

Raffles HealthNews

A PUBLICATION BY *RafflesMedicalGroup*

Get to the
Core

Foods to
Improve
Gut Health

The
ABCDE
of Hepatitis

A Gastro
Intestinal
Special

5 Points
to Better
Gastro
Health

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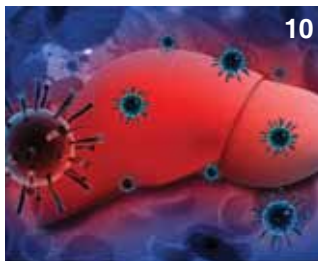
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Dear Readers,

Welcome to another issue of Raffles Health News. This issue will concentrate on matters of the gut.

I've learnt in my medical school years that the stomach is a fascinating body organ. Some of you may think of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract as nothing but a long tube that extends from the mouth to the anus. Yes, it is long; nine metres to be exact! But far from being an inert tube, it is a living organ that helps process food so that your body can absorb nutrients along the way. Each segment from the mouth, stomach, small intestines and the colon is unique in their functions and capabilities. The GI tract has quite a few other organs that are attached to it - the most important of which are your liver and pancreas.

Many GI conditions will cause you to seek your doctor's advice. As a family physician, I see patients with diarrhoea, vomiting, constipation, gastric pains, bloatedness and symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) every day. Most of these are harmless and will go away after a couple of days; some are more annoying and may warrant further investigations and long term lifestyle modifications and treatment. Once in a while I will see a patient that will exhibit symptoms as well as risk factors that will make me worry; colorectal cancer. Learn more on page 18 as we share its signs and symptoms.

Hepatitis B is endemic in Singapore with 1 in 35 persons being carriers. Yet hepatitis is sorely under-discussed. Many carriers are unaware of their condition as it oftentimes has no symptoms. We demystify hepatitis in our cover story (page 10).

Learn how to recognise some common GI conditions (page 14) in this edition of HealthNews. Our experts will take you through the important signs and symptoms to look out for so that you can seek advice from our friendly doctors in a timely manner. In addition, you will learn diet tips to prevent constipation (page 28), haemorrhoids and reflux (page 22).

The GI's humble function is key to your nutritional health. And the more you know how it operates, the better your general well-being. I believe you will find this issue interesting and helpful. Hope you enjoy it!

Points to Better Health

Accupoints that can help eliminate abdominal fats and improve digestion.

Pg 34

Flat Tummy Alert!

Bothered by fat deposits or sagging skin? Cosmetic surgery can help restore your waistline and confidence.

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Know Your Poop

Your stools can say a lot about your health. Learn the signs on when medical help is needed.

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✿ Also, don't forget to subscribe to our monthly e-Healthnews at
healthnews@rafflesmedical.com

Dr Melvyn Wong
Senior Physician Leader
Raffles Medical



New Docs on the Block

We warmly welcome the following doctors to the Raffles family!

Dr Tan Siew Kiang
Specialist in Dermatology & Consultant
Raffles Skin & Aesthetics



After completion of her basic specialist training in internal medicine and obtaining membership of the Royal College of Physicians (UK) and Master of Medicine (Singapore), Dr Tan Siew Kiang went on to advance her specialist training in dermatology at the National Skin Centre and Changi General Hospital. Prior to joining Raffles Hospital, Dr Tan was a dermatologist at Changi General Hospital and a clinical tutor for the National University of Singapore.

Dr Chua Siew Eng
Specialist in Psychiatry & Consultant
Raffles Counseling Centre



Dr Chua Siew Eng is a specialist psychiatrist with over 20 years of clinical experience. She studied Medical Sciences at Cambridge University, and graduated in Clinical Medicine from Oxford University in 1990. She received training at Cambridge University, the Maudsley Hospital and Institute of Psychiatry, London, and became a specialist in 1995. She is trained in general adult, child and adolescent, eating disorder, consultation, rehabilitation, and old age psychiatry.

Advanced Cardiac Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Service

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- Heart Failure
- Myocardial Function
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- Pericardial Disease
- Valvular Heart Disease

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MEDICINE strengthened
by knowledge from
Mayo Clinic



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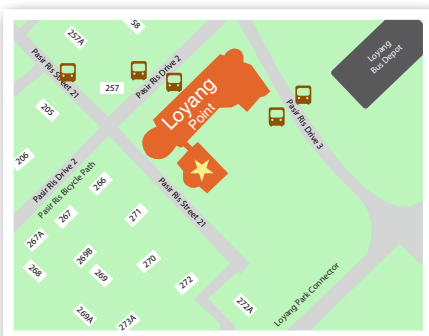
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Now Serving You in 13 Cities Across Asia

On 30 March 2016, a ceremony to rebrand seven of our joint venture clinics in China and Cambodia to Raffles Medical was held in Beijing and graced by Guest-of-Honour Mr Stanley Loh, Singapore's Ambassador to China.

Dr Loo Choon Yong, Executive Chairman, Raffles Medical Group, and Mr John Williams, Managing Director, Partnership and Government Affairs of International SOS China, officiated at the ceremony which was witnessed by the clinics' guests.

"Patients can expect the Raffles brand of consistent, seamless and integrated medical services regardless of the clinic they visit. Through sharing of medical information across the Group, Raffles physicians are able to provide greater convenience and continuity of care for patients travelling throughout the region," said Dr Loo.



Loyang Point Clinic has Relocated!

Raffles Medical at Loyang Point has relocated to

Loyang Point Blk 259 #02-33 Pasir Ris Street 21.

We look forward to serving you there!

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Closed on Public Holidays.

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2.00pm – 5.30pm

Mon & Wed: 8.30am – 1.00pm
2.00pm – 5.30pm
6.30pm – 9.30pm

Closed on Public Holidays.

Our Heartiest Congratulations to...



We congratulate Mr Muhammad Hanif Bin Kamsani, Senior Enrolled Nurse at Raffles Hospital's Intensive Care Unit for winning the coveted 2016 Healthcare Humanity Award. The Healthcare Humanity Awards are given to outstanding healthcare workers who are inspirational role models for going the extra mile to offer care and comfort to the sick and infirmed.

Besides his full-time job as a nurse, Hanif has been volunteering his time in community service over the last six years. Hanif also conducts first aid courses in secondary schools.

We are proud of you, Hanif!



We would like to commend three staff nurses SN Clemente Jhoeanna Lyn Sanchez, SSN Helen Ituralde Oso and SSN Wong See Lea from the Paediatric Ward for receiving the Exemplary Service Award, presented by Dr Donald Poon, General Manager of Raffles Hospital.

The Exemplary Service Award is Raffles Medical Group's dedicated platform to honour staff who have delivered quality care and excellent service in their work.

The three nurses were applauded through a letter of appreciation, that was published in The Straits Times Forum page, for their excellent service and care rendered to a young patient while on duty. Well done ladies!

Understanding Dementia

Warning signs of dementia often start off as something innocuous. This includes confusion of time and place, misplacing things, changes in personality and difficulty in solving problems.

On 8 and 9 April, students from the Nanyang Technological University held an exhibition at Raffles Hospital to raise awareness about dementia and the challenges patients and caregivers face.



Staying Abreast for Life



Standing from left: Dr Darren Ng (Raffles Surgery Centre), Dr Anthony Tang (Raffles Surgery Centre), Dawn Tan (CNA presenter), Physician Chua Hui Zi (Raffles Chinese Medicine), Physician Miao Meng (Raffles Chinese Medicine), Dr Lynette Ngo (Raffles Cancer Centre) and Dr Henry Oscar (Raffles Radiology).

On 23 April 2016, Raffles Hospital held its breast health seminar featuring our multidisciplinary team from Raffles Surgery Centre, Raffles Cancer Centre, Raffles Radiology and Raffles Chinese Medicine.

The successful event was hosted by Channel NewsAsia presenter Dawn Tan to a full-house crowd. The seminar aims to educate the attendees as the doctors shared professional insights and advice for treating issues relating to the breast. "It was a very enlightening and educational session on awareness and prevention, a big thank you to the excellent panelist of speakers," said Ms Valerie Tan, one of the participants at the seminar.



Know Your Allergies

An allergy is a hypersensitivity to a substance that is ordinarily harmless to most people. The types of allergies range from allergic rhinitis (hay fever) to allergies involving the skin and eyes, pets, food and even drugs. Allergic symptoms can be classified as mild, moderate and severe. They may include symptoms such as itchiness, hives, cramps and even swelling and breathing difficulties.

At Raffles Hospital, we can help you to understand allergies and also find out what you can possibly be allergic to.

These are the investigations available at the Allergy Clinic:

- Skin Prick Test
- Blood Immunoglobulin E / G (Ig E / G) Measurement
- Food / Drug Challenge

For more information or to make an appointment, please call us at 6311 2000 or email allergy@rafflesmedical.com.



Wiping Out Colorectal Cancer Together

In support of Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month in March, Raffles Hospital offered FOBT (Faecal Occult Blood Test) kits and screenings to individuals aged 50 and above from 1 March to 30 April 2016.

Within a span of two months, a total of 404 kits were sent back for analysis, of which 5.7 per cent of the kits analysed were tested positive and required further follow-up.

Colorectal cancer is highly treatable in its early stages and we would like to thank everyone for taking steps to wipe out the high incidence of colorectal cancer cases in Singapore.

The

ABC
DE

of Hepatitis

By Magdalene Lee, Noel Lee and Stanley Wong

Some of us, especially kids, may balk at the idea of seeing pig or chicken liver in our dishes. However, do you know the liver plays an important part in ensuring our body's smooth functioning? Aside from detoxifying our body and metabolising nutrients, it also produces proteins and blood clotting factors to aid energy storage and release, digestion and other important functions.

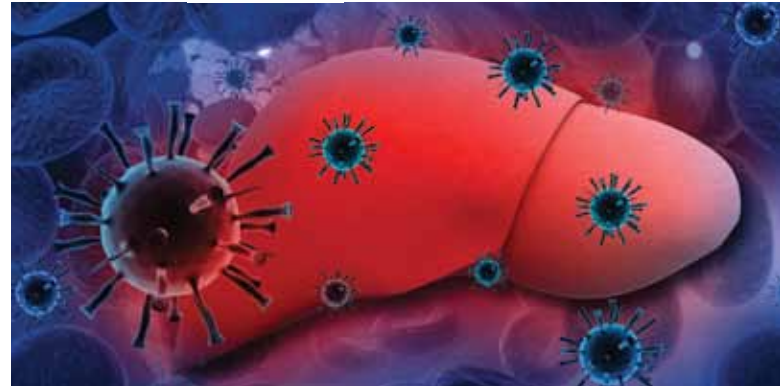
The liver acts as a filter for our body, helping it to detoxify harmful substances and metabolises nutrients. It is also susceptible to various ailments, one of which is hepatitis. A general term for the inflammation of the liver, hepatitis may lead to liver cirrhosis, cancer and liver failure.

Hepatitis virus is a virus that attacks the liver, causing inflammation, which may lead to complications if left untreated. Let's find out more about the five known hepatitis subtypes – A, B, C, D, and E.



Hepatitis Exposé

Hepatitis as a medical condition is relatively unknown and poorly understood. Many are even unaware that they have hepatitis. Dr Lim Lee Guan, Specialist in Gastroenterology & Consultant, Raffles Internal Medicine Centre, helps decipher the ABCDEs of hepatitis.



Myth 01 : You can get hepatitis only from eating contaminated seafood.

Fact:

Hepatitis A and E can be spread through consuming contaminated food, water, and even ice. Developing countries are at higher risk for Hepatitis A and E infection. On the other hand, Hepatitis B, C and D are spread through blood and body fluids, such as sexual contact with someone who is infected, contaminated needles or blood transfusions, or as an infant born to Hepatitis B infected mothers. More than 90 per cent of Hepatitis B cases are transmitted from mother to child during birth. Hepatitis D infection only occurs in people who already have chronic Hepatitis B infection.

Myth 02 : Viral hepatitis is very rare.

Fact:

Hepatitis B and C are the most common infectious diseases in the world, with more than 350 million people infected with it worldwide. In Singapore, about 6 per cent of adults are Hepatitis B carriers. However, many do not know they have the virus as the condition often has no noticeable symptoms. If you feel unwell or uncertain about your health, it's best to visit a medical professional to get tested. Hepatitis B and C may lead to chronic diseases and are important causes of liver cirrhosis and cancer. That said, Hepatitis D is rare in developed countries and requires the viral particles of Hepatitis B virus to replicate.

Myth 03 : Those infected with hepatitis will get very sick and die from a serious liver disease or cancer.

Fact:

For every 1000 older persons (age > 50) who catch Hepatitis A, about 18 will die from it*. Pregnant women who get infected with Hepatitis E face a higher risk of death from that infection, but numbers of such cases are low.

90 per cent of adults infected with Hepatitis B in adulthood have an acute infection which usually lasts for a few weeks or months. These people will recover fully and not have any lasting problems. Hepatitis B transmitted vertically from mother to child is usually chronic.

Chronic Hepatitis B and C carriers are at higher risk of liver cancer and should have regular medical check-ups. Their spouses and sexual partners should also practice safe sex and should be vaccinated against Hepatitis B.

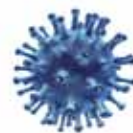
* US CDC Health Information for International Travel 2012








Myth 04 : There's no way to prevent hepatitis.

Fact:

There are vaccinations for Hepatitis A and B. Hepatitis A vaccine requires two doses, given six months apart. Hepatitis B vaccine is a three-dose series, given on a 0, 1, and 6-month schedule. If you need both, you can opt for the combination Hepatitis A+B vaccine, a three dose series administered at a 0, 1, and 6-month schedule, similar to Hepatitis B vaccine. There are currently no vaccines against Hepatitis C.



According to the World Health Organisation, Hepatitis A, B and C are the more common strains. Here are some quick facts about Hepatitis A through E.

	Hepatitis A	Hepatitis B	Hepatitis C	Hepatitis D	Hepatitis E
<div>Global numbers in a year</div> <div>1253467910</div>	<div>New infections:</div> <div>1.4 million</div>	<div>▪Chronic infections:</div> <div>240 million</div> <div>▪Acute cases:</div> <div>4 million</div> <div>▪Deaths: 1 million</div>	<div>▪Chronic infections:</div> <div>130 to 150 million</div> <div>▪Deaths:</div> <div>500,000</div>	<div>Affects 5% of persons with Hepatitis B</div>	<div>▪ New infections:</div> <div>20 million</div> <div>▪ Symptomatic cases:</div> <div>3 million</div> <div>▪ Deaths:</div> <div>56,600</div>
<div>Spread</div> <div></div>	<div>Ingesting faecal matter from:</div> <div>▪ Contaminated food or drinks</div> <div>▪ Close contact with another person</div>	<div>Contact with infected body fluids via:</div> <div>▪ Childbirth from an infected mother</div> <div>▪ Sexual intercourse with an infected person</div> <div>▪ Sharing contaminated needles or other injection-related materials</div>	<div>Contact with infected body fluid. It only occurs in those who already have Hepatitis B.</div>	<div>Contaminated food or water, and a possibility of transmission from pork, boar and deer.</div>	
<div><div></div><div>Symptoms</div><div></div></div>	<div>Diarrhoea, fatigue, loss of appetite, mild fever, nausea, muscle/ joint aches, light abdominal pain, vomiting, weight loss, dark urine, drowsiness, light coloured faeces, jaundice or similar variants.</div> <div>★ Most Hepatitis B carriers may not show any symptoms at all.</div>				
<div>Treatment</div> <div></div>	<div>None needed.</div> <div>Most will recover after two weeks with medications and rest.</div>	<div>While some medications can suppress the virus, they can't eradicate it.</div>	<div>New treatment available with high rate of success.</div>	<div>While some medications can suppress the virus, they can't eradicate it.</div>	<div>None. Infection tends to clear on its own.</div>
<div>Vaccination</div> <div></div>	<div>Yes, Hepatitis A vaccine</div>	<div>Yes, Hepatitis B vaccine</div>	<div>Currently, there is no vaccine available</div>	<div>Yes, Hepatitis B vaccine</div>	<div>Yes, but not widely available.</div>

Source: WHO, WebMD, Healthline, Cleveland Clinic, CDC



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- Health screening services, pneumococcal and twinrix vaccinations are available at Raffles Medical clinics in Singapore and are not applicable at 24 Hour Emergency at Raffles Hospital, Raffles Executive Medical Centres and Raffles Health Screeners.
- Flu vaccination is available at Raffles Medical clinics and Raffles Executive Medical Centres in Singapore only.
- Prices are subject to changes without prior notice.



RafflesMedical RafflesDental
are CHAS clinics



Wi-Fi is available at all Raffles Medical clinics



The Wrestle against GI Infections

Gastrointestinal (GI) infections are among the most commonly encountered diseases worldwide and a frequent cause of outbreaks. Although they are seldom life-threatening or severe, it is important to know how they are transmitted. Transmission is often through contaminated food or water, contact with infected animals and person-to-person transmission via the faecal-oral route.

By Alan Lim

Common Symptoms of GI Infections



Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is associated with discomfort and embarrassment because having diarrhoea is no fun. But everybody gets it once in a while, usually due to gastrointestinal infections. Diarrhoea, with its frequent and watery bowel movements, is often caused by gastrointestinal infections (although other illnesses and dietary changes can be culprits).



Vomiting

Vomiting, along with nausea, is a symptom of an underlying disease rather than a specific illness itself. Vomiting is the forcible emptying of the stomach in which the stomach has to overcome the pressures that are normally in place to keep food and secretions within it. Some illnesses will cause nausea and vomiting, even though there is no direct involvement of the stomach or gastrointestinal tract.



Abdominal pain

Abdominal pain is pain that occurs between the chest and pelvic regions. Also known as a stomachache, abdominal pain can be crampy, achy, dull, intermittent or sharp. Diseases that affect the digestive system can also cause chronic abdominal pain.

Dehydration

Dehydration is the main danger of gastrointestinal infections, so hydration is important. Most gastrointestinal infections are self-limiting and resolve within a few days. However, they can be potentially serious for infants, immunocompromised patients or the elderly.

Common GI Infections

Rotavirus

Rotavirus is a contagious virus that can cause inflammation of the stomach and intestines. It can be said to be the most common cause of severe diarrhoea among infants and children throughout the world. The name rotavirus comes from the characteristic wheel-like appearance of the virus when viewed by electron microscopy, and is derived from the Latin word *rota*, meaning “wheel”.

Typically, the incubation period for the rotavirus infection is around two days, but can vary between one to three days. Adults sometimes become infected and most of them have minor symptoms or none at all.



Escherichia coli (E. coli)

This type of bacteria normally lives in the intestines of people and animals. Most E. coli are harmless and actually are an important part of a healthy human intestinal tract. However, some particularly nasty strains can cause severe abdominal cramps, diarrhoea and vomiting. You may be exposed to E. coli from contaminated water or food. Healthy adults usually recover from the infection within a week, but young children and older adults have a greater risk of developing a life-threatening form of kidney failure. Do see a doctor if the diarrhoea is persistent, severe or bloody. Most cases of E. coli infection gets better without treatment in five to 10 days.



Norovirus

In Singapore, norovirus is also one of the most common causes of gastroenteritis. People who are infected with norovirus may have been in contact with shellfish, ready-to-eat foods handled by infected food workers or any other foods contaminated with vomit or faeces from an infected person. In addition, food and water may be contaminated during processing or handling. Unlike the rotavirus, norovirus is a small virus that is highly contagious among humans.

A person usually develops symptoms 12 to 48 hours after being exposed to norovirus. Although having norovirus can be unpleasant, most make a full recovery within three days.



Salmonella

Salmonella bacteria live in the intestines of humans and animals and are excreted in faeces. Generally, the infection occurs from consumption of raw meats and eggs, contaminated dairy products (eg unpasteurised milk), fruits and vegetables.

While there is no vaccine to prevent salmonella infection, no specific treatment is needed other than adequate hydration in most cases. The infection will resolve on its own without complications. However, reptiles, rodents and birds may be infected with Salmonella. Contact with these animals increases the likelihood of getting the infection.



We speak to Dr Amitabh Monga, Specialist in Gastroenterology & Consultant of Raffles Internal Medicine Centre about the top gastrointestinal infections and their management.

Who is normally at a higher risk for developing GI infections?

Babies and toddlers between six and 24 months of age are at greatest risk for developing GI infections. In addition, children and adults with poor hygiene habits or who are usually exposed to dirty food and poor hygiene habits should take note too.

What are some ways to prevent gastrointestinal infections?

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and running water for at least 15 seconds, particularly after using the bathroom and before preparing food.
- If you are ill with diarrhoea or vomiting, do not cook, prepare or serve food to others.
- Wash clothing or linens soiled by vomit or faecal matter immediately. Remove the items carefully to avoid spreading the virus. Machine wash and dry.
- Cook meat well, wash fruits and vegetables before eating or cooking them, and avoid consuming unpasteurised milk and juices.
- You can also get infected by swallowing the water in a swimming pool that has been contaminated by human waste.

Butterflies in the Stomach



Did you know that your gut has 100 million neurons linking it to your brain? Thus the gut is also referred as the second brain. By Magdalene Lee

Maybe it's your first-ever public speaking engagement, or for a crucial business proposal, or having to speak to this person whom you have a crush on.

You may have experienced the feeling of having butterflies in the stomach at least once in your lifetime. And this is not just your emotions acting up due to stress and anxiety.

According to Dr Chua Siew Eng, Specialist in Psychiatry & Consultant, Raffles Counselling Centre: "When you are under stress, your body goes into this fight or flight mode whereby your body is on high alert as your hormones and all parts of the body

react to face up to the threat." This affects your stomach and gut as well, resulting in the proverbial butterflies in the stomach as nervousness sets in.

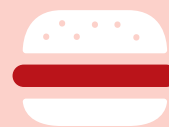
These are perfectly fine and a normal reaction to stress or nervousness. When they occur infrequently, your body recovers from the physiological, psychological and emotional changes, and return to its normal function quickly. On the other hand, when you experience repeated or dramatic stress responses, your body may have greater difficulty recovering. Due to stress hormones, your body may be in a semi hyper-stimulated state, leading to digestive problems and stomach problems.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a chronic disease of the intestines that affects 10 to 15 per cent of the population. According to Dr Monga, IBS does not lead to obstruction, bleeding or cancer of the colon, but individuals with severe symptoms may experience impaired quality of life with major disability.

Triggers

- Food
- Stress
- Hormones
- Other illnesses



Risk factors

- Young
- Female
- Family history
- Mental health problem

Dr Amitabh Monga, Specialist in Gastroenterology & Consultant of Raffles Internal Medicine Centre, suggested that you should seek medical help if you experience these symptoms regularly and without due cause:

- 👉 Nagging, vague abdominal pain
- ⚠️ Nausea
- 👉 Bloating feeling
- 👉 Irregular consistency of stool
- 👉 Flatulence

You should always be aware of alarming symptoms such as difficulty in swallowing, severe abdominal pain, unexplained weight loss or black tarry stools.

Investigations ranging from ultrasound and CT scans to gastroscopy would be required to rule out possible medical conditions such as peptic ulcers or cancer, added Dr Monga.

If the problem has been assessed to be psychological in nature, "treatment can then range from finding the cause, jotting down when you have the pain and what causes it, reducing pressures from work or life, speaking to friends or a counsellor about your worries, exercising and taking part in relaxing activities," said Dr Chua.

Symptoms

- Abdominal pain or cramps
- Bloating feeling
- Gas
- Diarrhoea or constipation
- Mucus in stool



When to see doctor



- Rectal bleeding
- Abdominal pain at night
- Weight loss

Diagnostic Criteria



The Rule of Three

IBS is diagnosed when a patient experiences recurrent abdominal pain or discomfort for at least three days in a month consecutively for the past three months, and in association with two or more of the following:

- ✓ Improvement with defecation
- ✓ Onset associated with a change in frequency of stool
- ✓ Onset associated with a change in form (appearance) of stool

Although these are the usual symptoms of IBS, your doctor will be able to make a definitive diagnosis after hearing you out and a thorough examination.

The Colorectal Cancer Checklist

Colorectal cancer tends to produce easily missed symptoms until the cancer is in its advanced stages. Here is a handy checklist of common signs and symptoms to watch out for. **By Pameline Kang**

Colorectal Cancer is the most common cancer in males and the second most common cancer in females in Singapore. However, the symptoms of colorectal cancer can be subtle and easily missed or confused with other gastrointestinal conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and haemorrhoids. Learn how to recognise the signs of colorectal cancer.

Change in bowel movements



Changes in bowel movements can be indicative of colorectal cancer. These include pain when passing stools, regular constipation, frequent bouts of diarrhoea and having a sensation of incomplete emptying of your bowel.

Change in shape of stool



Stools that are long and thin in appearance is a common sign of a developing case of colorectal cancer. This is due to tumours in the colon making it difficult for waste to pass through, causing stools to be squeezed into a thinner shape.

Unexplained weight loss



Colorectal cancer is sometimes an underlying cause of unexplained weight loss. Do see a doctor to rule out other explanations for the mysterious weight loss causes such as an overactive thyroid gland.

Blood in your stool



The presence of blood in your stools presents itself as a dark red or blackish colour, and can be seen on the surface of the stool or mixed through it.

Do you have any of these symptoms?

Mucus in your bowel movements



Almost all cases of colorectal cancer are accompanied with increased mucus production during a bowel movement. This symptom is easily confused with other bowel problems such as IBS.

Anaemia (low blood count)



Anaemia is common among colorectal cancer patients as tumours in the colon tend to cause bleeding, and this steady blood loss eventually leads to the development of anaemia.

Abdominal Pain



Abdominal pain often accompanies colorectal cancer and is easily confused with other conditions such as appendicitis or indigestion.

None of the above?



Keep in mind that many patients diagnosed with colorectal cancer report having no symptoms prior to their diagnosis. It is important to screen yourself regularly to rule out colorectal cancer.



Know your family history well! Find out who in your family has polyps, colon cancer, other cancers especially stomach, liver, bone, breast cancers as these may increase your risk of colon cancer.

Dr Ng Chin, Specialist in General Surgery & Consultant, Raffles Surgery Centre

Scope for Good Health

Screening endoscopy is recommended for those above 50 years of age, with or without a family history of cancer. You may choose to do a colonoscopy or gastroscopy on its own, or together in a single session.

Colonoscopy

A screening colonoscopy can help detect polyps for removal before they develop into colorectal cancer, the leading cancer in Singapore.

You should go for a **Screening Colonoscopy** if you:

- Are above 50 years old
- Have a family history of colorectal cancer
- Notice a change in bowel habits
- Notice blood or mucus in stools or test positive for faecal occult blood test

Gastroscopy

A gastroscopy can diagnose conditions such as gastritis, stomach and esophagus cancers, as well as conditions associated with abdominal pain or bleeding.

You should go for a **Gastroscopy** if you experience:

- Upper abdominal pain or discomfort
- Persistent indigestion
- Heartburn after meal
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Weight loss

Screening Packages @ Raffles Hospital

Colonoscopy	\$1,311
Gastroscopy	\$874
Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy	\$1,747

* Terms and conditions apply.

** For Singaporeans and Permanent Residents.

Package Prices*

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Bariatric Surgery Debunked

Bye bye obesity,
hello good health

By Magdalene Lee

Bariatric surgeries were first started in 1965 by the father of obesity surgery, Dr Edward Mason. 50 years on, we speak to Dr HG Baladas, Specialist in General Surgery & Consultant, Raffles Surgery Centre to understand the myths behind the science and art of bariatric surgeries.

1 After the surgery, I can eat all I want and not grow fat.

Bariatric surgery can help you in your journey to a healthier you. It will make you feel full after a smaller meal and hence help you decrease your daily food intake. However, it's not a magic bullet whereby you will become slimmer without effort. You need to adhere to a few rules for eating and exercising. Should you choose to eat the wrong foods and not exercise, you may not lose enough weight.

2 Anyone dissatisfied with their weight can have bariatric surgery.

This is incorrect. The minimum Body Mass Index (BMI) for bariatric surgery in Asian patients is 32.5 though we may perform it on very selected patients with BMI 30 to 32.5 who have severe obesity-related medical conditions. In addition, they must have tried to lose weight by other methods and failed.

3 Bariatric surgery is dangerous.

All forms of surgery come with risks, including complications and death. Modern advances in anaesthesia and surgery have largely reduced the risks.

Obesity kills too. Morbidly obese patients may have life-threatening conditions such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, and sleep apnoea. As such the benefits of bariatric surgery far outweigh the risks of mortality from the surgery.

4 With the surgery, I will immediately lose weight and become healthy.

It will take time for the effects of the surgery to be seen. For the majority, average weight loss of around four kg per month is normal. For successful weight loss, close follow-up is critical, especially in the first year. After which, patients will need to see their doctor between one to four times annually. In general, patients will lose 20 to 40 kg over six months to two years though some super obese people may lose up to 70 kg.

5 Bariatric surgery involves stapling my stomach.

There are various forms of bariatric surgery ranging from the lapband, which does not involve cutting or stapling to gastric sleeve, and bypass, which is entirely performed by stapling. At Raffles, we perform the gastric band, sleeve and bypass surgeries. These operations are all performed through key-hole surgery.

6 My nutrition will be affected after the surgery.

After bariatric surgery, patients are required to take supplements as the procedure may affect absorption of vitamins and minerals. The degree of nutritional disturbance depends on the type of operation. It is most pronounced in bypass operations and less in restrictive operations.

Your surgeon and dietitian will work together to help you plan your meals sufficiently so that your nutrition and health will not be affected. For most cases, overall health, energy levels, sex drive and mobility will improve post-surgery.



Did You Know?

A normal stomach holds four cups of food. After bariatric surgery, it holds about two cups of food.



Is My Poop Normal?

It might smell, but poop is fascinating. There is so much you can learn about your health by paying attention to the shape, consistency and colour of your poop before you flush. Let's find out what your poop is saying about you.

By Pameline Kang



Type 2



Sausage-shaped but lumpy, somewhat difficult to pass out. A sign of constipation and poor dietary habits.

Type 3



Sausage-shaped with cracks on surface, requires strain to pass out. Caused by poor lifestyle and dietary habits.

Type 1



Separate hard lumps are due to lack of gut bacteria or from stools sitting in the large intestines or colon for too long.

Type 4



Sausage-shaped or smooth-like soft stools. The ideal stools to pass.

Shape & Consistency

Type 7



Watery with no solid pieces. A sign of diarrhoea due to irritated small intestine.

Type 6



Fluffy pieces with ragged edges and a mushy texture. Caused by stress or dramatic changes in diet and lifestyle.

Type 5



Soft blobs with defined edges, easy to pass out. Ideal type of stools that are passed two to three times daily after major meals.

Colour



Black

An excess of dried blood present in the stool. Requires medical attention.



Green

Indicates the presence of bile. Some vegetables and supplements can also turn your stool green.



Red

A sign of bleeding in the lower intestine usually caused by haemorrhoids. Requires medical attention.



Grey / White

Occurs when the liver does not release enough bile salts into the stool in your intestines. Requires medical attention.



Brown

The medically desired colour of stool should mimic the colour of milk chocolate.



Yellow

Is a result of liver disorder due to fat not being absorbed from the stool. Requires medical attention.



Coping with Gastrointestinal Disorders: **Food for the Gut**

While medications can help you recover from gastrointestinal conditions, knowing what you can and cannot eat can help you better manage your symptoms.

By Stanley Wong

If you are suffering from a gastrointestinal (GI) disorder, chances are that you will face dietary restrictions. As your gastrointestinal tract is highly sensitive, eating the wrong kinds of food can easily trigger your symptoms or even aggravate them.

As such, paying attention to what you eat is important. Aside from medications that are used to manage these diseases, having a proper diet plan can help you to alleviate the symptoms and promote healing in your gastrointestinal tract, while ensuring your body gets the nutrients it needs at the same time.

Ms Claudia Correia, Dietitian, Raffles Diabetes and Endocrine Centre added: "As some gastrointestinal diseases, such as colitis or Crohn's Disease, are highly individualised, it is always helpful to talk to a dietitian to figure out what foods you can and cannot eat to ensure you get your daily recommended nutrition intake." In addition, you can also keep a food diary to document your meals, and whether you experience any symptoms after that. Through trial and error, you will slowly find out foods that you may be particularly sensitive to, and then eliminate them from your diet."

Below are some common gastrointestinal disorders, and the foods that you can eat to improve your condition.

Haemorrhoids

“The goal is to have regular bowel movements with soft and regular-shaped stools so they do not aggravate your haemorrhoids or cause bleeding and discomfort,” said Ms Correia.

Constipation may strain your bowels and cause your haemorrhoids to flare up. Fruits, vegetables and wholegrains are foods that are rich in fibre and can help prevent constipation. Water also helps in softening the stools, so staying hydrated is important.

What to eat



Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)

If you are overweight, losing weight is the most effective food-related approach.

Having small and frequent meals rather than three big meals may help alleviate the symptoms. The routine elimination of foods from your diet should not be encouraged. Instead, you should keep a food diary to detect if there is any food that will trigger the reflux and eliminate them after detecting it. Avoid eating meals with high fat content within two to three hours of reclining is also recommended.

What to eat



Gut Foods for Health

Spending too much money on digestive supplements? Prebiotics and probiotics can also be found in everyday food. Find out what types of food make great nutrition boosters for your gut health.

By Pameline Kang

Most of us are aware of the good bacteria living in our gut that play an important role in our digestion. These beneficial bacteria offer a hand in helping our body synthesise vitamins, absorb nutrients and protect us against infections, certain germs and viruses.

Probiotics and prebiotics are substances used to reduce the “bad” bacteria and increase the “good” bacteria in our gut.

Here is a simple breakdown on the roles of probiotics and prebiotics:

Probiotics vs Prebiotics



Probiotics

- ‘Living’ friendly bacteria similar to those that inhabit our digestive tract
- Helps to maintain the digestive tract with friendly, beneficial bacteria
- Helps to restore good bacteria in the gut after a course of antibiotics and to boost our immune system

Prebiotics

- ‘Non-living’ food ingredients that feeds the beneficial bacteria in our gut for them stay alive and flourish
- Occurs naturally in a number of common foods with high fibre content



Many studies have shown that probiotics promote good gut health by controlling the growth of harmful bacteria in gut. Both probiotics and prebiotics are necessary as they work in synergy to promote good gut health.

- Ms Bibi Chia, Principal Dietitian, Raffles Diabetes & Endocrine Centre

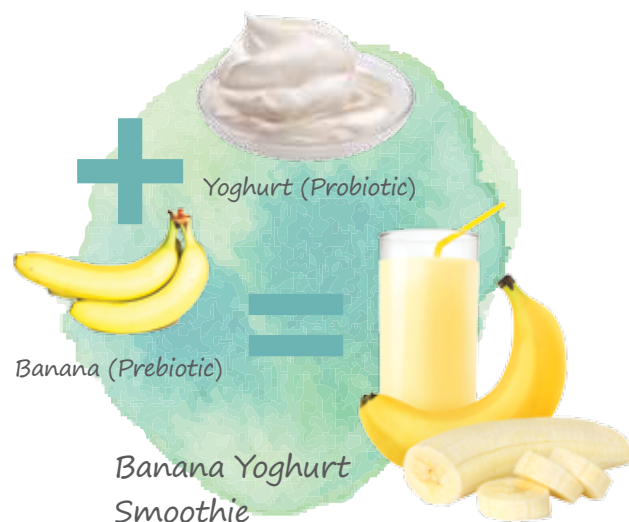
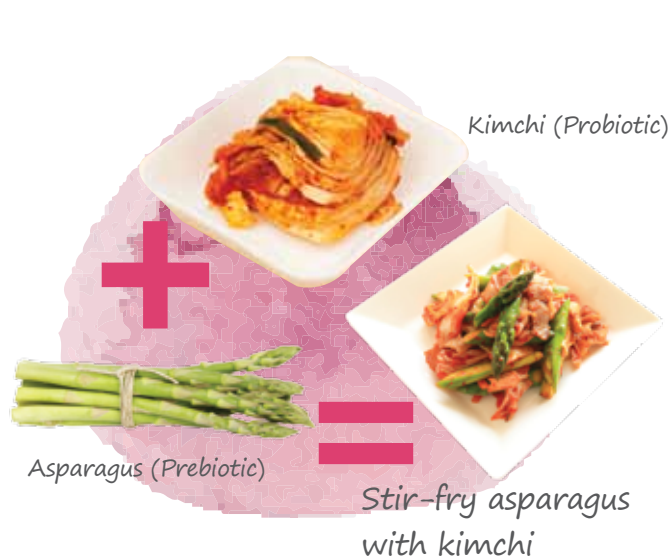
Gourmet for Your Gut

Having a combination of pro and prebiotic-rich foods can help maintain and nourish good bacteria in the gut and create a diverse intestinal flora in our bodies.

Ms Chia says “It is best to take them in natural forms found in food. One of the best kinds of probiotics is from fermented dairy products like yoghurt and aged cheeses that contain live cultures (eg lactobacillus). Other non-dairy foods with these cultures will include kimchi, miso, and tempeh. Prebiotics can be found in banana, onion, garlic, asparagus, soybeans and whole-wheat foods.”

However, it is not necessary to eat prebiotics and probiotics at the same meal to get their synergistic effect, but the duo works together deliciously.

Here are some of our favourite recipes:





Beauty and the FEAST



Passionate about her craft, Principal Dietitian **Ms Bibi Chia**, 34, is hospitable and sociable which helps builds rapport between her patients and her to work as a team together towards better health.

Share with us more about yourself!

As a dietitian, I work with patients to provide medical nutritional therapy to treat medical conditions and alleviate symptoms. Sometimes, both diet and medicine are needed to treat medical conditions. In such cases, we, dietitians, double as consultants to other medical professionals, where we work together to manage patients' conditions to help them get better.

My day at work begins with seeing the warm smiles from the colleagues I work with; they play an important role before and after the patient comes in for a consultation. When the patient comes in, I always spend time to know them better and understand their objectives and expectations. Doing so help us, as a team, to work together to form a diet plan and navigate through it.



Some interesting cases I've encountered before...

There was a gentleman who was aware that he needed to change his lifestyle, but had no confidence in doing so.

With some motivation, he gradually changed his eating habits, and even lost 15kg over six months. This gave him a great sense of well-being and newfound confidence.

There's also a couple who visits me together regularly and it is always great to find out what they were up to in between visits. One thing that struck me is how they motivate each other. For instance, if they have "cheat" days, they do it together. They are both gradually achieving their health goals.

Some people often use the terms "dietitian" and "nutritionist" interchangeably. Are there any actual differences between these two professions?

Both dietitians and nutritionists' jobs are similar in that they look at how food

and nutrition can be used to maintain good health. The main difference between the two professions lies in their accreditation, required experience, and knowledge. Dietitians require an educational qualification from an accredited university by the Dietetics Association of the country of study and complete at least 6 months of clinical internship. On top of providing information and advice to achieve good health, we are qualified to provide medical nutritional therapy as well, something nutritionists cannot do.

Aside from patient consultations, are you keen on sharing your expertise in others?

I'm a strong believer of promoting good health via public education. Therefore, I'm always happy to share my knowledge with others at every opportunity. I work with various stakeholders from within and outside Raffles Hospital to hold customised workshops and seminars for different target audience, as well as working with the media to share nutrition-related advice with the public.

A piece of advice I would give to people would be...

Have a plan and stay motivated. Don't keep your diet a secret. Let the people who care about you at home or in the office know that you are on a health transforming journey and they can become a good source of support.

Fast Facts about Bibi Chia

1. An avid foodie, Bibi is always experimenting with new cooking methods. She has amassed a repertoire of original recipes, thanks to her expertise and passion for cooking.

2. She's a big fan of Game of Thrones and Vikings!

3. Her favourite quote: "One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well."

*Virginia Woolf,
A Room of One's Own*



No matter how busy Bibi is, she will always make time for her two kids, Dylan, 6 years old (left) and Kiefer, 9 years old (right).



Bibi enjoys cooking and loves to share how to prepare healthy food.



Besides giving public health talks, Bibi is frequently featured on TV programmes and news articles imparting her knowledge.



Demystifying constipation

Courtesy of the Mayo Clinic News Network

Do you have trouble with your bowel movements?

In general, constipation is generally described as having fewer than three bowel movements a week. Chronic constipation is infrequent bowel movements or difficult passage of stools that persists for several weeks or longer. Though occasional constipation is very common, some people experience chronic constipation that can interfere with their ability to go about their daily tasks.

Chronic constipation may also cause excessive straining to have a bowel movement and other signs and symptoms. In some cases, a cause for chronic constipation is never found.

Home remedies for constipation

Constipation can be cured by following certain home remedies that are very easy to implement. With the implementation of these home remedies for constipation, one can experience free and smooth bowel movements, without the need to apply pressure. The sense of incomplete bowel movements shall also fade away.



Fruits

Fruits are highly recommended for controlling constipation. Fruits contain dietary fibre that fights constipation. There are many varieties of fruits and vegetables that can be consumed on a daily basis to avoid constipation. Fruits such as apples, papayas, oranges, apricots, guavas, strawberries, dates, raisins, and pears have all been associated with reduced constipation.



Almond oil

Consume milk with two tablespoons of almond oil added to it every night.

Consume this

mixture for three to four days to get rid of constipation.



Dates

Make a paste from a half cup of dates. Mix this paste with milk and consume it

every night before going to sleep. The fibre in dates will reduce constipation.



Water

Water is one of the major components of our body that helps in most metabolic activities, especially digestion. Drinking

good amounts of water every day (at least eight glasses) will help not only in maintaining an optimum water level in the body, but will also help in smooth bowel movements. Drinking water throughout the day is helpful.



Constipation in children

Constipation in children is a common problem. It is often characterised by infrequent bowel movements or hard, dry stools. Various factors can lead to constipation in children.

Common causes include early toilet training and changes in diet. Fortunately, most cases of constipation in children are temporary.

Encouraging your child to make simple dietary changes — such as eating more fibre-rich fruits and vegetables and drinking more fluids — can go a long way toward alleviating constipation. If your child's doctor approves, sometimes constipation in children can also be treated with laxatives.

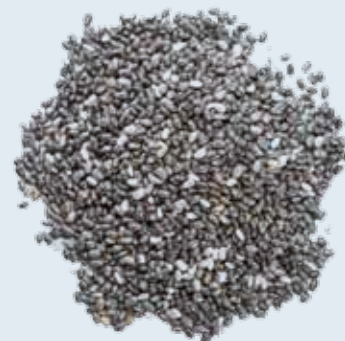
Signs and symptoms of constipation in children may include:

- Less than three bowel movements a week
- Bowel movements that are hard, dry and difficult to pass
- Pain while having a bowel movement
- Abdominal pain
- Nausea
- Traces of liquid or clay-like stool in your child's underwear
- Blood on the surface of hard stool

If your child fears that having a bowel movement will hurt, he or she may try to avoid it. You may notice your child crossing his or her legs, clenching his or her buttocks, twisting his or her body, or making faces during these manoeuvres.

Orange and Chia Seeds Jelly

Ms Correia Claudia, Dietitian, Raffles Diabetes and Endocrine Centre, recommends a recipe to help soothe constipation.



Ingredients:

- ½ an orange
- 1 tablespoon of chia seeds

Method:

1. Place a tablespoon of chia seeds in a bowl.
2. Wash and cut an orange in half.
3. Squeeze the juice of half an orange with the wringer.
4. Add the juice into the chia seeds and stir well.
5. Add the pulp of the half orange.
6. Wait about 10 minutes till chia seeds hydrate.
7. When ready-to-eat, it would have a gel-like a consistency similar to jelly.



**Dietitian
Says**

This recipe has about 5 grams of fibre which is more than one bowl of brown rice (3.5 grams of fibre). In order to maintain good bowel health, a person should consume 25 to 35 grams of fibre per day. Keep in mind that while you increase your fibre intake, you need to increase water consumption to soften the stools as well.

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Raffles Medical Group collaborates with Mayo Clinic as a member of the Mayo Clinic Care Network



Cut Tummy Fat

Is diet and exercise not keeping your waistline in check? Perhaps it's time to consider other alternatives.

By Stanley Wong

Despite your best efforts, you may still find yourself with a less-than-ideal body shape. This can be due to a slow metabolic rate and genetics which can hamper your progress. Similarly, having fat deposits and sagging skin around your belly after a successful weight loss regime will do no justice to your new and improved look.

This is when you may wish to turn to plastic surgery to get a trim and flat stomach. According to Dr Darren Ng, Specialist in Plastic Surgery & Consultant, Raffles Skin & Aesthetics, abdominoplasties (also known as tummy tucks) and liposuctions are the most common procedures for an enviable flat belly.

Ultimately, such surgeries should not be seen as quick fixes; rather, it should be part of your arsenal towards getting a well-toned and flat stomach. Commitment in the form of dieting and exercising is required to maintain your body as well, as future weight gain or pregnancies can easily reverse the procedure, causing your muscles or skin to stretch.



Tummy Tuck

VS



Liposuction

- If you have a protruding tummy from a weakened abdominal wall despite being in shape
- If your abdomen has loose or excess skin following weight loss
- If you have stretched or sagging skin after pregnancy



- If you have localised areas of fat that are not in proportion with other areas
- If you have localised stubborn areas of fat that don't go away after diet and exercise

- Tightens the abdominal wall
- Removes excess sagging skin and stretch marks from the lower abdomen
- Removes fat attached to the excess skin



What are its advantages?

- Removes excess fat without the need for long incisions
- Less invasive
- Shorter recovery time

Between two to four weeks

Recovery time?



Between two days to two weeks

Bleeding, wound infection and breakdown, scarring, fluid collection, altered sensation, and breakdown of the navel due to disruption of blood supply



Bruising, swelling, pain, uneven contour, over / under-correction, fluid collection, and excess skin

**The information provided is meant to be a guide as each patient's suitability for the procedures depends on the individual. Do consult with your physician to assess your suitability.*

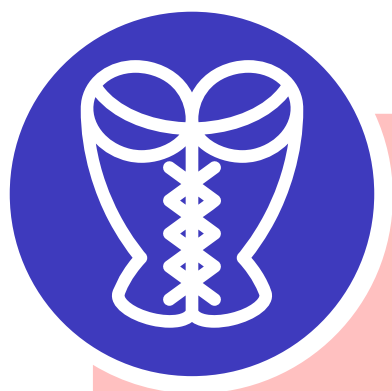


Do non-invasive procedures work?

With the rise of non-invasive procedures that are touted to have a shorter recovery time, it may seem like an obvious choice to opt for them. However, does newer always mean better? According to Dr Ng, liposuction is still the gold standard for achieving fast results for body contouring. Non-invasive procedures such as cryolipolysis (fat freezing), external ultrasound or laser do work for appropriately selected patients. However, they require multiple sessions and the results are more subtle. In addition, not all patients and not all areas of the body will be suitable for such procedures.

Oh My, Curvy Body!

Corsets, shapewears, slimming gels... Most women would try anything to have a smaller waistline and get rid of unsightly bulges especially from their abdomen, thigh and hip areas, just to appear shapely and curvy. But have you ever wondered whether there is any potential health risk to this? We find out from our experts. By Joanna Lee



Corset

Apart from medical purpose, the corset is often worn as a body-shaping garment. It is usually made from either steel or plastic and has a long history of helping women achieve the smallest possible waist circumference over a course of time. This was especially popular and desirable during the Victorian era, and were worn by girls at a young age to achieve a small and fashionable waistline.

"Wearing tight fitting clothes or body shaping corsets increase the intra-abdominal pressure. That means that various organs in the abdomen like the liver, spleen, stomach and intestines are under increased pressure. This may increase the problem of gastro-esophageal reflux disease and can cause heartburn, acid reflux and nausea or vomiting. Patients who suffer

from irritable bowel syndrome and functional dyspepsia may also experience increasing bloating and abdominal discomfort," said Dr Amitabh Monga, Specialist in Gastroenterology & Consultant, Raffles Internal Medicine Centre.

"Wear the corset for as short a time as possible, and remove it once you can to decrease the associated discomfort," added Dr Monga.



Dr Amitabh Monga
*Specialist in Gastroenterology
Consultant, Raffles Internal Medicine Centre*



Shapewear

These days, shapewear comes in different forms and there is always a suitable piece for every need and occasion. They are often made from comfortable materials and are marketed to allow one to wear for prolonged hours. Shapewear works as a compression garment by pushing fats inwards, thereby shaving off a few inches at a targeted or multiple areas temporarily.

“An important key to wearing shapewears is getting the right fit. Wearing overly tight shapewear, eg at the thigh area, compresses the nerves in the leg. This can lead to

tingling and paraesthesia of the legs and in severe cases can lead to neuritis or nerve pain. In addition, compression of the tendons or soft tissue on the bony prominences can cause irritation and inflammation resulting in pain,” said Dr Victor Seah, Specialist in Orthopaedic Surgery & Consultant, Raffles Orthopaedic Centre.

Dr Seah advised to avoid wearing them for prolonged periods of time, and on a daily basis. Wearing tight, non-expandable clothes for sports activities is discouraged as they will restrict blood flow to the limbs.



Dr Victor Seah
Specialist in Orthopaedic Surgery
Consultant, Raffles Orthopaedic Centre

Slimming Gels

Slimming gels or creams are usually used to treat cellulite mainly on the abdomen, pelvic region and legs. Cellulite is caused by the herniation of subcutaneous fat within fibrous connective tissue, leading to skin dimpling, nodularity or orange peel-like appearance.

“Caffeine, aminophylline and theophylline are members of a group of bio-chemicals known as methylxanthines that is present in many cellulite creams. These biological agents can enhance the body’s ability to breakdown stored fat (lipolysis). However, it remains a challenge for the creams to penetrate the skin to reach the inner fat layer at a sufficient

concentration for a sufficient period. Thus, the efficacy in cellulite removal has not been scientifically proven. Nonetheless, these treatments are still used, and patients have reported subjective improvement,” explained Dr Tan Siew Kiang, Specialist in Dermatology & Consultant, Raffles Skin & Aesthetics.

She pointed that it is important to note that many of the ingredients in the topical slimming products are not known. Some products with higher-concentration formulas require large amounts of surfactant or alcohol, which can also cause skin irritation. Consumers should stop using the product if rashes develop after few days of use.



Dr Tan Siew Kiang
Specialist in Dermatology
Consultant, Raffles Skin & Aesthetics

5

Points to Better Gastro Health

Getting rid of undesired belly fat often pose as a challenge to many, even to hardcore gym rats. According to TCM, many accupressure points are closely connected to our internal organs. When stimulated correctly, it can improve their function and wellness. TCM Physican Tan Weii Zhu, Raffles Chinese Medicine, introduces five accupressure points, coupled with simple massages, that can help you get rid of stubborn abdominal fats and improve digestion at the same time. **By Joanna Lee**

Preparation

Stand upright.

Position

These points are located at the two sides of your waist and along the same level as your belly button.

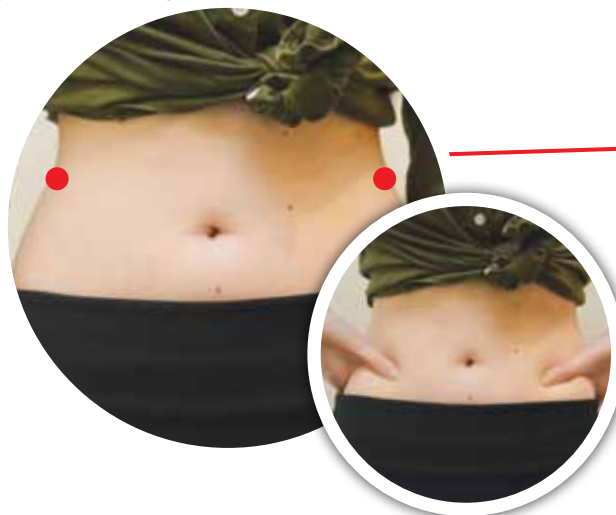
Instruction

Squeeze gently with your fingers and thumbs around these points in an outward direction for 15 times twice daily.

Benefits

Helps to reduce saggy abs, improves metabolism and aids digestion.

帶脉 (Dai Mai)



天枢 (Tian Shu)

Preparation

Lie down on a soft surface.

Position

These points are located approximately two thumb-width away, from your belly button on the left and right.

Method 1

Gently and slowly pinch the flesh around this point up and downwards for 15 times. Do this twice daily.

Method 2

Massage around the belly button slowly in a clockwise direction. Do this 15 times twice daily.

Benefits

Aids digestion, improves metabolism, promotes bowel movement and relieves abdominal bloating.



内关 (Nei Guan)

Preparation

This can be done either seated or standing.

Position

This point is located on your inner arms approximately two thumb-width from the wrist line, and between the two tendons.

Instruction

Apply some pressure as you knead this point in a circular motion for two to three minutes, twice daily. You should feel a slight sore and aching sensation when more pressure is applied on it. Massage this point on both arms.

Benefits

Aids digestion, helps to relieve chest pains, insomnia and numbness in hands.

支沟 (Zhi Gou)

Preparation

This can be done either seated or standing.

Position

This point is located on your outer arms approximately four finger-width from your wrist bone, between the two bones.

Instruction

Apply some pressure as you knead this point in a circular motion with your thumb for three minutes each on both arms twice daily. You should feel a slight sore and aching sensation when more pressure is applied on it.

Benefits

Aids digestion, and helps relieve headaches and giddiness.

足三里 (Zhu San Li)

Preparation

Sit comfortably on a chair.

Position

This point is located on the outer part of the lower leg, approximately four finger-width below your knee cap.

Instruction

Apply pressure with your thumb as you slowly knead this point in a circular motion for three minutes, twice daily on both legs. You should feel a slight sore and aching sensation when you press on this point.

Benefits

Improves digestion and helps to relieve abdominal bloating.



Get to the Core

Having a flat ab is what many either secretly wish for or openly strive to achieve. Whether it is for a more confident appearance or for good health, we know that people with too much belly fat are at higher risk of contracting diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and colorectal cancer. The trouble with belly fat is that it is not just simply having an extra layer of padding below the skin (subcutaneous fat). It also includes visceral fat, which lies deep under the abdomen, surrounding the internal organs.

Whether you are in the midst of trimming down your belly fat or contemplating to start, consider the following core training exercises as suggested by Mr Lim Hun Teck, Chief Physiotherapist, Raffles Rehabilitation Centre. Do them daily to realise your dream for a flat ab!

By Joanna Lee

Criss Cross

The 'criss cross' action works the entire mid-section of the abdominal muscles.

HOW: Lie on your back with shoulders lifted and hands supporting your head. Pull both knees into your chest. Extend either side of your legs straight in front of you while keeping the other bent. Twist your upper body and elbow towards the side of the bended knee. Hold for three seconds. Alternate this movement for 10 times each side.

Note: Perform this action in a slow and controlled motion.



Teaser

The teaser is one of the most difficult core exercises but very effective and worth practising. It engages a full range of core muscles, as well as the thigh muscles all within a single motion.

HOW: Start by lying flat on the floor without arching your lower back. Lift your upper body and legs up until it forms a nice V-shape. Hold for three seconds. Return to the starting position and repeat this 10 times or for the desired number of times.

You can opt for an easier option by keeping one leg on the floor as you lift up your shoulder blades to reach forward as far as you can.

Note: Keep your neck in a neutral position. Do not pull or engage your neck muscles.



Standing Side Lateral Crunch

Lose the love handles with this easy exercise that works on your external abdominal oblique muscles. Use either a dumbbell or your own body weight.

HOW: ¹ Stand up tall and straight, hip distance apart. Hold one dumbbell with either your right or left hand. ² Rest your arms naturally at the side of your body, bend slowly towards the side of the dumbbell. Use your oblique muscles to pull your body back up slowly to the starting position. Repeat this for two reps on each side, each rep 15 times.

Note: Keep your core muscles tight at all times. Movement should be slow and controlled.



The 100

'The 100' is a basic pilates exercise that got its name because one is supposed to hold the position for 100 beats. It is an excellent exercise for increasing torso stability and abdominal strength as well as a full body warm up exercise.

HOW: ¹ Lie flat on your back with your knees lifted and bent at about 90 degrees. Reach your arms upwards. ² In a single controlled motion, lower your arms down and roll up by your head and shoulder blades off the mat. You should feel your abdominal muscles tighten.

Stay in this position and inhale for five short breaths through your nose. You will feel your rib cage expand by each breath, and exhale for five short breaths through your mouth, this time feeling your rib cage squeezing back together again. This will account for 100 beats.

Note: Keep your neck in a neutral position. Do not over extend it.



Plank

The plank exercise is one of the best exercises for a flat and toned ab simply because it works all the muscles in the core, back, hips and external obliques all at the same time.

HOW: ¹ **Elbow Plank:** Position your elbows 90 degrees below your shoulders. Lift your body and align your back and butt on a straight line. Engage your core muscles to support your body weight and hold for 30 to 60 seconds. Repeat as desired.

² **Side Plank:** Start on either side. Rest your elbow 90 degrees below your shoulder and lift your body and hips. Hold for 30 to 60 seconds and repeat as desired.

Wood Chopper

This exercise works the abs, lower back, quadriceps, hamstrings and glutes with a rotating motion.

HOW: ¹ Stand up straight with both feet slightly wider than hip-distance apart. Starting from the side, hold a dumbbell or medicine ball with both hands to increase resistance or go weight-free. Do not lock your elbows. ² Bring your hands diagonally upwards across the front of your body to the opposite side by rotating the torso and bending forward slightly while pulling your hands across your body. Return to the starting position. Repeat this for two reps on each side, each rep 15 times.

Note: Keep your knees soft and engage your core muscles at all times to protect your lower back.



Ask the Experts

Q: I am an underweight 23 year-old male and am unable to gain weight. My doctors told me that I have a high metabolism. Is there anything I can do to gain weight?

A: A thorough medical assessment is required to ensure that there is no underlying medical condition causing your underweight status. There are many reasons why people may find it difficult to gain weight. Genetics can play a role, but individual personalities and the environment can be contributing factors. An assessment by your doctor should be able to explain why you are underweight.



Dr Stanley Liew
Specialist in Endocrinology
Consultant, Raffles Diabetes & Endocrine Centre

Q: What are the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables? Will eating less of these contribute to health conditions?

A: Fruits and vegetables provide us with tons of vitamins and minerals which are important in keeping our body healthy. They often are high in potassium, fibre and antioxidants which can help in combating possible health conditions. For example, eating high fibre low caloric fruits and vegetables can keep you full for a longer period of time, thus reducing the chances of craving unhealthy high fat food and weight gain which in turn prevent obesity. In addition, eating fruits and vegetables high in potassium helps to maintain or even lower our blood pressure because potassium is necessary to balance out the salt in our body, allowing our kidney to filter the sodium out.



Ms Bibi Chia
Principal Dietitian
Raffles Diabetes & Endocrine Centre

Q: I am in my 30s and had two babies over the past three years leading to a stretched abdomen. I exercise regularly but cannot tighten the skin around my abdomen. I feel frustrated but do not want to go under the knife. Is there anything else I could do about this?

A: Unfortunately, there is very little that can be done to tighten this type of skin condition other than by surgery. Other techniques of skin tightening can only do minimal tightening. You will need to remove the loose skin in a surgical operation. On your part, abdominal exercises will do little to tighten the skin. I would recommend you see a Plastic Surgeon for a full assessment.

Prof Walter Tan
Specialist in General and Plastic Surgery
Consultant, Raffles Skin & Aesthetics

Q: What are haemorrhoids? How is it prevented and treated?

A: Haemorrhoids are cushions of blood vessels found in the anus and lower rectum. Signs of it are bleeding, discomfort, pain or itching at the anus and a protrusion of anal lumps during bowel movement. Treating haemorrhoids varies depending on its size. Smaller haemorrhoids can be relieved by regular bowel movement, increasing fibre intake and fluids. For slightly larger ones, ointments, suppositories and medication can offer relief. If symptoms persist, rubber band ligation or infrared coagulation is used as treatment. Surgery is recommended for larger haemorrhoids. It can be performed using the conventional open method or the stapled haemorrhoidectomy technique.



Dr Wong Kutt Sing
Specialist in General Surgery
Consultant, Raffles Surgery Centre

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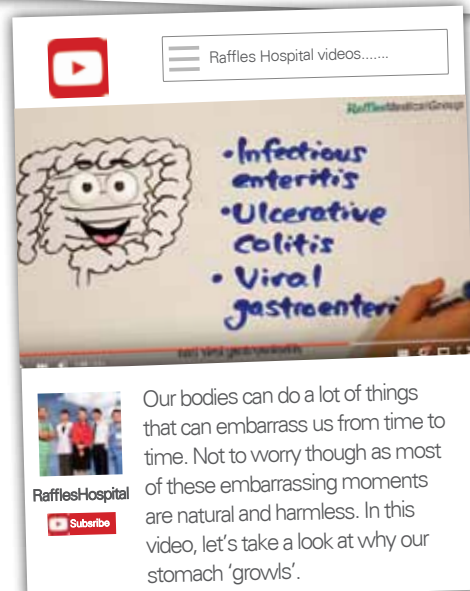
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