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**7** HAUNTING HIGHLIGHTS ON HEALTH 

**Graceful & Gray** AGEING RIGHT

DOCTOR

**LYNNELIM**

ENT VANGUARD

Matters of Memory

**ALZHEIMER'S PREVENTION**

**MUM'S DAY**

A history of Love

**Eat Right Sleep Tight**

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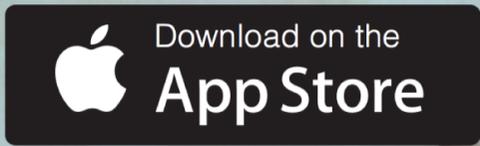


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# QUIZ:

## HOW IS YOUR MEMORY HOLDING UP

### SELF ASSESSMENT:

# ARE YOU AGEING WELL



You might detect sudden signs of ageing from newly grown white hair and wrinkles. But in actual fact, ageing is not a sudden thing, and it can be reflected through 10 indicators like memory, respiratory function and skin elasticity. By checking against these indicators, you can find out more about the state of your body and get anti-ageing advice from the experts.

## 1 FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility can be evaluated by flexing your shoulder, i.e. maintaining a standing position, with arms naturally perpendicular to the ground, and raise your arms with the shoulder as the pivot point. If you can reach 180 degrees (arm perpendicular to the ground), it shows evidence of good flexibility; if you can reach less than or equal to 90 degrees (arm parallel to the ground), it is a sign of weak flexibility.

**EXPERT'S SUGGESTION:** Emphasise on stretching the shoulder, waist and lower body limbs to improve flexibility. For example, when seated, extend both thighs vertically, and use your hands to touch your toes. Hold for 10 seconds. Control the intensity of such exercises based on your body's pain sensors to prevent ligament injury.



## 2 SKIN ELASTICITY

Skin elasticity is one of the indicators to measure the extent of human ageing. You can use your thumb and index finger to pinch the skin on the back of your hand. Hold in that position for 10 seconds before letting go and observe your skin's elasticity reaction. The longer time taken for the skin to retract to its original position, the weaker the skin elasticity and the older a person will seem.

**EXPERT'S SUGGESTION:** To protect the skin, avoid burning the midnight oil, smoking and frequent drinking. Working people today are under a lot of stress, which means they need to maintain even better lifestyle habits. Other points to note include taking care of sensitive areas, applying sunblock and moisturising cream.



## 3 BALANCE

Detailed assessment: Put both hands at the waist, with both eyes closed and one leg standing, with the other leg either raised or lowered. Once the standing leg moves or the other leg touches the ground, the assessment ends. Conduct the assessment twice and take a longer timing as the final result. For males above 30, a timing more than 20 seconds shows good balance, whereas a timing more than 17 seconds shows the same for similarly aged females. If the timings are below 10 and 8 seconds respectively, more balance training is needed.

**EXPERT'S SUGGESTION:** To protect the skin, avoid burning the midnight oil, smoking and frequent drinking. Working people today are under a lot of stress, which means they need to maintain even better lifestyle habits. Other points to note include taking care of sensitive areas, applying sunblock and moisturising cream.



## 4 STAMINA

Research has shown that a healthy 40 year old man should be able to walk 3km within 28 minutes. This is equivalent to walking 134 steps every minute. Additionally, 50m shuttle walks can also be used to test stamina. Complete the shuttle walk at 3 times your normal speed. If you were unable to complete 400m within 6 minutes, you probably need to enhance your stamina training.

**EXPERT'S SUGGESTION:** Slow jogs, brisk walks, and swimming are all good choices, amongst which brisk walking with a walking stick enhances arm action and burns more calories, thus having a better effect. You are recommended to do stamina-building exercise for at least half an hour, three times a week.



## 5 LEG STRENGTH

Females can assess their thigh strength via the leg lifting exercise. Lie down flat on the bed and place both legs together, extended. Lift them up vertically until they are 45 degrees from the ground before returning them to the original position. If you can do 3 sets of this within 1 minute, you have excellent leg strength, whereas any score under 10 sets means that you require strength training.

**EXPERT'S SUGGESTION:** Doing standing leg lifts, standing leg kicks, and kicking chapteh, can improve thigh strength, coordination and flexibility of the body.



## 6 HEART FUNCTION

Another important indication of health is the heart rate. Assessment method: In a quiet environment, press your finger against your pulse to calculate the pulse rate per minute. Many research findings show that a heart rate that is too fast or too slow will increase the risk of cardiovascular disease or even death. The ideal heart rate is 60-75 beats per minute.

**EXPERT'S SUGGESTION:** Cultivate the habit of taking note of your heart rate. Consciously monitor your pulse when you wake up, when your chest feels taut and after intense exercise. If your heart rate tends to be high, you should go to the hospital for related check-up. Additionally, you must also be persistent in exercising regularly, eating healthily, controlling alcohol and tobacco intake, and maintaining a calm mindset.



## 7 LUNG FUNCTION

Our lung capacity starts to decrease year on year after 35 years old. You can assess your lung capacity by climbing the stairs. If you can climb 4 flights of stairs consecutively and still maintain almost normal breathing, your lung capacity is fine. If breathing difficulties or heavy panting occur, you probably need more exercise and lung training.

**EXPERT'S SUGGESTION:** Jogging, brisk walking and swimming are all good ways of training, and you can also consciously practise aerobic exercises like yoga and qigong etc. Breathing adjustment method: Find a surrounding with fresh air and inhale slowly for 4-5 seconds to allow the lungs to take in enough oxygen. Then, exhale slowly. Practise this for 5-8 minutes. Alternatively, small activities such as blowing balloons and candles are also good ways to increase lung capacity.

## 8 MEMORY

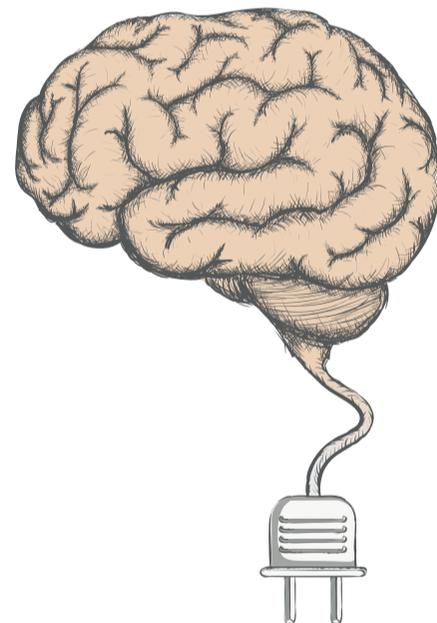
Memory decline tends to set in faster for males than females. It is natural process for memory to deteriorate with age. This tends to get noticeably worse as we reach our 50s, as the likelihood of cholinergic dysfunction, beta-amyloid deposits, hippocampal neurofibrillary tangles and numeric plaques in the brain cortex increases, blocking memory connections and decreasing memory function.

**EXPERT'S SUGGESTION:** More memory-strengthening exercises like chess, slow jog and brisk walk, identifying music, completing jigsaw puzzles, solving rubik's cubes, guessing riddles and working your fingers are also good for improving blood circulation in the brain.

## 9 REACTION TIME

Being one of the basic human responses, reaction time mainly assesses the duration of time taken from receiving a signal to producing a response. The simplest assessment method involves the "test-giver" placing a ruler against the wall and releasing the ruler suddenly. The test-receiver will have his/her hand placed 20cm away from the end of the ruler, and will immediately react to the falling ruler by pressing it against the wall. Measure the distance that the ruler has travelled; the shorter the distance, the faster the reaction time.

**EXPERT'S SUGGESTION:** Such reaction time will weaken naturally with age, but we can delay the onset of such deterioration through scientific training, and among which, ball games and racket games are most suitable. Examples, include badminton and table-tennis.



## 10 HEARING

Healthy hearing ability is defined as the ability to hear sounds within 20 decibels in a relatively quiet environment. Generally speaking, our hearing ability diminishes after middle age, but with the modern lifestyle, many young people also experience hearing difficulties. If there are evident signs of hearing deterioration, you should seek medical attention immediately. If you cannot hear properly while interacting with many people in a relatively noisy environment, you might be suffering from hearing problems.

**EXPERT'S SUGGESTION:** Alpha-Lipoic Acid is an antioxidant that helps improve hearing. Take 150mg a day of alpha-lipoic acid. Also, take recommended dosages of vitamin C and E everyday.



“

I am a 53-year-old woman. Recently I caught a cold and I took some regular medicine only for my cold as I didn't feel feverish and knowing that I would recover in a week or so. As expected, my stuffy nose, dizziness, fatigue and other symptoms subsided, but not my cough. Neither cough syrup nor boiled pear juice helps. My throat gets itchy every now and then. The sputum is foamy and white. Does this mean my immune system is not functioning properly? Will it cause pneumonia if it continues like this? What is your advice?

”

The common cold is an upper respiratory tract illness that can affect anyone including healthy people. Most common colds are caused by viruses. A more severe form of cold, known as the flu (or influenza) is caused by the influenza viruses. As you have correctly described, symptoms include nasal congestion (blocked nose), mucus discharge from the nose, sore throat, cough, headache, fatigue and myalgia (body aches), and sometimes even fever. Symptoms are usually at their worst in the first 2-3 days before gradually clearing. However, the cough and sputum production may carry on after the infection has gone. This is because inflammation (swelling) in the airways, caused by the infection can take a while to settle. It may take 3-4 weeks, after other symptoms have gone for a cough to clear completely. Similarly, sputum colour which may be yellow or green initially, will become clearer as you recover from the cold. Sputum colour does not give an indication about the status of one's immune system.

In both common cold and flu, most people with no prior health problems will have mild illnesses. However, some groups such as older people (65 years and older), children (6 months to 5 years), patients with diabetes or chronic heart, lung or kidney diseases, as well as patients whose immune system is lowered due to medications or other types of infections, are at higher risk of developing more serious complications from flu, including bronchitis and pneumonia.

Unfortunately, the common cold/flu cannot be entirely prevented as many viruses that cause respiratory tract illnesses can spread through the air, which you cannot avoid. Nonetheless, one should still practice measures to protect oneself against acquiring the infection and to minimize

the risk of transmission. These include:

- Adopting a healthy lifestyle by eating healthy, exercising and getting enough sleep
- Practising good personal hygiene such as washing one's hands thoroughly and regularly with soap and water
- Covering one's mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
- Avoiding going to school or work or hanging out in crowded places when one is down with the common cold

In addition, to reduce the risk of developing complications from the cold/flu, it is recommended that one should go for a yearly flu vaccination even when one is healthy.

The main aim of treating the cold/flu is to ease the symptoms whilst allowing your immune system to clear the infection. Some effective treatments are paracetamol (panadol) for fever and myalgia, antihistamines for nasal congestion, and cough suppressants. For mild illnesses, antibiotics are not advised as they do not kill viruses and do not speed up recovery. They can be prescribed if a complication such as pneumonia caused by a superimposed bacterial infection develops. If symptoms do not ease within few days or more worrying symptoms develop (such as shortness of breath, chest pain, confusion, persistent fever, cough lasting for more than 4 weeks), early medical attention is advised as this may be a sign that a complication is developing.

**Asst Prof Adrian Chan Kwok Wai**  
Singapore General Hospital

# 7

# ASTONISHING NUMBERS

A NUMERICAL LOOK ON HEALTH ISSUES

## 300

**6 year olds: 300 times versus Adults: only 15-100 times**

People who laugh a lot are much healthier than those who don't. Dr. Lee Berk at the Loma Linda School of Public Health in California found that six-year olds have it best - they laugh an average of 300 times a day. Adults only 100 times a day

## \$60,000

**1 hour of sleep > \$60,000**

According to US study by psychologist Daniel Kahneman and his colleagues, getting one extra hour of sleep each night does more for your daily happiness than a \$60,000 raise!



## 3<sup>rd</sup>

**3<sup>rd</sup> in least number of hours of sleep**

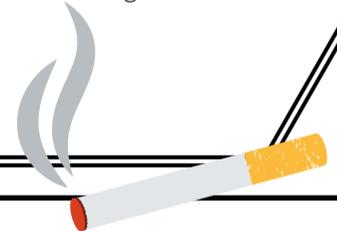
Sleepless in Singapore: Singapore comes out 3<sup>rd</sup>, on par with Dubai and Mexico City, but behind Tokyo and Seoul, in terms of the least average number of hours of sleep.



## 25:4

**Smoked tobacco prevalence of M;F = 25:4**

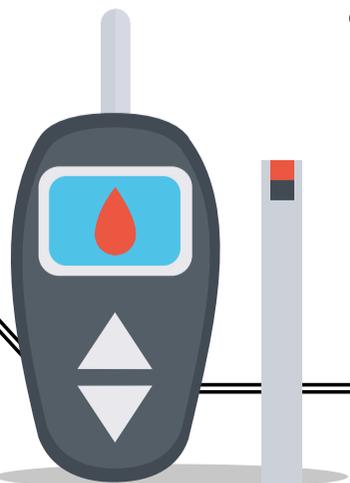
Among the adults in Singapore, smoked tobacco prevalence (daily cigarette smoking) amongst males is 24.7, and that among females is 4.2.



## 600,000

**400,000 → 600,000**

By 2030, the number of Singapore residents above 40 with diabetes is projected to increase by another 200,000 from about 400,000 today. As there is no cure for diabetes, keeping it under control is crucial.



## 20%

**4 cups of coffee - depression by 20%**

Drinking 4 or more cups of caffeinated coffee a day could reduce risk of depression by 20%. But there are more than 1,000 chemicals in a cup of coffee; of these, only 26 have been tested, and half caused cancer in rats.



## 10

**Life expectancy increased by 10 years**

Singapore's life expectancy has increased by 10 years over the last 3 decades.



# Doctor Lynne Lim



## Transcending Treatments

*Dr. Lynne Lim the ENT  
specialist with a penchant  
for effecting change and  
helping others*

One of the top ENT specialists in Singapore, Dr. Lynne Lim has over 20 years of accredited ENT experience. In this issue, she takes us through her unique journey as a woman in the ENT field and the hurdles that she had to overcome on her path to success. Her passion and her sincere desire to improve the lives of others make her an inspiration to us all. Read on to learn more about the importance of ENT health from the ENT expert herself.





Dr. Lynne Lim was at the young age of 24, at a time when she was feeling a little lost and searching for meaning; - she woke up one morning and decided it was time to get married, focus on her family and do good work. Dr. Lim did not always want to be an ENT surgeon - in fact, she had aspirations of being a criminal psychiatrist or a pediatrician. However, she grew to prefer a surgeon's life. It was the beautifully interconnected ENT anatomy in the very tiny and complex head that captivated her then, and which continues to fascinate her to this day.

To Dr Lynne, while the ENT field boasts many cool instruments and high technology, at its heart, it remains very public health. Becoming an ENT surgeon is no easy feat, especially so in Dr. Lim's case, with the field being highly dominated by males before she was accepted. In 1996, only 2 to 3 doctors were selected in Singapore each year for the highly competitive ENT traineeship and Dr. Lim clinched a traineeship spot; being

**“ Health is a great equalizer,  
there is nothing more valuable.  
I learn something from  
every patient - from family,  
Socioeconomics, politics, work  
and home countries.**



also only the second female ENT at that time. The first lady ENT was a good 10 years older than her. Undaunted by the seemingly impossible odds, she worked hard at all her postings to prove herself worthy in clinical and surgical acumen and a good colleague that would be welcomed by the fraternity. The experience was invaluable to her, and she is grateful to her seniors and mentors from whom she learnt a lot.

As many ENT problems are not life-threatening, Dr. Lim believes that they are grossly underestimated. Some common diseases and disorders of the ear, nose and throat would be nose issues due to allergies, rhinosinusitis and deviated septum, snoring and sleep apnea, hearing loss and ear infections, lumps in the head and neck, tonsils and adenoid and voice and gastric reflux and disorders. Dr. Lim explains that there are hidden dangers associated with these disorders that can greatly reduce quality of life. For instance, sleep apnea may increase the risk of hypertension, stroke, heart attack and diabetes up to 3 to 5 times.

Many also ignore the signs because they fail to recognise them as symptoms of ENT disorders. For instance, people tend to ignore their hearing difficulty or ringing ears and delay seeking help for years. However, this is highly dangerous as these symptoms can cause depression and isolation, and increase accident, memory and dementia risks 2 to 4 times. Furthermore, the hearing brain actually shrinks without sound stimulation, making delayed hearing rehabilitation not as effective. Many also fail to realise that they have a blocked nose problem, having lived with it all their lives. Dr. Lim's patients are often surprised when her scope reveals how their crowded

nose anatomy is aggravating their ear block, snoring, sinus pain, headache, chronic fatigue, hypertension and diabetes.

Dr. Lim discusses some of the key challenges in the ENT field - there are so many vital organs and structures compacted into the small head and neck area. A few millimeters can make the difference between a good and bad incision during surgery. Dealing with the very face that a patient presents to the world can put a lot of pressure on a surgeon. Minimally invasive procedures, special instrumentations of all manners, sizes and angles of scopes, micro-instruments and high magnification is often needed. ENT surgeons also need to balance handling pathology, function and cosmesis deftly. They are often exposed to respiratory tract infections their patients have, and highly prone to neck and spine injuries as a result of the odd positions they have to assume at surgeries, peering into the small spaces of the mouth, ear and nose.

In spite of the many complications in this field, Dr. Lim finds her career as an ENT surgeon to be one that is highly rewarding. She loves being able to feel the very pulse of society at all levels, meeting people from all walks of life from babies to centenarians; meeting people from all over the world.

Dr. Lim has pioneered many ENT surgeries and services. When asked about these experiences she says that the “firsts” are

“ **A life in medicine is full of challenges - sometimes involving high science and gritty economics - but it is always, a “people” kind of work.** ”



usually very special as “the fights are toughest and fears loom large”. She recounts one such experience in 2006 where she performed the first simultaneous bilateral Cochlear Implant surgery for total deafness in Singapore for 1 year old Talia. At the time, there was controversy surrounding the surgery as it was not commonly done in Asia. Although she was convinced of its benefits, Dr. Lim was anxious about the surgery as all eyes were on her. The surgery was successful and Talia went on to do great at PSLE last year - she is an orator, plays the piano and is a huge inspiration to many. Dr. Lim also performed the first anterior posterior joint rib grafts in Singapore to open the airway of a 1 year old who was depending on a tracheotomy hole in her neck to breathe. She is now able to breathe and speak on her own and go to school.

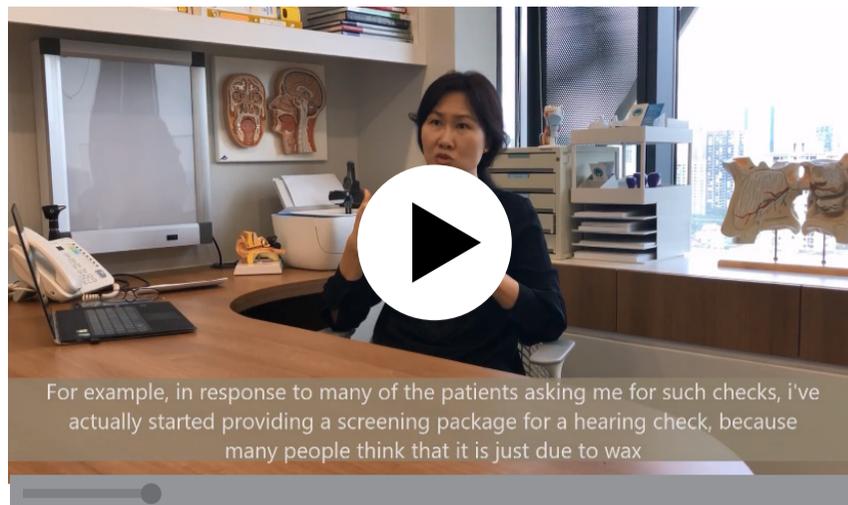
Beyond surgeries, Dr. Lim has a passion for public health service. The roving minivan project is one example of this. The project brought hearing tests and hearing aids right to the doorsteps of adults and the elderly at community centres. Over the last 8 years, Dr. Lim has also been working on developing solutions for middle ear infections, to translate innovations from laboratory for actual use by patients. One of these would be - a handheld applicator that can insert the grommet tubes for middle ear infection under local anesthesia and, without microscope, in the clinic or even the field. The difficulty is heightened by the ecosystem for invasive surgical biomedical devices in Singapore being nascent and competitors from USA and Ireland already just out there in the market.

Among Dr. Lim’s many ventures and accomplishments is the Singapore Master of Science in Audiology degree program that she founded at NUS. Started in 2013, the MSc Audiology degree program is very dear to her heart as it brought together an industry partner cum donor, an academic university institution and a very busy tertiary clinical hospital, to

work towards a single goal. Dr. Lim particularly enjoys bridging groups and building teams. When she started as Director of the Hearing Centre at National University Hospital 15 years ago, it became clear to Dr. Lim that a professional and comprehensive allied health team would be needed to increase efficiency and reduce cost for hearing health in Singapore

Dr. Lim attributes her success to her family. Her father, from whom she learnt the importance of being independent and grounded. Her hubby, whose support motivates her to do her best. Her mother, who exemplified fortitude and courage. Dr Robin Cotton, Dr. Lim's mentor at her USA fellowship, who taught her the importance teamwork and persistence. "There is nothing really, that one cannot do, if we but want it badly enough."

Dr. Lim is nowhere near done, in fact she hopes to have moved on to something slightly different within the next 5 to 10 years so as to continue growing and learning. She's not entirely sure what that is going to be - she believes in serendipity and does not plan for more than 2 years ahead as that would be limiting. What she knows for sure is that she would like to do more to bridge the private and public sector so that Singapore is able to tap on potential and resources in a better and more meaningful way. Dr. Lim also still dreams about studying architecture under a Japanese maestro and building 100 tree houses. She fantasizes about being given a mandate to interview a 100 people of her choosing, and producing short one page interviews to share for each.



[Click to view more videos](#)

Art, good writing, and travel are things that Dr. Lim turns to to relax and unwind from the stress of her job. She is thankful for every day. Dr. Lim describes herself as a dreamer and as someone who can be flexible and adaptable as long as her principles are not comprised. Both optimistic and fatalistic at once, she respects the transience of life and sees the need to strive to do better. Dr. Lim is touched by the courage and decency patients demonstrate in the face of pain and adversity. Her own personal mantra is one that we can all take from: "Take the unknown path, keep the big picture, do some good, live for something bigger than yourself - we pass this

**“ In Singapore, 2 in 5 in their 60s and over 50% over 70 years of age have hearing loss. We need at least 3 times the numbers of audiologists we have now, to give best care. Without more audiologists, we would not be able to test, fit and rehabilitate, nor teach and do Singapore-Asia specific research. ”**



world just once”.

Dr. Lim stresses that ENT health affects every person, be it in big ways or small ways. We fail to realise how important our hearing, throat voice, swallowing and breathing are although we use them every minute. They also influence the way the world views us, and how we present ourselves to others. ENT health is inter-related - your nose affects your throat and ears, your ears affect your brain and balance, your throat affects your voice and sleep, and your sleep affects your every waking moment. So keep in good ENT health!

# EAT RIGHT FOR A GOOD NIGHT

Sleep deficiency is one of the most common problems faced by people of all ages these days. Popping pills is dangerous, so why not try something natural and healthy? Go from being a nocturnal creature to a sound sleeper by making some small changes in your diet

If sleep disorders are troubling you, then the trick might lie in certain foods for better sleep. After a day's work, travelling and crazy sessions at work, all one wants is nothing but a good night's sleep. Everybody wants to be able to sleep like a baby everytime they hit the bed. But for many of us patting ourselves to sleep is a Herculean task.

So is there a solution to better sleep? Sure there is! Instead of soothing lullabies, try these foods that will help you discover your inner sleeping beauty!

## LEGUMES



The high levels of B Vitamins in Legumes, such as black-eyed peas and lentils, also help calm your nervous system. Legumes can be a great choice for an evening meal because they often replace animal protein, which can cause sleep problems, eat them only in moderation.



## WARM MILK

Milk has some tryptophan, an amino acid that has a sedative-like effect, and calcium, which helps the brain use tryptophan.



## HONEY

Drizzle a little in your warm milk or herb tea. Lots of sugar is stimulating, but a little glucose tells your brain to turn off orexin, a recently discovered neurotransmitter that's linked to alertness.



## CHERRIES

Cherries boost the body's supply of melatonin, and they're packed with antioxidants and phytonutrients that help you get a good night's sleep.



## POPCORN

Popcorn helps create the sleep-inducing neurotransmitter serotonin in our brains; it can be helpful in falling asleep. But skip the butter and oil; air-popped is best!



## ALMONDS

Almonds contains magnesium, which promotes both sleep and muscle relaxation. They help promote sleep by switching you from your alert adrenaline cycle to your rest-and-digest cycle.



## BREAD

As a high-glycaemic food, bread can definitely help you feel sleepy, especially if you eat it within four hours of going to bed. But avoid it if you're trying to stay slim; it'll pack a rise in blood sugar that could cause weight gain.



## FLAXSEEDS

Try sprinkling 2 tablespoons of these healthy little seeds on your bedtime oatmeal. They're rich in omega-3 fatty acids, a natural mood lifter.



## BANANAS

Packed with healthy carbohydrates, bananas can help you slow down a little bit. They too, contain tryptophan, as well as substances that promote the production of melatonin, the hormone that induces sleep and muscle relaxation.



## YOGURT

Same as milk, but with more protein to boot, so it's a satisfying snack before bed. Just choose a sugar-free, low-fat variety to avoid weight gain or increase in blood sugar levels.



## CHICKPEAS

Protein and serotonin-boosting vitamin B6 make chickpeas a great choice for a relaxing late-night snack. Keep some chickpea salad in the fridge.



## GREEN TEA

Drinking green tea throughout the day can help you feel calmer. It may also help relieve the symptoms of sleep apnoea.



## OATMEAL

It's rich in calcium and magnesium, and the perfect partner for some bananas, milk and honey, making oatmeal a great choice for suppers.



## CEREAL

Choose a low-sugar fortified cereal as another great late-night snack that will help you drift off to sleep. The complex carbohydrates in many cereals can increase the availability of tryptophan in the bloodstream, and fortified cereals are often a great source of Vitamin B6.



## POTATOES

The carbohydrates in potatoes make them another high-glycaemic food that can help you sleep more peacefully. Try a small serving of mashed potatoes with milk, topped with a dollop of plain Greek yogurt.



## DARK CHOCOLATE

It can help you sleep better too. Compounds in the dark chocolate have been found to reduce the production of the hormone cortisol in the brain. Eat it throughout the day to help you feel more relaxed, not right before you go to bed, since it does contain a little bit of caffeine.



## SAFFRON

It has a "mood-improving effect" that could aid in weight loss and help you relax.



## SOUP AND STEWS

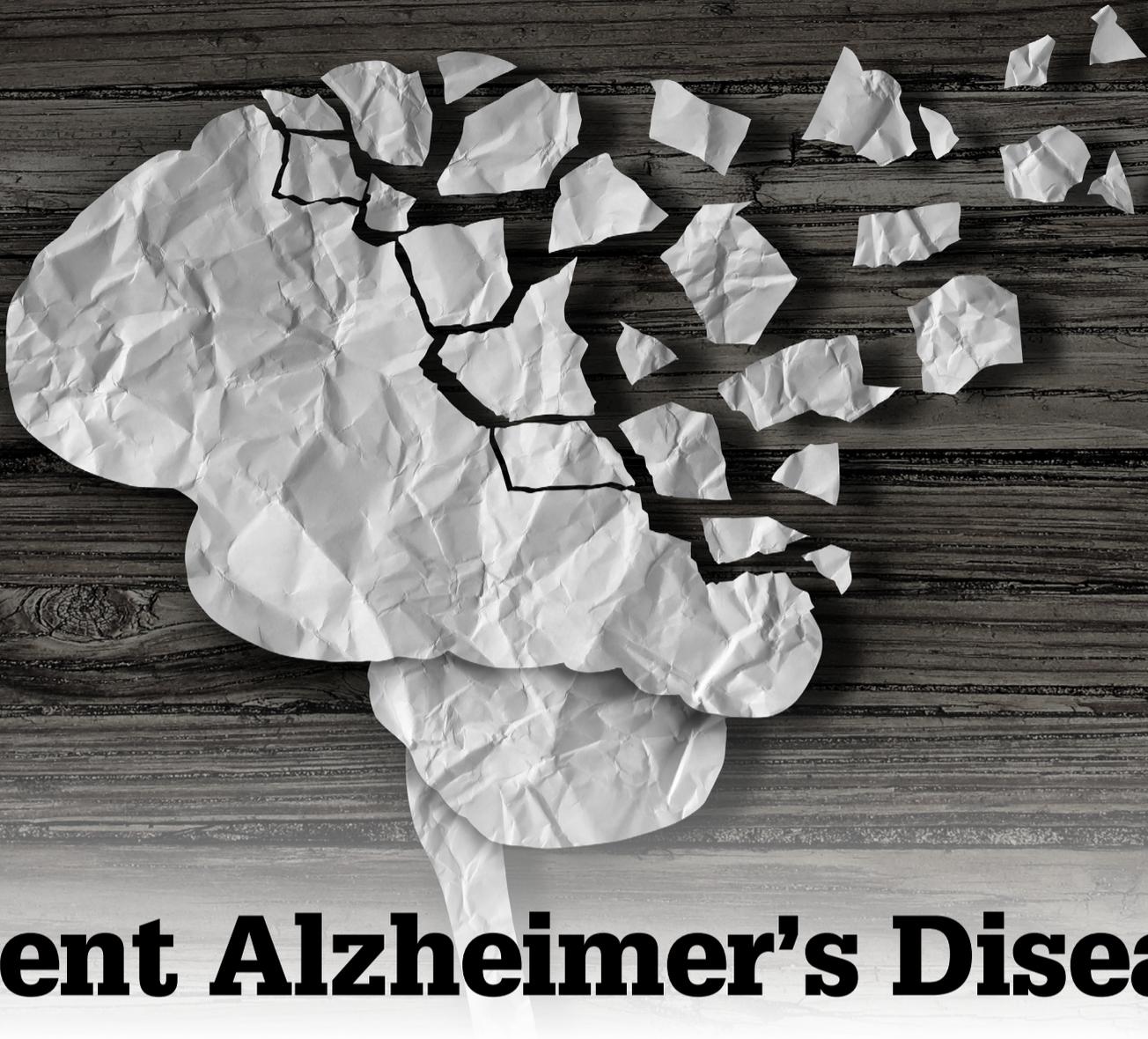
Soups and stews, particularly those filled with fibre-rich veggies and legumes, and low-fat casseroles are much more calming and relaxing than seared meats and hot, spicy food.



## EGGS

High in proteins, eggs help improve your sleep and maintain your fitness levels thereby giving you complete protection. However, in case you suffer from high cholesterol issues, you can opt for eating only the egg white without the yolk.





# Prevent Alzheimer's Diseases

**T**he highest risk factor for Alzheimer's disease is age. Risk increases as people grow older. About 1 % of people who are over 60 years of age get Alzheimer's disease. but cases double every five years between the ages 65 to 85. Under the assumption that the age onset can be deferred for 5 years, the number of cases can be halved. This is the basis for for lowering the risk of having the disease in order to attain the goal of a hypothetical "Alzheimer free" society.

## **USE YOUR BRAIN MORE OFTEN**

Over the years, many studies have shown that well-educated people are less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. In fact, education cannot chnage the brain structure, but may strengthen the brain to prevent brain degeneration. Even if Alzheimer' disease is contracted, the symptoms of dementia will occur right away.

## **EXERCISE MORE**

The most effective approach to keep the brain active is by doing much reading and crossword puzzles, as well as playing card games and visting friends and relatives. Watching TV, listening to the radio and other recreational activities are also good choices. Continuing to learn after retirement is the best defense for older people against the disease, whether it is continuing education, online learning, development of new interests, or participation, online learning, development of new interests, or participation in community activities.

Exercise is the real deal in keeping young. Experiments on animals have shown that aerobic exercise can increase brain capillaries and nerve cells and reduce cerebral amyloid levels. Exercise can also prevent chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, high cholestrol, cardiovascular disease, colorectal cancer, osteoporosis, diabetes, obesity, depression. etc.

## **MEDITERRANEAN-STYLE DIET**

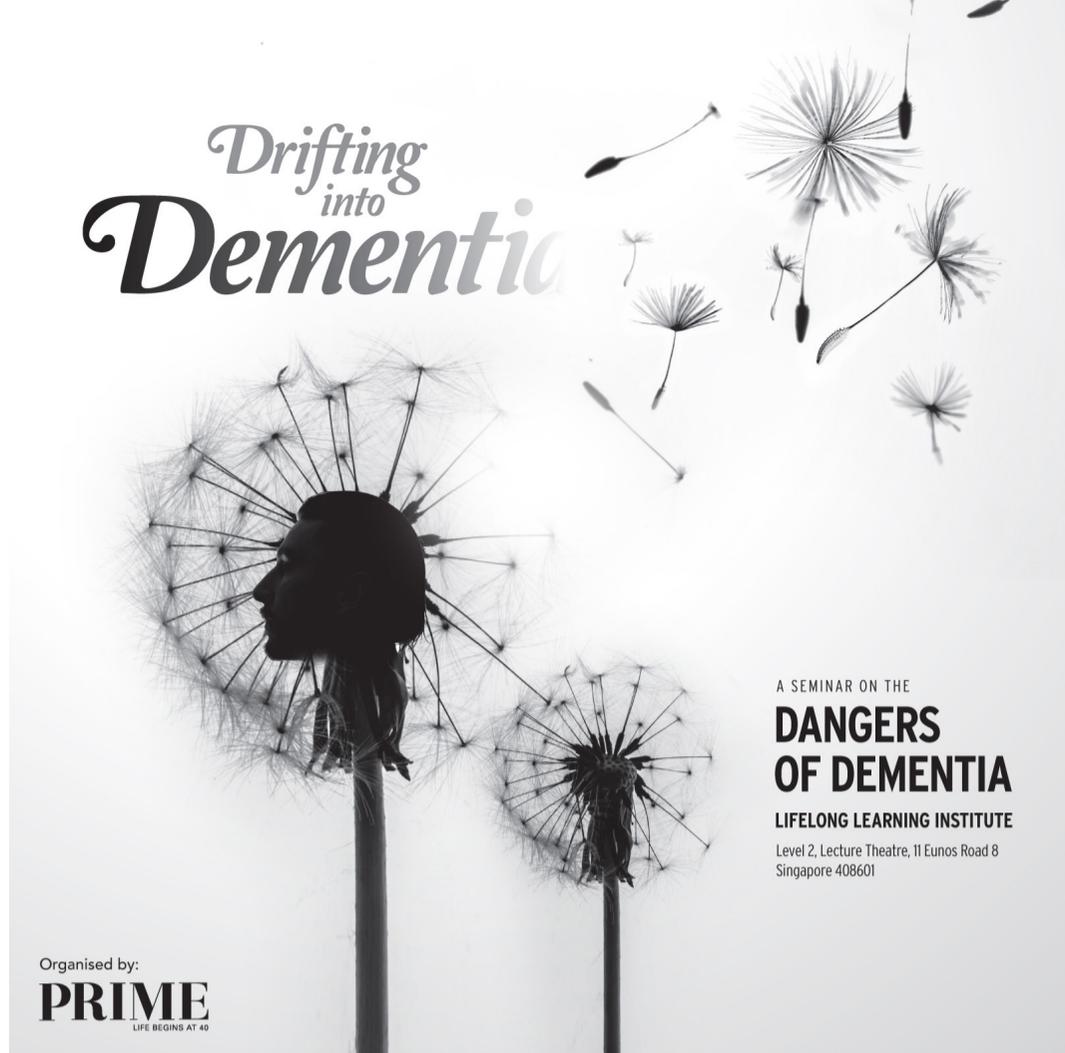
Scientists have long noted by cutting down food intake in rats by 30%, they not only live 30% longer, but their spatial memory is also larger with stronger learning ability. Survey has also found that the diet containing more unsaturated fatty acids that the diet containing more unsaturated fatty acuds of fish or low-fat diet can lower the chance of getting Alzheimer's disease. According to Columbia University study in 2006, which tracked 2,258 residents with an average of 77 years, those who were on Mediterranean diet (i.e. more fruits, vegetables, beans, grains, olive oil, fish, wine, and a small amount of meat and poultry) had a lower risk (40% less) of Alzheimer's disease than those who were not. The importance of low calorie diet is clear.

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Therefore, everyone young and old should develop learning habits, keep in touch with friends, and participate more in recreational activities. Try to walk at least 40 minutes a day. Eat light meals with more emphasis placed on fruits and vegetables. You can lower your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

## THE PROGRESS OF DEMENTIA

The early stage of Alzheimer's disease is also called Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). 5-6% of elderly people (65-79 years old), meet the diagnostic criteria of Mild Cognitive Impairment. Normally, only memory impairment occurs in this group, and usually th patients are not aware of it. With the passing of time, most of these patients' smptoms will progress into mild Alzheimer's disease. Aside from memory loss, the main problems with abstract thinking; visual spatial disorder and loss of sense of time. When it enters the metaphase of the disease, they will experience other problems such as loss of ability to comprehend spoken language; apathy in behavior; wandering as a result of forgetting their home address; gradual loss of memories, and change of personality. As the condition becomes more severe, verbal communication becomes impossible, and patients cannot remeber their families at all due to the memory loss. Suffering from psychomotor dysphoria and gatism, they will be in need of allround care. Additionally, their mobility will also be impaired so that they will either need wheelchairs or be confined to bed. The speed of development



of Alzheimer's disease varies widely. It takes some people 3 to 5 years to go from being healthy to the terminal stage, while some others can take 10 to 15 years. On average, it takes around 7 to 8 years to reach the terminal stage. There are many factors that affect the progress of dementia, but usually it is related to the quality of treatment that the patients are given. With good treatment, there usually are some good signs in the early stage. However, Alzheimer's disease will still progress over time before it eventually deteriorates rapidly.



**WHAT IS DEMENTIA?**  
(Click to watch)

# Ageing and Digestive Health

Digestive problems can occur at any stage of life, but certain digestive health problems are more likely to arise as your body ages.

**A**s we age, our body undergoes many physiological changes and your gut is one of them. These are some of the common digestive problems that may arise with age.

## CONSTIPATION

Constipation is a common problem in people in their 60s and older. Symptoms of this condition often include difficult, painful or infrequent bowel movements with dry, hard stool. Age-related factors that lead to constipation include:

### Inactivity

Aerobic activity increases blood flow to the body's organs. It increases blood flow to the gastrointestinal tract which results in stronger intestinal contractions and more digestive enzymes being released. This allows food to move easily through the colon and out of the body. As we age, we tend to become less active and this could be one of the reasons constipation sets in.

### Changes in the digestive system

In a healthy digestive system, food is pushed through the body through a series of muscle contractions. These contractions push food through the digestive tract and allows the body to absorb the nutrients that it needs from the food. As one ages, this process may slow down and cause food to move more slowly through the colon. When this happens, more water is absorbed from the food and this can cause constipation.

### Not drinking enough fluids

Staying hydrated is important in preventing constipation, especially if you are also taking medication for certain conditions, such as high blood pressure or heart failure. Certain medications may work to rid the body of excess fluid by making you

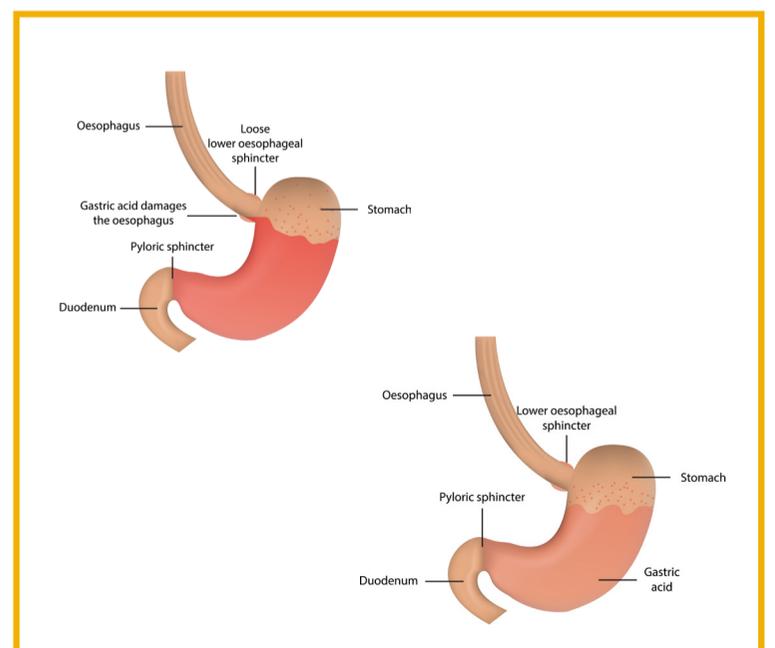
urinate more. If you don't drink enough fluids, the combination of fluid loss and decreased intake of fluid will dehydrate the body, leading to constipation.

### Tips

To help relief constipation, take a 20 minute brisk walk each day!

## GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE (GERD)

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a common upper gastrointestinal disorder that can occur in people of all ages, although it is common in older adults. GERD occurs when the muscular valve at the bottom of the oesophagus (lower oesophageal) sphincter is weakened and allows stomach contents such as food, acid and stomach enzymes to flow back into the oesophagus. When stomach acid flows back into the oesophagus, it causes a burning sensation, usually felt in the chest area.



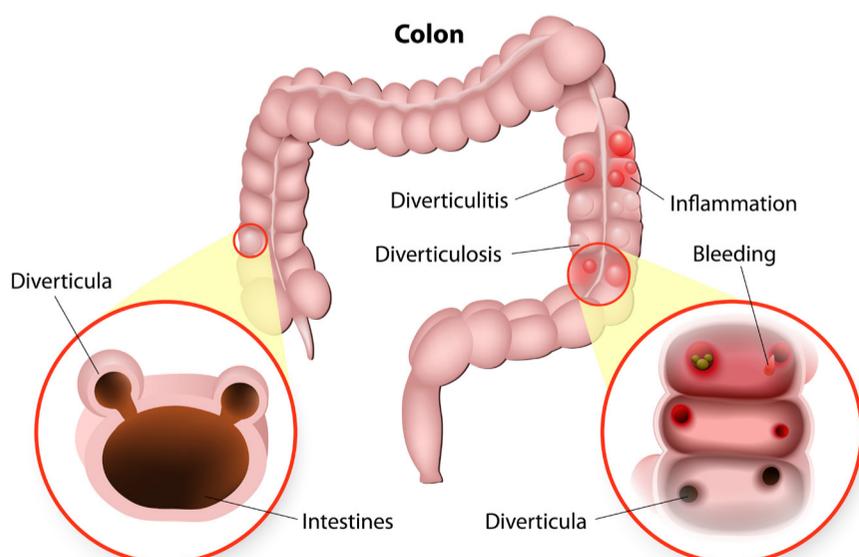
## Symptoms of GERD

- Heartburn
- Nausea
- Non-exertion chest pain when lying down or waking up
- A bitter taste in the mouth
- Food regurgitation in the mouth
- Pain when swallowing
- Food getting stuck while swallowing

While ageing can play a part in causing GERD, other risk factors also include smoking, being overweight and suffering from peptic ulcers. To cut down your risk of GERD, you may also want to avoid certain foods such as carbonated beverages, alcoholic drinks and spicy, greasy or fatty foods. Also avoid eating large meals and lying down within 2 hours of eating.

## DIVERTICULAR DISEASE

Diverticular disease is another common gastrointestinal condition in older people. Diverticular are small pouches of the colon lining bulge out along weak spots in the intestinal wall. Although many patients will not experience any symptoms, some may suffer from pain or change in bowel habits. Diverticular are believed to be caused by high pressure in the colon. If they become inflamed, it can also cause abdominal pain, cramps, fever and nausea.



## SWALLOWING DIFFICULTIES

Difficulty swallowing, or dysphagia, is a common condition among ageing adults and this can be due to problems with the oesophagus or throat muscles. The oesophagus is the tube that allows food to move from the mouth to the stomach, and as one ages, the muscles of the oesophagus and the throat may become weaker and cause difficulty swallowing: when the lower oesophageal muscle does not relax properly to let food enter the stomach, food may be brought back up into the throat. Certain disorders such as muscular dystrophy and Parkinson's disease can also weaken the throat muscles and make it difficult to move food from your mouth into your throat and oesophagus when you swallow.

## PROTECT YOUR GUT!

***You can't stop your body from ageing but if you take extra care of your digestive health now, it will go a long way in ensuring a strong digestive system in the years to come.***

### 1. Keep Moving

Exercise improves blood flow throughout your body, including your digestive system, allowing your body to absorb nutrients more effectively and helping to ward off constipation, bloating and cramps.

### 2. Eat more Fiber

High-fiber foods not only help to prevent constipation but also can ease the symptoms of diverticular disease. Besides fruit and vegetables, whole grains and beans are also great sources of dietary fiber.

### 3. Drink up!

We can't stress enough the importance of staying hydrated to your digestive system. Always make sure you drink plenty of fluids throughout the day, especially if your body has lost extra fluids through exercise or any medication that you are taking.

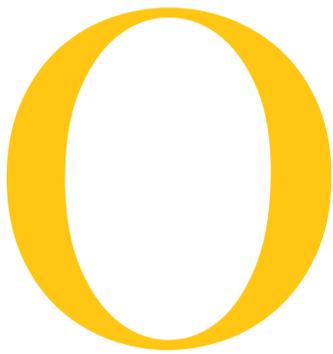
### 4. Manage your weight

Being overweight can lead to all kinds of health problems, including those of your digestive system. Maintaining a healthy weight will help to ease the pressure on the system and help to reduce the discomfort of GERD and heartburn.

### 5. See your doctor regularly

Go for regular health screenings so that your doctor will be able to detect any symptoms of gastrointestinal disorders early.

# Mother's Day was not originally a Hallmark moment



On this date in history, I had always assumed that Mother's Day was invented by some card company like Hallmark. I was wrong. It was just hijacked by the entrepreneurial spirit of America! There are all sorts of stuff about it going back to the early church and then going on through the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Europe when it was still associated with the church. It had been to celebrate Mother Mary, then the Mother Church with Mothering Sunday. But when the folks came across the pond to America, the colonists were too busy working to do such things and it died out.

Then along came the Civil War and a woman named Anne Marie Reeves Jarvis. She started "Mother's Friendship Day" as a way to improve sanitation in 1858. During the Civil War she continued the practice by organising women on both sides to try and improve the nasty situation.

Afterward, she organised Mother's Friendship Clubs to teach women the basics of nursing and sanitation. She also took the opportunity to bring reconciliation to the nation following the war. Anne died in 1905 and her daughter Anna missed her greatly. Anna felt that children didn't appreciate their mothers enough while they were alive.

So, in 1907, she decided to start a day to honour mothers. She began a letter writing campaign to ministers and such and in 1908, the first Mother's Day service was held in honour of Anne Marie Jarvis in Grafton, West Virginia, where she went to church for 20 years and also at her church in Philadelphia, the city where Anne died.

It caught on and in 1912 The International Mother's Day Association had come into being and on this date in 1914, a Presidential Proclamation by Woodrow Wilson designated the second Sunday of May as Mother's Day. But Anna Jarvis' happiness didn't last long. In just a few short years, people started giving cards and flowers and presents and all sorts of things. It became more secular than what Miss Jarvis had envisioned. Commercialisation had taken over and it continues today as Mother's Day is one of the most financially successful days on the calendar. Anna Jarvis died as a cranky old woman who fought to oppose Mother's Day. I guess she created a monster like Frankenstein. But not as much as the Postal Service.

Yes indeed...in 1934 the US Postal Service decided to get into the act and make a stamp to commemorate Mother's Day. And what did they pick to commemorate the day to honour the wholesome beauty of motherhood? The portrait of James Abbott McNeill Whistler's mother! You look at it and try to figure out what they were thinking. It sure wasn't "Happy Mother's Day." As it turns out, the inspiration came from none other than President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt had been presented the idea by Mrs. H. H. McCluer of Kansas City who was the past president of a group called the American War Mothers. President Roosevelt had been devoted to his own mother so he heartily accepted the proposal and sent a sketch of the stamp that he envisioned to Postmaster General James A. Farley. Farley made a few modifications and the stamp was issued on May 2, 1934.

As for Hallmark, it celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday last year. Joyce C. Hall (the founder) was given the name "Joyce" because he had the misfortune of being born in David, Nebraska on the day that a Methodist bishop named Isaac W. Joyce was in town and his parents must have been inspired. As a teenager, J.C. Hall went into business with his two older brothers selling picture postcards. In 1910 at the age of 18, he dropped out of school and went to Kansas City and started selling postcards to drugstores, gift shops and bookstores before opening a specialty shop.

But, in a case of misfortune turning to a catalyst for success, a fire swept through the store. The brothers then got a loan and decided to purchase an engraving firm that they had done business with in the past. While Mother's Day was just getting started around that time and no doubt did Hallmark participate in the commercialisation of the "Holy Day" invented by Anna Jarvis, the company was not built on the hallowed days back. Instead, the Hallmark company history says that the Hall brothers originally gained success with Christmas and Valentine's cards. But, let's think about this for a moment. All about the same time: Anna Jarvis comes up with Mother's Day, President Wilson recognises it nationally, a fire destroys the Hall brother's store and they start making specialty cards; Mother's Day becomes so commercialised that Anna Jarvis works to oppose the very thing she created. I think that perhaps Miss Jarvis did not buy any Hallmark cards.

Article extracted from a blog entry by Bob Symon



**President Roosevelt had been devoted to his own mother so he heartily accepted the proposal and sent a sketch of the stamp that he envisioned to Postmaster General James A. Farley. Farley made a few modifications and the stamp was issued on May 2, 1934.**



# Tinnitus

Many elderly people share a common experience on hearing a sound in one ear or both ears, such as buzzing, ringing or whistling that occurs without an external stimulus. It can be caused by specific reasons, such as ear infection, vascular compressive, disorder of inner ear.



One specific case was a patient has been bothered by pulsatile tinnitus of the right ear which resulted from carotid artery stenosis. This dull roar and unceasing noise in the ears has a medical name called Tinnitus.

Under normal circumstances inside of the ear normally remain silent without

any noise. However, funny noise by itself, such as, buzzing, ringing, whistling, sometimes the noise can be as loud as that of a siren's. When this annoying noise appears, the normal hearing ability will be disturbed, although it does not last long.

This phenomenon is called Tinnitus. The causes of Tinnitus is rather complicated but mostly happens when the body gets weak.

The inner ear and auditory nerve are made to sense the sounds from the outside world, any outside stimulus will be processed and recognised as different sounds. Tinnitus is a common problem among elderly people. There are many causes leading to tinnitus in elderly population, it might be related to otology, metabolic, neurologic, even cardiovascular condition. Ear infection, the use of certain drugs, a blocked auditory tube or canal, or even too much earwax could be the cause of Tinnitus.

Other than the acoustic neuroma, which is a type of tumor causing vertigo symptoms which manifests in one-sided ringing in the ear and hearing loss. Being affected by tinnitus is part of the natural physical deteriorating process. Along with the years, each part of the body becomes weaker, which is normal and understandable.

There is a study in the United States which shows that 9% of the population between 55 - 64 years old would have the Tinnitus problem, 11% of the population between age 65 - 74 has the Tinnitus. The study also indicate more female patients than male patients.

The major complain about Tinnitus is the patient could not carry on the normal life and weary in body and minds. Tinnitus caused by the tension, fatigue, nervous prostration, nervousism, can be recovered by proper relaxation and sufficient rest. Tinnitus cause by abnormal blood pressure, such as too high or low blood pressure, anemia, cerebral arteriosclerosis or insufficient blood supply, these cause the auditory center, auditory nerve and

peripheral of acoustic apparatus has ischemia and hypoxic which the Tinnitus follows.

The study also shows that variables like gender, residence, economic status, alcohol or smoking were not significantly associated with tinnitus. However, dizziness, hypertension, arteriosclerosis or diabetes were significantly correlated.

On the other hand, there is also a theory that claims nicotine stimulates the nerve system and causes the blood vessel convulsion. As a result, the inner ear receive insufficient blood supply.

Sleep disturbance, defectuous concentration on daily and professional activities, isolation and a poor emotional balance can be often found in tinnitus patients.

## Fun Facts:



The word "Tinnitus" is Latin in origin and means "To ring or tinkle like a bell"



There are some forms of tinnitus which can actually be heard by another person (or recorded) coming from the ear of the individual with Tinnitus, which is referred to as "Objective Tinnitus." Most forms are classified as "Subjective Tinnitus" where it is only heard internally by the person who has it



## Tinnitus can be classified into Acute Tinnitus and Chronic Tinnitus

Acute Tinnitus means it only happens in short time, say less than 3 months. It is easy for doctors to determine the cause to the acute tinnitus, so that to render proper treatment. On the other hand, the chronic tinnitus might have more complicated causes and the doctor would have difficulty to have the condition under control.

### These are two types of Tinnitus

#### Objective Tinnitus

The Objective Tinnitus means the complain can be detected by instrument which enable other people (doctors) to hear the same noise that bothers the patient.

#### Subjective Tinnitus

The Subjective Tinnitus means the complain cannot be detected by any means, and other people (doctors) are not able to hear the same noise that bothers the patient.

Tinnitus cause much dissatisfaction in elderly people, as this symptom affects their daily activities and may alter sleeping patterns and their emotional status.

### There are some of the professional treatment to the tinnitus, such as

#### Biofeedback Therapy

This is a type of body-relaxation training, including exercise and massage. By relaxation, the nerve system ease up, the circulation of the head gets improved. The biofeedback is aimed at helping the tinnitus patient to learn to live a life without too much stress and tension.

#### The Tinnitus re-training Therapy

This is the newest therapy for tinnitus, by combining the low volume and consistent background sound, the therapist will lead the patient into a psychological conversation. The patient wears a special hearing-aids to keep the background sound stay the same for 8 hours daily. This combination is meant to help the patient to get used to the tinnitus that had already long existed.

#### Tinnits Masker

This masker has to be tailored made according to the patient's tinnitus frequency. The doctor will choose the hearing-aids that is closest to the specific frequency and turn up the volume to cover the tinnitus. The patient should wear this special aid for 1 - 2 hours daily. Another similar method is to make the patient listen to the waterfall or ocean waves, to help diminish the buzzing sound caused by tinnitus.

## Some suggestions on preventing Tinnitus

### 1 Embrace your life with an open mind

There is a Chinese saying: "a happy smile makes you 10 years younger, a sorrow sigh makes your hair grey." This idiom explains the correlation between the emotional and physical health. Being optimistic and happy towards the life is they key to good health. On the contrary, the tension and anxiety lead people to hypertension, as a result, the blood supply to inner ear is affected and thus followed by Tinnitus or deafness.

### 2 Regular Exercise

Exercise regularly could delay the maturing or ageing of the physical condition. To go for a walk is always highly recommended. Lots of elderly people form groups and practise Tai-Ji in the park, which is an ideal exercise. A simple general gymnastic can be included as one of the choices. Whatever the choice may be, the exercise should be mild.

### 3 Inhale and Exhale Exercise

Every morning when you get up, try to fully open your mouth to exhale, then make a good inhale and immediately close up your mouth. Repeat this for a couple of times not only does this relax the muscles, it also keeps the auditory tube clear. This will help balance the pressure of inside and outside of the ear, which also helps in preventing the Tinnitus.

### 4 Reasonable food taking for proper nutrition

The hygiene and freshness of food are the primary concern. Be mindful of the cholesterol level of the food, avoid too much fat, too sweet and salty food. Because these type of food will lead to hypertension, arteriosclerosis and diabetes. Reasonable portion of vegetable, especially those with dark green leaves, all kinds of nuts with high contents of good oil, black sesame, sufficient fruits and protein such as bean products and eggs. It is advised to plan for your meals to ensure a well-balanced diet.

### 5 Go for regular health screening

The regular health check helps the early finding of physical disorder so that early treatment could be given. This could also reduce the risk of being affected by Tinnitus.

### 6 Suggestion to daily life

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# Maturing with healthy smiles

**A**s our body matures, a vast number of changes occur in our metabolism, hormones and nutrition that can have an effect on our teeth, which tend to weaken, decay and break more often. Thanks to scientific developments and the preventive emphasis in dentistry, older adults are keeping their natural teeth longer. So it is useful to know what some of the general age-related dental issues are in order to be better prepared to handle them.

## TOOTH DECAY

Corrosive acids that cause decay are produced when the bacteria in our mouth feed on carbohydrates (sugars) in our diet. Over time, a minor decay can cause pain, infection and tooth loss if left untreated. While tooth decay takes place regardless of age, it can worsen as we grow older. Even after a long period of being able to successfully prevent or have very few teeth decay, adults can suddenly find themselves entering a phase where cavities become a significant problem.

One of the main reasons for this is the reduced production of saliva as we mature. Saliva, a key factor in the fight against tooth decay, contains shielding agents that can neutralise the acids that cause tooth demineralisation. It also carries minerals and antibacterial agents that slow down the growth of oral bacteria. To help circumvent this it is important to regularly drink sugarless fluids to keep our mouths moist and encourage the flow of saliva.

The build-up of plaque around older fillings is also quite common, as are other

problems such as root caries (decaying of the tooth root) that happens when the gums recede to expose the softer root surface, which decays more easily than tooth enamel. Regular brushing and flossing with fluoride toothpaste is therefore very important to fight plaque build-up.

## SENSITIVITY

A number of factors can cause tooth sensitivity such as cavities, tartar build-up and overconsumption of acidic food and beverage. With the natural recession of gums over time, there is an increased chance of hypersensitivity especially in areas of the teeth that are not well protected by enamel. As we age, areas that would usually be well concealed by gums become exposed and more vulnerable to pain or discomfort, which is usually aggravated when eating or drinking anything that is hot, cold, sweet, sour or spicy. Maintaining good oral hygiene, using low-abrasive toothpaste and avoiding highly acidic foods and drinks to prevent erosion can prevent tooth sensitivity. Simple procedures such as laser desensitising or bonding to cover the exposed surface can also be done to help avoid further discomfort.

## DARKENED TEETH

As we grow older, the appearance of our teeth changes and there are a number of causes for this. Poor dental hygiene practices, a lifetime of consuming stain causing food and beverages, smoking and also the changes in dentin – the bonelike tissue that underlies the tooth enamel – can cause tooth discolouration. The outer layer of the enamel on our teeth gets worn away, revealing the natural yellow colour of dentin as we age. While people with genetically thicker enamel may find minimal change to the colour of their teeth, others may want to look into preventive measures such as avoiding food and beverage that cause stains and restorative treatments that can improve this condition.

## GUM DISEASE

Evidence of periodontal disease is when the gums get red and swollen; bleed with the slightest irritation, and when pockets are developed between teeth and gums that trap food debris. This disease, also known as gingivitis, is generally found in varying degrees in older adults and if not treated can become increasingly destructive. Studies have also shown that with periodontal disease, heart attacks are 2.7 times more likely to occur and the risk of cardiovascular diseases is 1.5 times to twice higher.

It is especially important to practise a meticulous oral care routine even if you have managed to avoid periodontal disease until now. Healthy gums are typically a light or coral shade of pink and usually fit into a nice sharp point where it comes in contact with the teeth.

## BRITTLENESS OF TEETH

As we mature, pulps in our teeth become smaller due to fewer blood vessels and a reduction in nerve tissues. With less fluid content, our teeth become more brittle, which with the gnashing action of chewing can further wear down the enamel of the teeth making them more vulnerable to breakage and chips.

Another cause of tooth breakage or extensive wear and tear is the grinding of teeth, also known as bruxism, which usually occurs during sleep and has been categorised as a common sleep disorder. The most evident consequence of bruxing in addition to sore jaw muscles is the trauma and extensive wear down of teeth, which coupled with natural deterioration in tooth structure, can cause significant damage. Solutions in addressing this include nightguards, which can be worn to help protect your teeth as you sleep, and stress reduction, as stress tends to be one of the common reasons why we grind our teeth.

## DRY MOUTH

This tends to increase as we get older, and is also heightened by the use of medications and certain medical disorders. As saliva has an important function to play when it comes to chewing, these symptoms can be treated, where your dentist can recommend ways to restore moisture to your mouth and also address some of the oral health problems that may have caused it.

## MISSING TEETH

This condition poses more than just an aesthetic issue. While the reasons behind missing teeth may vary, the fact remains that if left untreated

it can cause serious complications. A number of things may happen – food may get trapped in these gaps giving rise to bacterial growth, the remaining teeth may shift in an attempt to fill the gap left by the missing tooth that may even affect the ability to chew and speak, and the overall support structure of the mouth may weaken. As each tooth is supported by those around it, gaps left unfilled may cause additional tooth loss or injury that could worsen with time. Dentures, dental bridges or implants are choices you can choose from to replace missing teeth.

## DEALING WITH DENTURES

When it comes to wearing dentures, whether complete, partial or removable dentures; comfort is key, and is largely dependent on whether the remaining ridges in your mouth can provide the necessary support. With the removal of teeth, the remaining bone (ridge) continuously shrinks to a smaller size. As a result, the gum tissue that covers the ridge often becomes thinner and is more susceptible to irritation; these changes can also affect the comfort of dentures over time, causing pain and discomfort when it comes to chewing.

It is never too late to preserve and protect the health of one's teeth. It is important to note that by not making the effort to maintain the health of your teeth and gums in your prime just means that you may require extensive restorative, or reconstructive dentistry later in life.

It is also crucial to note that existing health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease or cancer can impact a person's oral health, and this too needs to be highlighted to your dentist, as with any other general health issues.

While simple oral hygiene practices such as brushing and flossing are essential, many oral health problems associated with aging require professional dental attention, so do not forget to factor in regular checkups into your overall health and wellness routine.

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