these diseases.

Studies show that people with it have a different gut microbiota, including higher levels of disease-causing bacteria, than healthy people.

Anxiety, depression, and autism: The gut is packed with nerve endings that communicate with the brain. Your doctor may call this connection the

"gut-brain axis." Studies have suggested a link between gut bacteria and disorders of the central nervous system, like anxiety, depression, and autism spectrum disorder.

Arthritis: It's thought that people with rheumatoid arthritis may have greater amounts of a bacteria linked to inflammation than people without it.

What Can You Do and How can you get healthy gut bacteria?

Start by eating a nutritious diet, high in fiber-rich foods, like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. A "western" diet that's high in fat and sugar and low in fiber can kill certain types of gut bacteria, making your microbiota less diverse.

Limit use of antibiotics, which can wipe out healthy bacteria along with problematic bacteria, to only when necessary as determined by your doctor.

Exercise can also encourage the growth of a variety of gut bacteria. Having a more varied gut microbiota may promote better health and, in turn, reduce your risk of disease. You can't just take probiotics to stave off diabetes or treat arthritis. Experts say that more research needs to be done to pinpoint the exact types of bacteria that lead to certain ailments. You may soon be able to take a medication or supplement made of a certain strain of gut bacteria to reduce your risk of, or even cure certain diseases.

Parkinson's disease breakthrough: Doing this simple activity could help to halt your symptoms

Parkinson's disease is a neurological movement disorder triggered by a loss of dopamine. Dopamine's role is to send messages to the part of your brain that controls movement and coordination. Symptoms start slowly at first, but as the disease progresses, it can greatly impact your routine activities. The disease usually develops most commonly around age 60 or older.

Even though the risk increases with time, a new study has identified an activity that could help halt symptoms and modify the associated risks.

What you need to do

According to the new study exercise could help alleviate the symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

In the study, researchers found that during endurance or aerobic exercises, a hormone released in the blood reduces levels of a protein linked to Parkinson's disease and is able to halt movement problems in animals.

About the research

The researchers looked at mice engineered to have Parkinson's disease symptoms and the role of irisin. (A hormone that can do amazing things for your metabolism and your health) The team proved that the hormone released when exercising was able to prevent the accumulation of alpha synuclein clumps and its associated brain cell death.

The researchers injected the mice with a viral vector, which increased blood levels of irisin and which could cross the blood-brain barrier into the mice. After six months, the

researchers saw that mice who received irisin had no muscle movement deficits.

Additional studies have also shown that the exercise hormone can lower levels of Parkinson's disease-related alpha synuclein by 50 to 80%.

Which exercise should you pick?

All kinds of exercises are healthy for your body, so you should choose the ones based on your interests and capacity. With time, you can work on your stamina and training to try other exercises of interest. The main goal is to do any exercises or activities that increase your breathing and heart rate in a healthy way.

Some popular and easy exercises to include in your daily life are cycling, doing pilates, swimming, jumping rope, or simply walking and jogging.

Symptoms of Parkinson's disease

One of the early signs of Parkinson's disease are tremors. These usually begin in the limbs, hands or fingers. Parkinson's disease may also slow your movement, whether in walking or performing your everyday simple tasks. Muscle stiffness can happen in any part of the body and can also be painful.

You may experience decreased ability to perform unconscious movements like blinking, smiling or swinging your arms when walking. Your posture may become stooped and you may also experience problems in balancing

your body. There can be changes in your speech as well.

Other modes of prevention

Apart from regularly exercising, some research has also shown that people who consume caffeine found in coffee, tea and cola get Parkinson's disease less often, compared to those who don't drink it. Green tea is also related to a reduced risk of developing Parkinson's disease. More research and evidence is needed to suggest that drinking caffeinated beverages can protect one against Parkinson's disease.

YOUR POSTURE WHILE TAKING MEDICINE DECIDES HOW IT WORKS ON THE BODY, SAYS STUDY

Did you know that your body posture can actually decide how better the medicine will work? A recent study by researchers has found that the position of the body has a huge influence on how fast the medicine will be absorbed by the body.

What does the study say about body posture?

The study says that if you are standing upright while taking medication, the pill lands to the end region of the stomach. Even when you take the medicine while lying down and leaning to the right, the pill also goes directly to the stomach and due to this, it dissolves very quickly.
However, the researchers have said that if you lie down and lean to the left, it does not dissolve quickly and cannot be absorbed by the body.

What did the study find?

The study found that taking pills while lying down and leaning to the right had a dissolution rate of 2.3 times faster than an upright posture.
Explaining the duration a pill takes to dissolve, the researchers have said that if a pill takes 10 minutes to dissolve when taken in the right side, it will take 23 minutes to dissolve while standing upright and it will take 100 minutes to dissolve when taken lying on the left side.

Apart from taking factors like meals into consideration, body posture should be taken into account

It was very surprising that posture had such an immense effect on the dissolution rate of a pill, never did one think about whether one was doing it right or wrong but now one will definitely think about it every time one takes a pill.
The model developed appears to be one of the first to be able to conduct realistic simulation of the human stomach which mimics what is happening inside a stomach as it digests food, or in this case, medicine.

How do pills work?

Majority of the pills work only after they are dissolved properly. Only after the contents of the pills are released by the stomach to the intestine is a pill's effect seen in the body. So, the closer a pill lands to the lower part of the stomach, the antrum, the faster it starts to dissolve and empty its contents through the pylorus into the duodenum, the first part of the small intestine. If you're aiming a pill for this part of the stomach, posture is critical to both gravity and the natural asymmetry of the stomach.

This is great news for those who need medicines to work faster

This is a critical health care aspect for elderly people especially. Giving them medicines based on postures can save time as the medicine can work on them quickly.
For elderly, sedentary or bedridden people, whether they're turning to the left or to the right can have a huge impact. Posture itself has such a huge impact, it's equivalent to somebody's stomach having a very significant dysfunction as far as pill dissolution is concerned.
A wrong posture can delay the impact of the medicine by an hour!

The takeaways

From what is revealed in this study, it is very important to watch the way the medicine is consumed apart from which medicine is being consumed.
Many doctors suggest taking medicines with lukewarm water so that it works quickly on the body. One should be careful about that too.
Now that the mechanism of how pills work has been known it won't be difficult to figure out the right way to take it.
Always remember, if it works faster it will heal you faster.

ELECTRICITY BILL

I went to ZESA to settle my electricity bill and I was told it was ZWL$15 000,00.
I gave the lady ZWL$100 and asked for a receipt. The following day I again paid ZWL$100 and asked for a receipt. I did this for 10 consecutive days until the Manager called me aside and in anger asked "Do you know how irritating it is for us to give you receipts of just ZWL$100 daily? Why not just give us the whole of your balance?"

I laughed and replied, "That is exactly how it feels when you give me power for a few hours every day and call it load shedding."

I rest my case.

MASHED POTATOES OR WEDGES?

I go to KFC to get the children something to eat. They wanted the children's meal with a leg, so I said, "children's meal with the leg" and the lady says, "which side?"

Me: "complete silence as I heavily contemplate such an odd decision."

"I guess the right side, I don't know what the difference is."

After several moments of laughter she says, "no Madam which side would you like to go with the leg?"

"Mashed potatoes or wedges?"

What did Adam say on the day before Christmas? ***It's Christmas, Eve!***

Which of Santa's reindeer needs to mind his manners the most? ***"Rude Olph".***

Why does Santa Claus go down the chimney on Christmas Eve? ***Because it soots him.***

What do you call people who are afraid of Santa Claus? Claustrophobic.

Why does Santa have 3 gardens? ***So, he can ho-ho-ho.***

Santa was forced to attend a Christmas party because his ***presents*** was required.

A MIRROR

On Christmas Eve, Nathan thought it would be nice to buy his wife a little gift for the next day.

Always short of money, he thought long and hard about what that present might be'

Unable to decide, Nathan entered Woolies, and, in the cosmetics section, he asked the girl, 'How about some perfume?' She showed him a bottle costing R500.

'Too expensive,' muttered Nathan. The young lady returned with a smaller bottle for R300. 'Oh dear,'

Nathan groused, 'still far too much.' Growing rather annoyed at Nathan's meanness, the sales girl brought out a tiny R50 bottle and offered it to him.

Nathan became really agitated, 'What I mean', he whined, 'is I'd like to see something really cheap.'

So, the sales girl handed him a mirror.

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