

# Sowkhya<sup>TM</sup> Magazine

January 2014

## **Fresh Fruit or Fruit Juice?**

Making the right  
choice.

## **Staying Positive**

Your key to a better life in  
2014!



## **5 Steps**

To A Healthier You  
This Year.

## **Expert Interview**

‘Migraine’ With Dr.  
Farooq Maniyar.

## **Anorexia Nervosa**

An Under-  
recognised But  
BIG Problem

*And A Whole Lot More!*

**8 - Page  
Special  
New Year  
Edition!**

We would like to wish our readers

## A Happy and Prosperous New Year 2014!

Hello, and welcome to the latest edition of Sowkhya Magazine! As always, I would like to say thank you to all of you for making this venture of ours possible – we are excited to have come this far and could not have done it without your support and well wishes.

So let me begin today by wishing you all a very happy New Year! While we look forward to welcoming 2014, we remember 2013 as a special year because we started the publication of our newsletter 'Sowkhya Magazine' that year. It was an exciting and nervous time for us, and thankfully it has been warmly welcomed with open arms by our patients and readers!

The New Year brings with it new hopes, new professional and personal goals and a large list of other plans. It gives us an opportunity to evaluate our lives and create new resolutions. How many of us will consider taking measures to lead a healthy life, I wonder. I suspect that the numbers may not be too large.

Having said that, I do feel it is time that one of the New Year resolutions should include taking steps and measures towards leading a healthy, balanced and happy life. Make achieving and maintaining a normal Body Mass Index (BMI) one of your targets this year. Doing this can be very simple, and starts with small goals such as following a healthy diet that contains more fresh fruit and vegetables and less carbohydrates and fats. More challenging goals such as quitting smoking and taking regular exercise should also be on the cards. All these aspects together will help build a healthier 'you' this year.

In keeping with this theme, this month's Sowkhya Magazine has covered some essential aspects of weight management. In addition, we have included some new material as well like an expert interview and other tips and information in this 8-page special edition. We are sure you will find this useful.

It is my belief that if you enjoy good health, then you are one step closer to achieving all your other goals for the New Year. Remember to get your regular medical checkups and take your medication as and when required.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish our readers a very Happy and Prosperous New Year from all of us at Baliga Diagnostics Pvt. Ltd. God bless you all.



**Dr B G Baliga**

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### Thought For the Day

'Every worthwhile accomplishment, big or little, has its stages of drudgery and triumph: a beginning, a struggle, and a victory' – Mahatma Gandhi

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### Start Your Day With.....

How we start our morning seems to impact how our day will be. If we rush through things, the rest of the day becomes disorganised. If we are in a bad mood, then it is likely to only get worse as the day progresses. In order to make the start of your day better, we thought we would include a few quirky tips that will help you smile the whole day!

**1. Cuddle your children** – It is said that even after a hard day's work, just seeing your children can help relax you and wash away all those stresses. So why not start the day the same way? Cuddle your little ones – not only will it warm your heart, it will also tell your child you love them dearly.

**2. Listen to some good music** – Be it calming morning hymns or your favourite pop band, listening to good music in the morning can set the mood for the rest of your day. Choose wisely!

**3. Start with a motivational 'thought for the day'** – Remember these in school? They served a purpose, though as kids we probably did not see it. Motivational thoughts can increase productivity.

**4. Exercise** – Get the heart pumping and blood flowing with 30 minutes of exercise. Doctor recommended.

**5. Study** – When the mind is at its 'freshest', studying your course material and textbooks will help you retain facts better. Early to bed and early to rise..... you know the rest!

Just a few tips to get you on your way to a better and brighter morning, and an enjoyable day!

# Making 2014 The Best Year Of Your Life.... Yet!

At the start of every New Year, we always hope and wish for it to be a great one – one that is filled with happiness, success and health of our children and love and good wishes for everyone we care about. We also jot down our New Year resolutions – steps that we believe will make our life better.

While making life-changing resolutions are not really that hard, sticking to them is where the difficulty lies. Many of us are tremendously enthusiastic at the start of implementing our resolutions, but over time the enthusiasm that we have tends to wane a little. Take joining a health centre for example. One of the most common New Year resolutions that we make is to lose weight and get healthy. In pursuit of that prospect, we join a gym or start going for a walk (or jog) everyday. In most cases, this lasts just a few days, and we revert back to our previous routine within no time, waiting for the next year when we can 're-implement' the same resolution yet again. Sound familiar?

## Embrace the present

Okay, so the above is a fairly common example, but not all of us make the same resolutions. And New Years is not just about resolutions – it's also about having a fresh start. We have all made decisions in our lives that have affected us and our loved ones – some of these decisions have worked in our favour, but many of them have not in retrospect. We have moments that we have celebrated and moments that we regret. We tend to live our lives reflecting on the bad things that have happened in our lives, rather than savour the good moments that we have been blessed with in this world.

The American inventor Charles Kettering said – '*You can't have a better tomorrow if you are thinking about yesterday all the time*'. Easier said than done you say? Well, agreed, but it is no doubt a reality. Many a time the decisions that we have made in the past or the events that have occurred in our lives tend to stop us from doing what we want to do at this current point in time. The fact of the matter is that unless we are brave enough to take that next step, we will never know what the future brings to us. Over time, we start to drown ourselves in a sea of negativity; one that will engulf us like a huge tidal wave and take away the bright light that burns within us. Every opportunity is seen in a pessimistic light, with the negatives outweighing the positives each and every time. Like Winston Churchill said – '*a pessimist sees difficulty in each opportunity. An optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty*'. It is after all the harsh truth; one that many of us are aware of but find great difficulty in coping with.

## Pause and reassess

In the world of medicine, there is a popular practice – when things get hard with managing a patient, take a step back and reassess the situation. Doing so might bring to light a fact that had been missed, and this one step can change the outcome of the patient for the better. It is all about patience and re-analysis. The same holds true in life as well. When our current situation becomes too overwhelming, take a step back and assess the situation in detail. Is there something that you are unnecessarily worrying about? Is there something that is stopping you from progressing in life?

## Staying positive

In this day and age where we are riddled with troubles, it is hard to look at anything in a favourable light. But if you think about it closely, isn't life all about creating opportunities for yourself that will make your life better? Renowned author Mark Twain said – '*I have had a lot of worries in my life, most of which have never happened*'. The bottom line is that we are responsible for our own success and failures. And with a positive attitude, anything is possible.

2014 brings a fresh start to many of us. It is a time to forgive, a time to reflect and a time to improve our lives. '*Today is a new beginning, a chance to turn your failures into achievements and your sorrows into so goods. No room for excuses*' (Joel Brown). We at Baliga Diagnostics hope that this year brings you and your family health, happiness and all that you wish for. We leave you with a saying by the great Mahatma Gandhiji – '*A man is but a product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes*'. God bless you all.

## Weight Loss Myths – Identifying Fiction

Losing weight can be a hard task, so it should come as no surprise that some people will try literally everything to lose weight. Blind belief that a particular technique will work can be accompanied by failure and an adverse affect on one's health. So what are these weight loss myths that are clearly fiction and not fact? Let's take a look at some of these here.

**Myth - Crash diets bring weight down fast** – Starving oneself to lose weight does not help; it can in fact cause weight gain in the long term. Crash diets can increase cravings for sugary and fatty foods, causing the weight gain.

**Myth – Slimming pills keep the weight down** – There is no evidence to support this in any way.

**Myth – Skipping a meal will help reduce weight** – Not at all! Missing meals can make an individual tired and lethargic. Over time, it can result in nutritional deficiencies.

**Fact – There are no foods that burn fat** – There is much chatter about how foods like green tea and grapefruit can help reduce weight. The fact is that these foods are healthy in regular portions, but do not help bring the weight down. However, they do have a number of other health benefits.

**Myth – Late evening eating increases weight** – It's not the time that you eat that matters, it's the amount you eat. Keep meals small and exercise regularly, and your weight will come down.





## Urticaria

Skin diseases are common. One such condition is a rash called urticaria. Typically, this rash appears as a raised, itchy rash that can start on one part of the body and spread to the rest of it.



Let's take a look at this condition a bit further here.

### Causes and triggers

Urticaria is caused by an allergic reaction of some sort. It could be to shellfish, peanuts, latex rubber or even dust. Certain drugs such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and aspirin are known triggers. Emotional stress and alcohol are also known risk factors for flare-ups. Urticaria is also associated with clinical conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus.

### Clinical symptoms

The typical symptom of urticaria is itching. Patients have a rash on their body that appears like a red, patchy and raised area on the skin. The size can vary between a few millimetres to the size of a small ball. Symptoms can last for a few hours to even a few weeks, though in most cases the rash gets better after 12 to 24 hours.

### Diagnosis and Treatment

The appearance of the rash is usually enough to make a diagnosis, along with the associated clinical history. Blood tests can help identify the presence of any associated conditions.

Treatment options include avoiding the triggers and treating the flare-ups using anti-histamine medication such as cetirizine. Simple lifestyle measures such as stopping alcohol and caffeine intake can help. In more severe cases, steroids may be prescribed for a short period to help reduce the inflammation and itching. Specialist treatments such as ultraviolet light treatment are offered by dermatologists to treat more advanced cases. Other advanced treatments include cyclosporine which modulates the way the body responds to the triggers. Ultimately, it is just preventative measures combined with different treatments that can help treat this troublesome clinical condition.

## Calculate Your Body Mass Index

The Body Mass Index (BMI) is a clinical measure used to determine if a patient is in a healthy weight range or obese. It is calculated by measuring the height and weight and using a specific formula  $BMI = \text{Weight (kg)} / \text{Height (m)}^2$ .



Below are the different ranges –

<18.5	Underweight
18.5 - 22.9	Health Weight
23 - 27.9	Overweight
> 28	Obese

These values are different in South Asian individuals when compared

to Caucasians. Maintaining a healthy BMI forms a small part of looking after one's health. Be that as it may, a high BMI is closely linked to an increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes.

If maths is not your thing, then visit our website, input your data and use our calculator to evaluate your BMI for free!

## 5-Step Plan To A Healthy 2014

With a brand new year upon us, it is time for each and every one of us to start making changes that will make our lives better. Be it better money management, rekindling of relationships with family members or even deciding on living a healthier lifestyle, there are just a few steps that we need to take to improve it all.

Now, we clearly cannot give you advice on how to manage your money, but what we can do is talk about 5 essential steps that we think you must adopt this year to improve your health. We like to call it HEART. Confused? The table below describes it a bit more clearly.

### Steps to Healthy Living

# 5

- H – Healthy Diet
- E – Exercise Regularly
- A – Avoid Smoking
- R – Restrict Salt, Sugar and Fats
- T – Take Your Medication

A healthy diet is one that contains the right proportions of fruits, vegetables, proteins, fats and carbohydrates. Eating at least 5 portions of fruits and vegetables a day is recommended. Consuming at least 3 portions of oily fish (sardines, mackerel etc) a week will provide the body with the required heart-protecting omega-3 fatty acids. If vegetarian, then supplements can be taken on advice of your doctor. Decrease your saturated fat intake. Olive oil and sunflower oil are the best oils available. Avoid palm oil, groundnut and coconut oil.

Regular exercise is essential to keep the body weight ideal. The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week; ideally this is spread out over a few days. Aerobic exercise such as brisk walking, jogging, swimming and other sports is recommended. Exercises such as yoga etc can help as relaxation therapy for stress, but do not offer the cardiovascular benefits that aerobic exercise does. Always seek advice from your doctor before starting any exercise.

Smoking is associated with high risk of heart disease, vascular disease, obesity and cancer, just to name a few conditions. Cigarette smoke contains tar which can deposit on the lungs and in the arteries cause lung disease and cardiovascular disease. The toxins also promote the uncontrolled growth of immature cells in the body, leading to different cancers. Stopping smoking takes determination and perseverance, so make sure you take a positive step and stop today!

Unrestricted salt intake is a well recognised cause for high blood pressure. Keeping the overall salt intake low can keep blood pressure levels under control. High sugar intake is associated with obesity and diabetes. Sugar is present in soft drinks, sweets and junk food, so keep the intake of these to a minimum. Fats are present in high quantities in fried foods and sweets. In particular, the high levels of saturated fats in these foods can cause elevated cholesterol levels and atherosclerosis. All the above are risk factors for the development of heart disease and stroke.

Take any medication that is prescribed regularly. The maximum benefit of medicines is obtained when patients also follow the lifestyle changes that are recommended. Missing medicines can make a patient unwell as the condition that was being treated is no longer being done.

Follow this HEART regime, and you will make 2014 your healthiest year yet!



## Fresh Fruit Juice vs. Fresh Fruit – Who Wins?

There has been a fair amount of controversy over the recent years regarding the benefits of fruits. Not all of us can get the recommended amount of fruit in our diet every day. In the western world, the advice now given to the general public is to consume at least 5 portions of fruits and vegetables daily. 1 piece of fruit or a cupful of vegetables classes as one portion.

But is it wise to consume fruit juices instead of fresh fruit? There has been a tremendous amount of advertising on television and in magazines of the 'health benefits' of drinking fruit juices. But what is the real truth?

In a study published by the Harvard School of Public Health, individuals who consume fruit juices are a higher risk of developing type II diabetes. This study prompted a great deal of revision of beliefs that fruit juices are actually good for you. A number of theories have emerged from this. It is believed that fresh fruits such as grapes and berries contain compounds such as anthocyanins can reduce the risk of developing a heart attack, which fruit juices lack. Fruits are also rich in fibre, which releases energy slowly. The reduction in the development of diabetes is over 20% in those individuals who consumed at least 2 portions of fruit a week when compared to those who consumed only one portion a month.

The above research reinforces the benefits of eating fresh fruit. It is not clear whether the benefits are with every fruit available and more research needs conducting in the future. Preliminary results are clearly promising, and research has demonstrated that just changing the consumption of 3 servings of fruit juices a week to 3 portions of fresh fruit instead reduces the risk of future diabetes by 7%.

That being said, both fruit juices and fresh fruits are rich in vitamins and minerals. But if one were to compare the long term health benefits, there is no doubt that fresh fruits come out a winner!

## Anorexia Nervosa – A BIG Problem

Maintaining an ideal body weight can be a daunting task. A lot of how we look and what we weigh depends on our perception of ourselves when we look in the mirror. If we think we are overweight and find that our clothes are getting tighter, we try and lose weight. If we think we are too thin, then we try and eat more or perform weight training exercises to put on muscle mass.

But this sort of healthy perception does not exist in every one. Some individuals may look in the mirror and think they are overweight, when in reality they fall in the ideal body weight category. This distorted perception can lead to habits that ultimately cause body weight to drop to such low levels that the person's skin and bones are all that one can see. This is a clinical condition called anorexia nervosa.

### Defining Anorexia Nervosa

Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder. It is also a well recognised mental health condition. Individuals think they are fat when they are slim, and attempt to lose more and more weight. It is closely associated with depression and self-harm.

### What are the causes?

Depression, stress and anxiety are common triggers. Obsessive, compulsive behaviour is also a cause. Being a perfectionist can be a risk factor. The constant portrayal in the media that being slim and thin is beautiful can alter how a teenager perceives himself or herself, and their attempts to look like these models can lead to anorexia.

### Symptoms and signs

People with anorexia make every attempt to make sure they lose weight. If they eat a bigger meal than usual, they will try and vomit it out. They tend to over-exercise and do not consume sufficient calories. Skin changes and dental disease can occur. They over-indulge in laxative use and may even attempt to take water tablets (diuretics) to lose water, though these actually have no major impact on the patient.

When eating their regular food, patients with anorexia tend to leave behind a large portion on the plate. Every attempt will be made to show that they have eaten enough food, including lying about their calorie intake. Missing meals is common.

As patients vomit out any food that they eat, the acid from the stomach contents can erode the teeth and cause tooth decay. They believe that they are fat and constantly check their weight to see if they have dropped a few kilograms. Heart problems can occur, and patients can feel extremely tired. Liver damage, kidney damage and bone thinning (osteoporosis) are well recognised complications. Patients can have fits. Miscarriages can occur in pregnancy. Clearly this condition can result in death if not treated.

### Treatment

Treatment of anorexia requires specialist psychiatric input. A consultation with a nutritionist is also required. Psychiatric treatment ranges from cognitive behavioural therapy to analytic therapy and therapy with the family involved as well. Any weight that the patient gains should be steady and over a period of time.

Medical treatments include drugs such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors and Olanzapine. In some patients who refuse treatment, forced therapy may be required to save their life. In a nutshell, anorexia nervosa is life threatening and is a problem that should be targeted head on.



## Cinnamon – 'Bark' Up The Right Tree..

Cinnamon bark is a popular spice in Indian cuisine. Its rich pungent aroma is welcoming

in any household. But its benefits are not just limited to our cuisine and its pleasant smell.

Studies have demonstrated that cinnamon is rich in essential oils that can fight bacteria (anti-microbial) and harmful free radicals (anti-oxidant) in the body. It can dilate the blood vessels and increases blood flow around the heart. It reduces blood cholesterol levels by blocking an important enzyme that is responsible for cholesterol synthesis. It makes the body more sensitive to insulin, and helps keep the blood sugar levels under control. All these effects are backed by clinical research. There is no doubt that when it comes to our spices, cinnamon is right on top!

## Expert Interview 'Migraine'

*In our new series of interviews with experts, we talk to Dr Farooq Maniyar, a Consultant Neurologist and headache specialist about migraine and how it can be managed.*

**SM: Thank you for taking the time for this interview Dr Maniyar.**

**Dr Maniyar:** My Pleasure!

**SM: Can we start with a simple question – What is migraine?**

**Dr Maniyar:** Migraine is a disorder that causes headache and other symptoms like sickness, increased sensitivity to light, sound, and movement. Most patients prefer to remain in a quieter and dark place and avoid movement.

**SM: Is every headache a migraine attack?**

**Dr Maniyar:** Migraine is one of the most common causes of headache, but not the only cause. Therefore every headache is not migraine. Perhaps the most common cause of headache is what is called tension-type headache that causes a dull, generalized milder pain that is not associated with sickness or increased sensitivity to light or sound. This is the headache that most of us can get from time to time. Then there is cluster headache which is very rare compared to migraine and tension type headache. Cluster headache causes severe pains around one eye associated with redness and watering of the eye. All these headaches are called primary headaches since they are not associated with any structural changes seen on brain. In other words the brain scan is usually normal. On the other hand, headache can sometimes be caused due to structural changes within the brain like a brain tumour or changes in pressure within the skull cavity. These causes can be diagnosed with appropriate brain scans. The secondary causes of headache are much less common than primary causes.

**SM: Why does migraine develop?**

**Dr Maniyar:** Most patients with migraine have other family members affected by the same disorder. Therefore, there is definitely a genetic link, although the exact genes and their role have not been yet well understood. Common triggers of migraine include changes in stress levels, sleep patterns, food intake, dehydration, weather changes etc. Thus, it appears that in those who are genetically predisposed to migraine, any significant change in routine can trigger off a migraine attack.

**SM: What are the common symptoms that patients with migraine may experience?**

**Dr Maniyar:** One sided headache is the most common symptom. However, it may be felt on both sides of head especially when the pain becomes severe. Sometimes the pain starts on both sides of the head. The headache is typically described as a throbbing headache that many of my patients describe as 'like my heart is beating in my head'. Other terms used to describe the pain include 'dull' or 'pressure-like'. The pain is usually severe enough to disrupt work. Another common symptom is sickness and vomiting. Interestingly, patients feel much better if they vomit. Bright light and loud sounds tends to make the pain worse. Therefore, patients prefer to be in a darker and quieter place. Any movement like bending down or climbing stairs can worsen the pain, so patients prefer to remain still.

About 25% patients experience distinct symptoms called aura. The most common is visual aura that causes zigzag lines, flashing spots or dark spots in front of eyes. These usually start in one corner and then spread across the eyes, typically lasting between 5-60 minutes. Sometimes the aura can be sensory i.e. tingling or numbness that starts on one side and then spreads upward or downwards. Patients can also experience dizziness i.e. a rotational feeling and more

rarely weakness on one side of the body.

**SM: Are there any specific triggers to avoid?**

**Dr Maniyar:** Any significant change in routine can trigger off migraine attacks. So, patients should try and maintain a strict routine in terms of eating and sleep times. Dehydration is another common trigger so make sure you drink enough fluids especially in the summer months. Certain food items like bananas, vanilla, mono sodium glutamate found in Chinese food etc. can trigger attacks. Triggers vary between patients so patients should make a note of their individual triggers. Alcohol tends to trigger attacks, especially wine (red or white). If so, it may be better to avoid that particular type of alcohol, or gently pace oneself when drinking alcohol, paying particular attention to drinking enough water. Similarly, pacing oneself i.e. starting slow and gradually building intensity during exercise can avoid or reduce headache. Another common trigger in women is menstruation. Typically, the attacks start two days before the menstrual period is due, although this can be variable. If the menstrual periods are regular, it is possible to start treatment before the estimated date of the period. Sometimes, hormonal treatments like the contraceptive pill or hormonal patches can be used in these cases.

**SM: What tests will a patient need for a diagnosis?**

**Dr Maniyar:** The diagnosis is made after a careful history and examination. There are no specific tests, though sometimes a brain scan (MRI) can be done to rule out other causes.

**SM: What treatments can patient have for migraine?**

**Dr Maniyar:** Treatments of migraine can be acute (treatment of pain when it comes) and prophylactic (treatment to prevent the attacks). For acute treatment of migraine attacks, if the attacks are mild, one can take paracetamol or non steroidal drugs. Specialised drugs like sumatriptan tablets or injection can be used. Generally, acute treatment works best when taken as soon as possible during the attack. Opioids like codeine, tramadol, morphine etc should be avoided in migraine since they have side effects and can cause 'medication overuse' headache.

In those who experience frequent attacks, at least two in a month, should consider prophylactic treatment. These tablets need to be taken daily and can take few weeks to few months to act. Treatment options include propranolol, sodium valproate, flunarizine etc. Botulinum toxin injections, greater occipital nerve block and occipital nerve stimulation are also specialist treatments. Newer treatment options include trans-cranial magnetic stimulation and non-invasive vagal nerve stimulation.

**SM: Can it be cured?**

**Dr Maniyar:** Unfortunately there is no cure for migraine. One can use the acute treatment and the prophylactic options to reduce the burden of the problem, in most cases quite successfully.

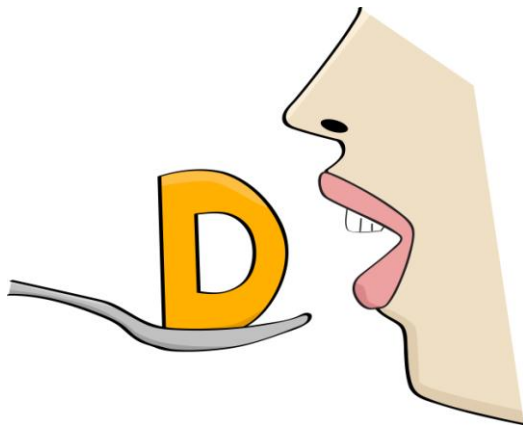
**SM: That's great. Thank you for your valuable insight Dr Maniyar. We are sure our readers will appreciate it.**

**Dr Maniyar:** Once again, it's my pleasure!



**Dr Farooq Maniyar** is an award-winning Consultant Neurologist at Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals in Essex, UK. He has authored and co-authored many research papers on headache published in renowned journals globally. Read more about him at [www.farooqmaniyar.com](http://www.farooqmaniyar.com).





## Vitamin D – Essential Facts About An Essential Vitamin.

Our body requires a number of different nutrients to function normally. Vitamin D is one such nutrient that has a variety of different functions in the body. Women (and men) in India are surprisingly low in Vitamin D levels. This can have detrimental effects on the body, and can affect your health in the long term.

Vitamin D is what is called a 'fat soluble' vitamin, and forms an essential component of our bones. It plays an important role in the regulation of calcium and phosphate levels in the blood, and these are primary components of bones and teeth. Once vitamin D is created in the body, it is converting into an active hormone in order to exert its benefits.

### Sources of Vitamin D

Vitamin D is primarily obtained from sunlight. Our skin absorbs the sunlight, and a series of different chemical reactions occur which ultimately results in the production of vitamin D. Besides sunlight, vitamin D is also available in a number of different food sources including fortified foods (cereals, margarine), eggs and oily fish such as sardines, mackerel and salmon. Cod liver oil supplements also contain vitamin D in them, but tend to have higher amounts of vitamin A in them (taking too much cod liver oil can be harmful). Vegetarian sources are rare, and people who are vegetarian rely on sunlight for natural synthesis of vitamin D.

### Daily Requirement

There are no clear recommendations as to how much vitamin D South Asian individuals require. However, the normal value is above 30ng/mL. You may be surprised to hear that South Asian women seem to have particularly low levels of vitamin D in their bodies. One of the likely reasons is the lack of exposure to sunlight, which is because women tend to wear clothing that covers their entire body.

### Problems with low Vitamin D levels

Individuals who are low in vitamin D tend to suffer from generalised tiredness, body ache and weakness. Some may find that their bones and joints are painful. However, a lot of patients who are low in vitamin D levels may not have any symptoms. The effect of low vitamin D levels build up over time and patients can develop a condition called osteomalacia, which is characterised by softening of the bones. Pregnant women who have low levels of vitamin D are at risk of developing gestational diabetes and small babies. Immunity levels may reduce and patients can become more prone to developing viral infections.

### Supplementation

In cases where the body is not producing sufficient vitamin D, additional supplementation can be obtained by consuming foods that are rich in vitamin D. Supplements are also available and side effects are rare. At Baliga Diagnostics Pvt. Ltd., we can check your Vitamin D levels and prescribe treatment if clinically indicated.

### Benefits of Vitamin D

- 1) Maintain the strength and structure of bones and teeth
- 2) Maintain adequate muscle function
- 3) Build the immune system to fight infections
- 4) Development of the brain
- 5) Keep the lungs and airways healthy
- 6) Promote normal heart function and healthy circulation
- 7) Prevent certain forms of cancer
- 8) Enhances sensitivity to insulin, promoting better blood glucose control and glucose homeostasis.

## The Sphygmomanometer – A Piece of Medical History



In the 1600s, William Harvey provided the medical world with the understanding of blood circulation. This was followed by a need to measure blood volume and blood pressure. In 1881, Samuel Siegfried Karl Ritter

Von Basch came up with a genius idea of connecting a water-filled rubber bulb against a blood vessel to restrict blood flow. This was connected to a mercury column and a BP reading was obtained. Scipione Riva-Rocci improved on this model in 1896 by creating a cuff that winds round the arm that built an even pressure on inflation. Finally, in 1905, Dr Nikolai Korotkoff described systolic and diastolic blood pressure by listening to distinct sounds called 'korotkoff sounds', which is what doctors listen to when checking the blood pressure. Since then great changes have emerged, making BP checking easy.

## Humour Corner!





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# Walking – Every Step Makes A Difference!

We all know that regular physical activity can keep us healthy and fit. Time and time again, clinical studies and scientific research have demonstrated the benefit that exercise has on reducing the blood pressure, preventing diabetes, and keeping our cholesterol levels low. In turn, this has a direct impact on heart disease and stroke, reducing one's chance of developing these life-threatening conditions.

But the fact of the matter is that we just do not get enough physical exercise every day. Our busy jobs and hectic lifestyles mean that we are exhausted by the end of the day and the possibility of getting any form of exercise goes straight out of the window. But getting your daily dose of exercise is not really that hard! A simple exercise such as walking can help keep you lean, trim, and fit.

Walking does not necessarily have to be in a park or at the gym. Simply walking to and from work every day can give you the benefits that the exercise brings. Of course, the walk must be brisk and should be a reasonable distance – ideally 2 or 3 km each way. Climbing up stairs instead of taking the lift is another way to get exercise. Make sure you speak with your doctor before you start or perform any form of physical activity.

The benefits of walking regularly are innumerable. But it needs to be performed in the right way. If you are just starting out, make sure you start with short distances to see how you cope. Make sure you have comfortable footwear so as to prevent blister development. Once you get used to the routine, start walking a little faster. Brisk walking has been shown to increase the heart rate, which is beneficial for cardiac conditioning. Make an attempt to walk 10,000 steps a day if you can – most of us walk around 4000 steps a day, so it should not be too difficult a task to achieve. Use a pedometer if you have to. If you feel tired, take a break. Once you have completed your walk, stretch your muscles for a few minutes. Drink water to keep hydrated – avoid drinking soft drinks and fruit juices as these have too much sugar in them and will make your entire walk pointless.

Mix and match your walking routine. Walk to work, in the park, to the local shop, in the gym and on the footpath – make every step you take count towards your regular exercise. Don't expect to see a change in your health within a few days; it will be a few weeks to months before you notice how much more energetic you are and how healthy you feel. Combine your exercise routine with a balanced diet, and you should start to lose unwanted body weight and appear slimmer in the mirror. Set yourself a target and be determined to reach it.

It is fascinating how a simple routine exercise like walking can keep you fit and healthy. Best of all, it can be done anytime, anywhere! So put your walking shoes on today and go out and get that all important walk!

## 'If I Were To Do One Positive Thing Today, It Would Be....'

Almost all of us start off a New Year with resolutions. We wish to lose weight, stop smoking or decide on something weird and wonderful. At Baliga Diagnostics Pvt. Ltd, we always wish our patients well, and believe that a positive frame of mind can make a big difference to our lives and the lives of the people we love. So, we would love to hear what the one positive step you will take this year that will make yours or a loved one's life better. We will publish a select few next month – don't worry, it will be anonymous!

Send us your thoughts at [contact@baligadiagnostics.com](mailto:contact@baligadiagnostics.com). We look forward to hearing from you!

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