

The Official Newsletter of Baliga Diagnostics Pvt. Ltd.

# Sowkhya

MAGAZINE™

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**The Message Is Clear!**

## Message From The Editor

Hello readers! Welcome to the next issue of Sowkhya Magazine™. As always, I am overwhelmed with the positive feedback and comments I have had, and would like to say thank you!

In this month's edition, we look at what I believe is a highly under-recognised problem in India – **obesity**. Some of you may have heard the saying – 'a minute on the lips, a lifetime on the hips'! We live in a culture where sweets and fried foods form a big part of our diet, in addition to the large amount of rice and similar foods that we consume. Combining this with insufficient exercise means the food we eat is converted to fat, resulting in obesity.

Obesity is recognised as a 'neglected world-wide public health problem', with over 1.4 billion people over the age of 20 years suffering from it across the globe. It continues to be on the rise in India, and Karnataka currently ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in male obesity and 9<sup>th</sup> in female obesity in our country (Punjab is #1). This is clearly not something to be proud of. In fact, tackling obesity should become our number one priority, given it can result in high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, stroke and arthritis, to name a few illnesses. We must recognise this problem TODAY and deal with it as soon as we can.



**Dr B G Baliga**  
MD FRCP FICC  
Editor, Sowkhya  
Magazine  
Director, Baliga  
Diagnostics Pvt. Ltd.

In this edition, we talk about how obesity can affect you, and what you can do to reduce your future risk of developing health problems. As always, we have also discussed a few other interesting topics as well, and have kept it light hearted and simple. We even have some rather weird medical facts for you too!

We hope you enjoy our December edition of Sowkhya, and I look forward to any comments, questions or suggestions you may have for us! Until next time – Stay healthy and God bless!

## Obesity – Time to Face It Head On

In the recent years, a number of different aspects of our health have been studied and researched. The one that still comes out near the top is obesity. Obesity is a term that is used to describe a person who is overweight. It has been well recognised as a global health problem.

According to the World Health Organisation, in 2008 over 200 million men and 300 million women were diagnosed as being obese. Shockingly, over 40 million children under the age of 5 were obese in 2011! Clearly, obesity can affect both adults and children, but here we shall concentrate on adult obesity.

An unfortunate yet true fact is that obesity is still not being recognised as a major health problem. Why is this?



Well, one reason could be that many of us view our country as one that is still affected by poverty and under-nutrition. Our diet and insufficient exercise are contributing factors, but genetics also seem to play an important part as well. Lifestyle choices have changed remarkably over last 30 years, resulting in a rise of obesity prevalence from 2% to over 17% since 1989.

### Defining obesity

Before discussing the health impacts of obesity, it is important to recognise what obesity is. Just being slightly overweight or having a muscular physique does not mean you are obese. Obesity is defined in the terms of body mass index (BMI). This value is calculated using the weight of the individual and their height. Different ranges have been described, and in South Asians, the ideal body mass index lies between 18.5 and 22.9. A value above 23 and less than 28 is 'overweight' and a value above 28 is considered 'obese'. This value is different in White Caucasians in whom obesity is defined as a BMI above 30.

Individuals who have extremely high BMI values over 40 are defined as being 'morbidly obese'.

### Health problems with obesity

Obesity brings with it a number of different health problems. The list is huge, but the worrying conditions include type 2 diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, heart disease, breathing problems such as obstructive sleep apnoea and asthma, stroke, colon cancer and back problems.

Being obese can make an individual constantly tired, making it even harder to lose weight through exercise. Obese individuals are also at risk of developing liver and kidney disease, gastro-esophageal reflux disease and osteoarthritis. Infertility can be a problem and patients are at risk of developing gout.

It is evident that obesity increases the risk of developing a number of different health problems, and tackling these can be rather difficult sometimes.

### Reducing your risk

If you are obese, there are a number of different steps that can be taken to reduce the risk. Diet and exercise are the most important aspects. Following a healthy diet that is low in calories is ideal. Avoid oily and fried foods and a carbohydrate-rich diet. Oil intake must be restricted to 20g (4 teaspoon) per day. High carbohydrate intake can increase insulin levels and make obesity worse. High fat intake can increase cholesterol and body fat levels. Your daily diet must be rich in fresh fruits, vegetables and pulses. 40% of your total calorie intake must be from carbohydrate, 40% from protein and 20% from fat. This will give you the recommended daily requirements of vitamins and essential nutrients.

Regular exercise such as brisk walking, jogging, treadmill walking, cycling and swimming can help reduce weight. Weight loss is not easy; it requires determination and hard work. Aim to lose 1kg per month. Joining a gym or exercise program can help if you are struggling.

### It's time to make a start

It is never too late to start losing weight if you are obese. Just a few simple steps can help shed the fat. Lifestyle modifications should remain priority. See if you can find a partner who you can lose weight with. All the best!!

If you wish to check your BMI, visit our website at [www.baligadiagnostics.com](http://www.baligadiagnostics.com) and check out our 'tools and resources' under 'Services' tab.





## Varicose Veins – A Cosmetic Problem

In our practice, we commonly come across patients who complain of 'swollen veins' in their legs. They are worried that they may have a problem with the blood circulation in their legs. This condition that we see is called varicose veins. Here we shall take a look at them in a bit more detail.

### What are varicose veins?

If we were to look at the entire circulatory system, the heart forms the centre of it. The heart pumps blood through arteries to various parts of the body and the blood returns to the heart again through the veins. This blood that returns to the heart

from the legs has to travel against gravity in an upward direction. In order to allow for blood to flow in just one direction, the veins have valves within them. With the help of the pumping action of surrounding muscles, the veins help blood to flow from the legs back to the heart. The problem arises when these valves become incompetent. When this occurs, the blood flows back towards the leg and fills up the veins, causing them to become engorged with blood. These engorged veins are called varicose veins.

### What causes varicose veins?

Well, there are a number of reasons. Firstly, the valves become weak and do not function normally. This seems to occur more often in women than men, and is seen in the more elderly population. In some cases, genetics can play a role as well. Being overweight can cause varicose veins due to increased stress on the veins. Pregnancy is also a cause as the enlarging uterus compresses the large veins. People whose job involves prolonged standing are at risk of varicose veins. In rare cases, a blood clot in the larger veins in the leg or even a tumor in the pelvis can cause varicose veins.

### What symptoms can I have?

Most patients have no symptoms. Other than the cosmetic appearance of varicose veins, the other symptoms include fullness in the legs, leg pain when walking and mild darkening of the skin around the engorged veins. The ankles may be swollen. The skin over the area may become dry and itchy. Sometimes skin ulcers called varicose ulcers may develop. However, these symptoms are often seen in patients who have had varicose veins for years.

*Continued on page 3.....*



## Are There Really Good and Bad Oils?

Oil forms a big part of the Indian diet. We use it to fry foods, pickle foods, and use it as an essential part of almost every curry that we eat! There are different oils that we consume in our diet, and these are broadly classified as 'good oils' and 'bad oils'.

Within the oils are 2 main kinds of fats – unsaturated and saturated fats. Unsaturated fats are the good fats as they can keep cholesterol levels controlled. There are 2 kinds of unsaturated fats – poly-unsaturated and mono-unsaturated. Omega-3 fats are poly-unsaturated fats. Canola oil, sunflower oil and olive oil are rich in unsaturated fats and are 'good oils' as they bring down LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol) levels. On the other hand, oils such as palm oil, ghee and Dalda are high in saturated fats and can increase cholesterol levels. There is evidence to suggest that high intake of saturated fats can result in heart disease.

Despite this, oil intake in moderation is essential to stay healthy. But keeping an eye on good and bad oil intake is essential. This will keep cholesterol down, and help prevent atherosclerosis and coronary artery disease. If using oil for cooking, use one that is high in unsaturated fats. Avoid sweets and junk food as they are high in saturated fats and can cause obesity and cardiovascular disease.

## Weird Medical Facts!

This month, we thought we would share some really weird and rather entertaining medical facts. Nothing like keeping a health magazine light hearted! Enjoy!!

1. The blood vessels in the body measure a total of nearly 1 lakh km in length.
2. The nerve impulses travel through nerve fibres at a rate that exceeds 270 km/hr. No wonder you realise it so quickly if you step on something sharp!
3. The average person passes gas 14 times (500cc) a day. Count yourself lucky if a family member or friend does it a lot less than that!
4. Women blink twice as more as men do. There is no clear reason for it – it's just a law of nature!
5. The largest organ in the body is the skin. It's a living, breathing structure. Make sure you take care of it!



## Garlic – Unassuming yet Powerful!

Garlic is an essential herb in Indian food. But it just does not add flavour to our food; it is in fact a 'super-herb'! Research has shown garlic to help bring down cholesterol, prevent atherosclerosis and heart disease and

control blood pressure. It has powerful anti-cancer properties too, fighting the likes of lung and colon cancer. It can boost the immune system and can combat bacterial, fungal and viral infections. Its effects are down to Allicin, which is the active ingredient in garlic. It also gives it a pungent smell. The list of benefits is endless, so make sure you get your dose of garlic in your diet daily!

## Varicose Veins (continued)

### How is it treated?

A clinical diagnosis of varicose veins is often sufficient to start treatment. An ultrasound scan may help rule out deep vein thrombosis. In most cases, just simple observation is sufficient. Dry skin can be treated with a good quality moisturising cream. Leg exercises such as calf raises and sit ups can help stimulate blood flow back to the heart. When sleeping at night, keep the legs elevated slightly using 1 or 2 pillows. Daflon is a useful drug for mild cases.

New techniques have emerged where tiny catheters are inserted into the veins and radiofrequency waves are passed through it. The heat generated collapses the veins, sealing them tightly shut. In some patients, a special solution may be injected that irritates the veins causing them to close. This procedure is called Sclerotherapy, and can take a few weeks to take effect. Finally, surgery may be performed where the entire varicose veins are 'stripped off' under general anaesthesia. Surgery is the treatment of choice to treat varicose ulcers.

### Compression stockings

Compression stockings can help with the symptoms and reduce any pain, swelling and discomfort. However, they may not necessarily stop varicose veins from appearing or from getting worse. They need to be personalised to the individual patient, and are therefore measured to size. They must be worn during the day when you are active, and taken off at night. They may be required for the rest of your life, and will need changing every 4 to 6 months. Talk to your doctor about whether or not you would benefit from them.

### Is it life-threatening?

No, varicose veins are not life threatening in any way.

### How can I prevent varicose veins from developing?

Maintain a healthy weight and exercise regularly. This will keep the muscles in the leg pumping blood back to your heart effectively. Avoid wearing high heeled shoes for long periods of time as this can reduce the tone of the calf muscles. Make sure the clothes you wear are comfortable. If your job involves prolonged hours of standing or sitting, make sure you move around and exercise your calf muscles every hour for a few minutes to keep the blood circulating. If advised by your doctor, make sure you wear compression stockings.

These simple steps can help prevent the development of varicose veins, and keep your legs looking healthy for years to come!

## Your Questions Answered!

Every week, we ask our readers to send in any topics they would like discussed. Below are a couple of questions we received from a patient of ours.

**Q. 'I would like to know the indications and side effects of Fupan 40mg. What are the side effects and how can one recognise them?'**

Fupan is the trade name for the drug Pantoprazole. Pantoprazole is a medication that falls under the class of drugs called 'proton pump inhibitors' or PPIs. PPI drugs include Omeprazole and Lansoprazole as well. They act on and block certain metabolic channels in the stomach called  $H^+K^+$  ATPase that is responsible for the production of acid. By doing so, it stops the production of acid completely within the stomach.

The tablets must be taken on an empty stomach so that the acid can be eliminated before having a meal, ideally as soon as you wake up. It is useful in conditions such as heartburn, stomach ulcers and reflux disease. In these conditions, acid is responsible for the symptoms that the patient experiences.

Side effects are rare, and some patients experience dizziness and nausea. Rare cases of diarrhoea may occur. If you feel you feel unwell after taking Fupan, make sure you pay your doctor a visit!

**Q. 'I was wondering what the uses of Ultracet are and what the side effects of the drug are?'**

Ultracet is a combination of 2 drugs – Acetaminophen and Tramadol. Both of these drugs are painkillers. Tramadol is a stronger painkiller than Acetaminophen. They work by blocking the pain receptors in the body, thus reducing pain that occurs in inflammation and other conditions. Tramadol is a similar drug to morphine, but acts in a slightly different way and is not as powerful. However, in combination, Ultracet works very well in managing pain.

It is essential that Ultracet is taken in the dose that is prescribed by the doctor, and not in a higher dose. Side effects can include drowsiness, dizziness, stomach pains and tiredness. Serious side effects are rare, and can include seizures, rash and an allergic reaction to the drug. Some patients can develop diarrhoea and an increase in heart rate.

In the event of any of these occurring, stop the drug and see your doctor as soon as possible.



## Did You Know?

### Women Are As Likely As Men To Develop Heart Disease!

The incidence of heart disease is **rapidly** rising amongst Indian Women.

This increase is closely related to

- ✓ High Cholesterol
- ✓ High Blood Pressure
- ✓ Obesity
- ✓ Diabetes Mellitus
- ✓ Smoking
- ✓ Family History
- ✓ Domestic and work related stress
- ✓ Lack of exercise
- ✓ Oral Contraceptive Pills



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