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Dr. Andrew Yam

MBBS (Australia), MRCS (Edinburgh), MMED(Surgery), FAMS (Hand Surgery)



Dr. Lim Beng Hai

MBBS (Singapore), FRCS (Edinburgh), MMED(Surgery), FAMS (Hand Surgery)

Paragon Medical Suites, #09-08, 290 Orchard Road, Singapore 238859, Tel: +65 67339093. Gleneagles Medical Centre, #04-03, 6 Napier Road, Singapore 258499, Tel: +65 64724043. 24 hours service: +65 65358833

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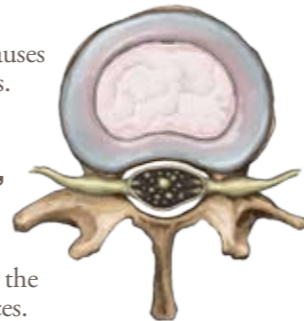
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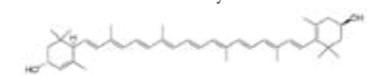
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### From the Editor's Desk ...

Hypertension is a fairly common condition in Singapore. Around 1 in 5 Singaporeans aged 18 to 69 years are said to have hypertension. As part of our World Health Day campaign focus, we bring you some useful and simple ideas to control and manage the condition.

Our panel of medical experts continues to share with us substantial advice on health issues such as cancer fatigue, hand fractures, back pain and frozen shoulders. For those who have been battling a bulging tummy for long, we hope our piece on The Essentials to Losing Belly Fat gets you started on your journey to flatter abs.

With the June holidays coming up, our singing chef, Irene Jansen whips up two colourful and easy recipes for you and your little ones.

We hope you enjoy the read.

*Puvanes Balakrishnan*

**PUBLISHER**  
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**Please send all press releases to**  
**editor@e-healthytimes.com or**  
**editor@healthytimes.com.sg**

**EDITOR**  
Puvanes Balakrishnan

**MEDICAL WRITERS**  
Dr Lilian Laruan

**CONTRIBUTORS**  
Dr Lim Kay Kiat, Dr Suzanne Wong,  
Dr Prem Pillay, Dr Donald Ng,  
Dr Andrew Yam, Dr Ann Tan, Dr Peter Ang,  
Dr Victor Fan, Dr Yeap Choong Lieng,  
Dr Yung Shing Wai and Irene Jansen

**WRITERS**  
Dave Tai, Maryruth Priebe and Jen Keehn

**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
Kevin Leong and Melvin Ling

**SALES**  
Lie Jia Rong

**PROMOTION & MARKETING**  
Merlyn (info@healthytimes.com.sg)

**DESIGN & CREATIVE**  
Yun Tan and Sakti Alhadid

**IT AND SEO**  
Adi Tanil  
William Tanil  
Diomar

**PRINTER**  
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# Bothered by colorectal problems? Leave it to us



**Dr Ng Kheng Hong**  
MBBS (Singapore), MMed (Surgery),  
FRCS (Edinburgh), FAMS (General  
Surgery),  
Consultant Colorectal Surgeon  
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## Current and Past Appointments held

Visiting Consultant, Minimally Invasive Surgery Unit, KK Women's and Children's Hospital

Visiting Consultant, Gynaecological Oncology, KK Women's and Children's Hospital

Director of Minimally Invasive Surgery, Department of Colorectal Surgery, Singapore General Hospital, 2009-2010

Consultant Surgeon, Department of Colorectal Surgery, Singapore General Hospital, 2008-2010

Visiting Consultant, Surgical Oncology, National Cancer Centre Singapore, 2008-2010

Honorary Surgeon Specialist, Pamela Yuode Nethersole Eastern Hospital, Hongkong, 2007

Specialist Registrar, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, University of Birmingham, UK, 2004

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A former Consultant Surgeon to the Department of Colorectal Surgery, Singapore General Hospital, Dr Ng has an avid interest in robotic-assisted surgical procedures and championed the use of robotics in various surgical disciplines. His other interests include the use of Single Incision Laparoscopic Surgery in various general surgical procedures, like appendectomy, cholecystectomy, hernia repair and colorectal cancer surgery. He is one of the pioneers in the use of this technique in colorectal surgery.

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## ADVISORY PANEL



**Dr Lim Kay Kiat**  
ORTHOPAEDIC  
SURGEON  
*Synergy Orthopaedic  
Group*



**Dr Yung Shing Wai**  
CONSULTANT  
ORTHOPAEDIC  
SURGEON  
*SW Yung Orthopaedic,  
Foot and Shoulder Surgery*



**Dr Andrew Yam**  
CONSULTANT HAND  
SURGEON  
*Centre for Hand and  
Reconstructive MicroSurgery*



**Dr Suzanne  
Wong**  
FAMILY PHYSICIAN  
*The Chelsea Clinic*



**Dr Peter Ang**  
MEDICAL  
ONCOLOGIST  
*OncoCare Cancer  
Centre*



**Dr Yeap  
Choong Lieng**  
PLASTIC SURGEON  
*Yeap Plastic  
Reconstructive &  
Cosmetic Surgery*



**Dr Ann Tan**  
OBSTETRICIAN &  
GYNAECOLOGIST  
*Women and Fetal Centre*



**Dr Donald Ng**  
MEDICAL DIRECTOR  
*Alaxis Medical &  
Aesthetic Clinic*



**Dr Victor Fan**  
SENIOR CONSULTANT  
& ORAL AND  
MAXILLOFACIAL HEAD  
AND NECK SURGEON  
*Medical-Dental Oral and  
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# 10 Painless ways to **REDUCE** your HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

WORLD HEALTH DAY  
APRIL 7TH

That uncomfortable nape pain and occasional dizziness have been bothering you. These symptoms occur when you've burned the midnight oil, drunk too many cups of coffee or when you're stressed to the max. A cursory visit to a health worker tells you your blood pressure (BP) is 160/100 millimeters of mercury (mmHG). You have most definitely got high blood pressure or HYPERTENSION!

Your doctor orders multiple blood pressure readings, lab exams and an ECG. Consequently, you are prescribed medications to control your spiraling blood pressure. Your doctor explains the need to bring your blood pressure down to 130/80 or lower as high blood pressure can damage your heart and kidneys.

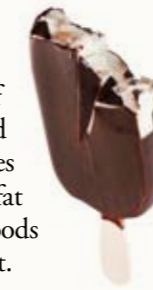


In the quest to lower your blood pressure, you would not want to be dependent on antihypertensive drugs the rest of your life. Here are alternative ways to help you...

## 01 Transform eating habits into healthy ones

Be determined to eat healthy. Get rid of those fast foods loaded with saturated fat and cholesterol. Eat a healthy diet that includes whole grains, vegetables, fruit and low fat dairy. Make a shopping list of healthy foods when you're grocery shopping and stick to it.

It will be helpful to monitor what you eat daily by jotting down every food you put in your mouth. You can then know the food that you should eat more and the food that you should be eating less of.



## 02 Be wary of sodium

Foods loaded with sodium increase your BP. The limit is 2,500 mg a day or less. For those who are 51 years of age or older or people with diabetes or kidney disease the limit is 1,500 mg or lesser. Even a little reduction in salt can help. Consider these tips –

- Know how to estimate sodium using measurements such as teaspoons.
- Know more about the foods you eat. Write down your food intake daily to estimate how much sodium you usually eat and adjust you intake.
- Read food labels
- Look for alternative foods and drinks that are low in sodium.
- Use herbs or spices to flavor your food in place of salt or high sodium condiments.
- Mix processed foods. Sodium is a preservative for processed food such as potato chips, bacon, deli meats, frozen dinners and others.

Potassium decreases the effect of sodium on BP. Eat more foods loaded with potassium such as fruits and veggies. Natural food sources of potassium are more effective than supplements.



## 03 Shed the extra kilos and keep a tight watch on your waistline

As your weight increases so does your BP. Just losing 10 pounds or 4.5 kilograms can have a positive effect on your BP.

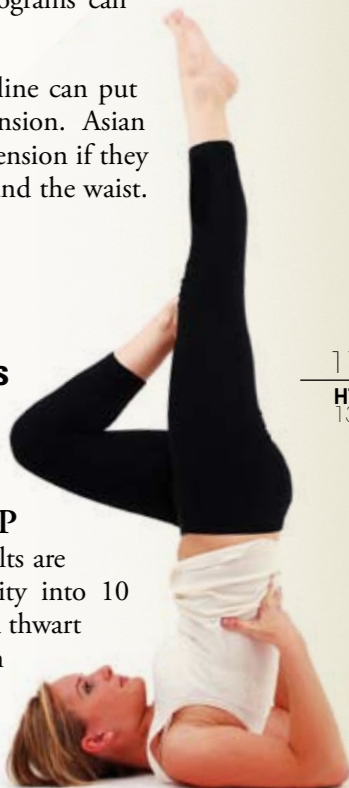
Too much fat around your waistline can put you at greater risk for hypertension. Asian men have a higher risk for hypertension if they measure 36 inches or greater around the waist. For women, it's 32 inches.

## 04 Exercise most days of the week

Just being active for 30 to 60 minutes most days of the week can reduce your BP by 4 to 9 mmHg and the results are fast. Break down moderate activity into 10 minute stretches. Exercise can even thwart the development of a full blown hypertension if you are pre-hypertensive – a systolic reading of 120 to 139 or a diastolic between 80 to 89 mmHg.

To be effective, you should exercise most days of the week not only on weekends. Once weekly exercises, even if prolonged and more strenuous, do not work as well.

Plan an exercise regimen that fits in with your work and routine activities so you can sustain your efforts. Taking the stairs, moving around your office, taking a walk during lunch break, walking the rest on your way home are ways to be active. Great ways to exercise include walking, jogging and strength training.





## 05 Drink moderately

Alcohol can lower your BP if taken in small amounts by as much as 2 to 4 ml. But drinking too much can skyrocket your BP with fatal results. The guidelines on drinking alcohol are – a drink a day for both men and women; two a day for men 65 and younger. One drink includes –

- 12 ounces of beer
- 5 ounces of wine
- 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor

## 06 Avoid smoking cigarettes and other tobacco products. Stay away from secondhand smoke

Nicotine raises your blood pressure by 10 mmHg or more instantaneously and can last up to an hour. The more cigarettes you smoke in a day, the higher your blood pressure would be. Inhaling second hand smoke causes the same effect.

## 07 Control your Caffeine Intake

We all know the zing a cup of coffee brings! However, it can raise their BP with some people. Even though experts say it isn't proven if caffeine indeed affects BP.

To determine if caffeine increases your BP, check it within 30 minutes of enjoying a cup of coffee or a caffeinated drink. If your BP increases by 5 to 10mmHg, then you're indeed sensitive to the hypertensive effects of caffeine.



## 08 Relax, relax, relax...

Stress, anxiety and worries can make your blood pressure jump through the roof. Try to cope healthily with the stressors at work and at home. Take small breaks at work and at home. Break down your tasks into manageable bits. Go for a massage, meditate or take up yoga. Seek the counsel of a professional in extreme cases.

## 09 Monitor your BP at home

Learn to take your BP, record and compare the times you have good control. This encourages you to continue with your healthy lifestyle. You can show your records to your doctor so he can adjust your drug dosage. If you have good control, you can visit your doctor once in six months unless you have other diseases.



## 10

**Enlist the support of your family and friends; join a community or online support group**

A support group encourages you to take care of yourself. Family members would understand and support your dietary choices, the need for exercise and others.

**You can swap experiences with other hypertensives at a community or an online support group. Their support can help you sustain your healthy lifestyle. HT**



References:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/high-blood-pressure/HI00027>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/high-blood-pressure/HI00027/INSECTIONGROUP=2>

– Dr Lillian Laruan



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# Battling Cancer Fatigue

**Fatigue generally refers to tiredness and lack of energy. A person who is not eating properly or has poor physical conditioning may experience fatigue. With this type of fatigue, the body is letting the person know that there is not enough nutrition or that the person is overdoing the exercises. The tiredness is usually short term and recovers rapidly with adequate nutrition or rest. However, fatigue for people with cancer can be very different. The cancer or its treatment may make one feel very tired. There are multiple possible obvious or not obvious causes and the tiredness may not go away even with rest. Fatigue is very common in people with cancer. It can be the most troubling symptom for some patients. Dr Peter Ang explains further.**

In general, **cancer related fatigue (CRF)** is subjective and patients may have a persistent sense of tiredness or exhaustion. It may involve physical, emotional and cognitive aspects. It is not proportional to the activities that the patient participates in and may significantly impact his daily functioning.

Many patients will experience CRF to a certain extent throughout their treatment, and sometimes even after their treatment is over. It can be difficult to identify. The common terms that we hear from our patients are **“low energy, low motivation, easily tired and difficulty sleeping”**.

## What causes CRF?

The causes of CRF are multi-factorial. It can be unrelated to the cancer, cancer treatment-related or related to a recurrence of the cancer.

**Some patients develop non-cancer related conditions such as diabetes or hypothyroidism during their follow up. These conditions can present with fatigue and low energy if undetected.**

Specific to cancer treatments, patients will generally feel tired after chemotherapy. Treatment-related anaemia is a cause of fatigue that can be corrected by medications or blood transfusions. Hormonal therapy used in the treatment of cancer can also cause CRF. Medications which lower male or female hormones such as for prostate or breast cancers can have an effect on energy levels. In these situations, medications may need to be adjusted for the patients.

## What can be done to combat CRF?

Detection of the underlying cause of fatigue is important for specific treatment. In terms of general prevention, some patients on chemotherapy treatment actually benefit from a light symptom-limited workout. It is best to check with the treating doctor in each case.

For some patients, short exercises during the week after chemotherapy when they are not too tired can be done. Exercise strengthens bones and maintains overall physical wellbeing. Light exercise of at least up to 15 minutes is recommended. This is to improve heart and lung function as well as strengthen joints and muscles. Fluids and good nutrition are equally important. A balanced diet is best. In terms of alternative medicine to combat CRF, there are no conclusive studies as yet.

If the fatigue level is unusual, we will need to investigate for sinister causes. There are some cancer drugs that can have side effects like diarrhoea. In these cases, the patient will need to replenish his fluids and electrolytes. Checking to make sure these are adequately replaced is easily done with a blood test. In other cases, cancer recurrences need to be excluded by further tests and treated if necessary.

## Does stress contribute to CRF?

I do not think so. Most patients are on medical leave and away from work during cancer treatment. Many patients worry that stress might contribute to cancer recurrence. However, this has not proven to be true. In cases of prolonged stress, some people feel discouraged and may not want to return to work. These are emotional and social issues which need to be managed. A little stress can have some motivational effects. Anxiety and depression, on the other hand, can contribute to CRF. Managing these emotions is important and occasionally professional help is needed.

## How common is CRF in Singapore?

As far as I know, there are no good epidemiological studies. In fact, it's quite tough to quote reference numbers. Studies may vary in when they record CRF; before, during or after treatment. Studies may also depend on subjective patient recall of their experience. Measuring the scale of fatigue in studies can also be challenging.

## When should one seek medical attention?

Patients should be on regular follow up with their oncologists after a cancer diagnosis. During these visits, patients should inform their doctor if they experience persistent disturbance in their normal activities or sleep. If the patient feels that he is tired in spite of many hours of sleep or rest, the symptom may warrant further evaluation. Although patients may be fearful that CRF is related to a cancer relapse, very often, it is not. We always start by evaluating the common, simple, treatable causes first and many patients may be relieved to know that their suffering may be something easily managed. **HT**

### Dr Peter Ang

MBBS (Singapore), M.Med (Singapore), MRCP (United Kingdom), FAMS (Medical Oncology), FAMS (Palliative Medicine)

Prior to entering private practice, Dr Peter Ang was Senior Consultant Medical Oncologist and Director of the Cancer Education Service (2004) at the National Cancer Centre, Singapore. He was also a visiting consultant to KK Hospital. He was the leading oncologist of the Breast Cancer Workgroup (2002) for National Cancer Centre and Singhealth cluster and was involved in the cluster Breast Cancer Health Management Plan (2003). He has been actively involved in clinical and translational research for many years, in breast and other cancers. Dr Ang is currently a Visiting Consultant to National Cancer Centre and is actively involved in research and teaching.



# Going the extra mile for cancer patients @OncoCare

A cancer diagnosis, needless to say is a life altering experience. It affects every part of the patient – physical, mental and emotional. Apart from support from family members and loved ones, cancer patients can turn to their physicians and caregivers to be there for them throughout their journey.

Receiving care at a well established cancer programme hospital or facility like *OncoCare Cancer Centre* (*OncoCare*) ensures that patients receive high-quality care from teams of specialists who can coordinate the best treatment options available. *OncoCare* goes the extra mile to see that cancer patients and their families benefit from its comprehensive and compassionate cancer care programmes.

Established in 2007, *OncoCare* is currently one of the largest practices in Singapore, with three clinics located at Singapore's premier hospitals- Gleneagles, Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre and Mount Elizabeth Novena Medical Centre. It is notably one of the largest private multi-disciplinary specialist oncology teams in Singapore. Treatment at *OncoCare* includes chemotherapy, hormonal therapy, biologic targeted therapy, clinical trials and supportive care.



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Singapore 329563  
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Fax : +65 6694 1722

**GLENEAGLES MEDICAL CENTRE**  
6 Napier Road #03-02 / #03-13  
Singapore 258499  
Tel : +65 6733 7890  
Fax : +65 6733 7891

**MOUNT ELIZABETH MEDICAL CENTRE**  
3 Mount Elizabeth #12-11 Singapore 228510  
Tel : +65 6836 5201  
Fax : +65 6836 5202

Email : [enquiries@oncocare.sg](mailto:enquiries@oncocare.sg)  
Website : [www.oncocare.sg](http://www.oncocare.sg)

It is common to use several treatment options together or in sequence. Recognising that every patient responds differently to a treatment, the team at *OncoCare* uses sophisticated technology and intensive peer monitoring and quality controls, to monitor and determine a patient's response to

particular treatment. This allows for individualised treatment and the flexibility for modifications if necessary.

*OncoCare* is helmed by six highly trained medical oncologists who are continually involved in new cancer research and to offer the most effective approaches for detection, diagnosis and treatment of cancer. While practicing general oncology, the multi-disciplinary team specialises in the following areas –

- BREAST CANCER
- LUNG CANCER
- GASTROINTESTINAL CANCER (such as Colon Cancer, Rectum Cancer, Stomach Cancer)
- LIVER CANCER
- PANCREATIC CANCER
- KIDNEY CANCER
- PROSTATE CANCER
- TESTICULAR CANCER
- EAR, NOSE & THROAT CANCER
- LYMPHOMA
- CANCER GENETICS

On a regular basis, the *OncoCare* team interacts with surgeons, medical and radiation oncologists to discuss patient cases for treatment planning. This would mean that a patient is not just taken care of exclusively by his own doctor, but can count on a whole team of specialists for support.

The *OncoCare* team is progressive; flexible enough to learn newer technologies and yet committed to only tried, tested and medically sound technologies. Besides employing the latest technologies and scientifically proven therapies to achieve the best possible clinical outcomes, the oncologists at *OncoCare* are also actively involved in many clinical trials with drug manufacturers, to support continuing research and efficiency in oncology treatments.

Patients can count on responsive and benevolent specialists and nursing staff at *OncoCare*. These individuals are committed not only to the most effective cancer treatment options but also to personalised care.

Free your body of harmful free radicals with

# S.O.D Balancer

THE SUPER ENZYME...

**Overproduction of free radicals** can oxidative stress and destroy protective cell membranes to break down and cause ageing. To help control the production of dangerous free radicals and improve immunity, we need Superoxide Dismutase (SOD) - an enzyme naturally produced in our body.

**The SOD Balancer** is a liquid food that works just like the SOD enzyme! Made with natural ingredients, and no artificial colourings or preservatives, the SOD Balancer is free radical scavenger that helps to correct enzyme imbalance, rids the body of harmful toxins and enables the smooth functioning of cells and the internal organs. Made of low molecular weight, SOD Balancer is readily absorbed into the digestive system.

## Other Benefits of SOD Balancer

- Has a slimming effect
- Improves liver and kidney function
- Improves infertility, irregular periods, white discharge, PMS and menopause symptoms
- Reverses the ageing process
- Promotes hair growth and prevents dandruff
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- Protects against flu and common colds
- Improves gastric and duodenal ulcers



Udo's Choice®  
Ultimate Oil Blend®

## Fats that BOOST HEALTH



“Some fats kill and other fats heal. If you want to be healthy, know the difference, and choose dietary fats accordingly.”

Dr Udo Erasmus, who is also known as the Father of “Organic, Unrefined Flax Oil” and Udo's Choice® Ultimate Oil Blend®.



**M**ention fats and most would cringe. After all, they have earned a bad reputation thanks to misunderstood public perception of the food pyramid. However, conventional wisdom on dietary fats is starting to see a huge difference, thanks to years of research. Essential fatty acids (EFAs) are, as they are called, fats that are necessary within the human body. Without them, the different systems in our body can be subjected to serious damage. In reality, EFAs are also not usually produced naturally within the body, which means they have to be added to our diet. Our body especially needs two particular EFAs – Alpha-Linolenic Acid (ALA) popularly known as omega-3 and Linolenic Acid (LA) popularly known as omega-6.

Udo's Choice® Ultimate Oil Blend® is a special blend of carefully chosen, natural, unrefined, EFA-rich oils that is accompanied

by a pleasant, nutty, buttery taste. It contains oils from fresh, certified organic flax, sesame, sunflower and evening primrose seeds as well as oils from coconut, rice and oat germ, providing 'minor' ingredients with major health benefits.

This formula is the brainchild of many years of scientific study by world-renowned nutrition expert, Dr Udo Erasmus, author of the best-selling book, *Fats That Heal Fats That Kill*. Each ingredient in Udo's Choice® Ultimate Oil Blend® was chosen for its specific health-promoting properties –

**ORGANIC FLAX OIL.** One of nature's richest sources of omega 3 fatty acids

**ORGANIC SUNFLOWER AND SESAME OILS.** Provide unrefined Omega 6 fatty acids



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Dr Erasmus’ research over the years indicates that the best results come consistently from oils blended to be richer in omega-3 than omega-6, in a 2:1 ratio. In contrast, the average Western diet is much too high in omega-6 and dangerously low in omega-3. Udo’s Choice® Ultimate Oil Blend® has an ideal 2:1:1 ratio of omega 3, 6 and 9 essential fatty acids, proven by research to lower risk factors for cardiovascular disease, enhance stamina and energy, and improve general health and well-being. It also comprises medium chain triglycerides, which are easy to digest and assimilate and can be used directly by our cells as a source of energy without increasing fat deposits.

Udo’s Choice® Ultimate Oil Blend® is pressed and filtered in a state-of-the art, low heat, light and oxygen-free environment to maximise stability and provide nutritional value and freshness. Nitrogen purged, amber glass bottles are filled with the oil blend and then nitrogen flushed to eliminate oxygen. The bottles are then capped and packed in a box to further protect the ingredients and ensure the highest possible quality. It is kept refrigerated in storage and ice packed during transit to keep the heat sensitive EFAs fresh.

Other benefits of this oil blend include healthier skin, hair and nails, improved stamina for better performance, enhanced bone health, reduction in PMS and menopause symptoms, improvement of brain function and development, and even weight loss.

Every cell in the body must have the correct balance of EFAs daily to function properly. EFAs manufacture and repair cell membranes, enabling the cells to properly assimilate nutrients from our foods and efficiently expel toxins and waste products. A deficiency, or even an imbalance, of EFAs can be linked to a decline in the optimal functioning of the body’s natural processes. HT

Udo’s Choice® Ultimate Oil Blend® is distributed in Singapore by United Nature.

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For Healthy Families



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Our digestive system is inhabited by billions of both 'good' and 'bad' bacteria. The 'good' bacteria, known as probiotics, play an important role in maintaining a healthy digestive system. They help in the absorption of essential nutrients, processing of waste and most importantly, minimise the growth of 'bad' bacteria, which is responsible for nasty infections. NEOBIOTICS is a new generation SYNBIOTIC supplement which combines both prebiotics and probiotics to further enhance their beneficial effects. "Prebiotic" is a source of fuel for the probiotics. It helps the probiotics to multiply thus overcrowding the harmful effects of the "bad" bacteria.

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NEOBIOTICS is formulated for babies and children, teens, adults and elderly.

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**Biotta Organic Artichoke Plus Juice**

An ideal concoction for your health, Biotta Artichoke Plus is a harmonious blend of vegetable juices, rounded in taste, appetite-stimulating and well suited for a balanced diet. Artichoke flowers were used as a high quality food source as far back as ancient Egypt.

Biotta Organic Artichoke Plus Juice is made from 20% pressed artichoke blossom bud juice, tomato juice, beetroot juice, and radish juice. The taste has been refined with lime juice, agave concentrate, and a dash of salt.



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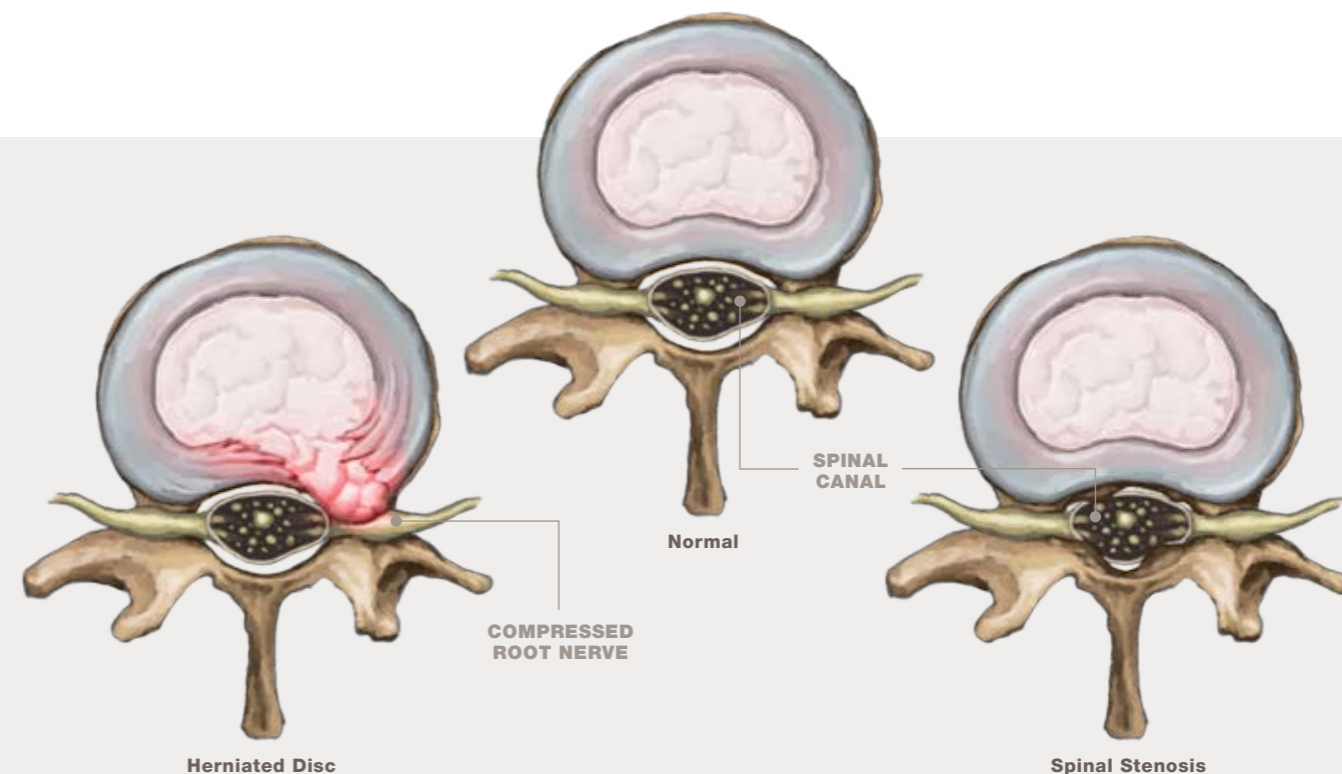
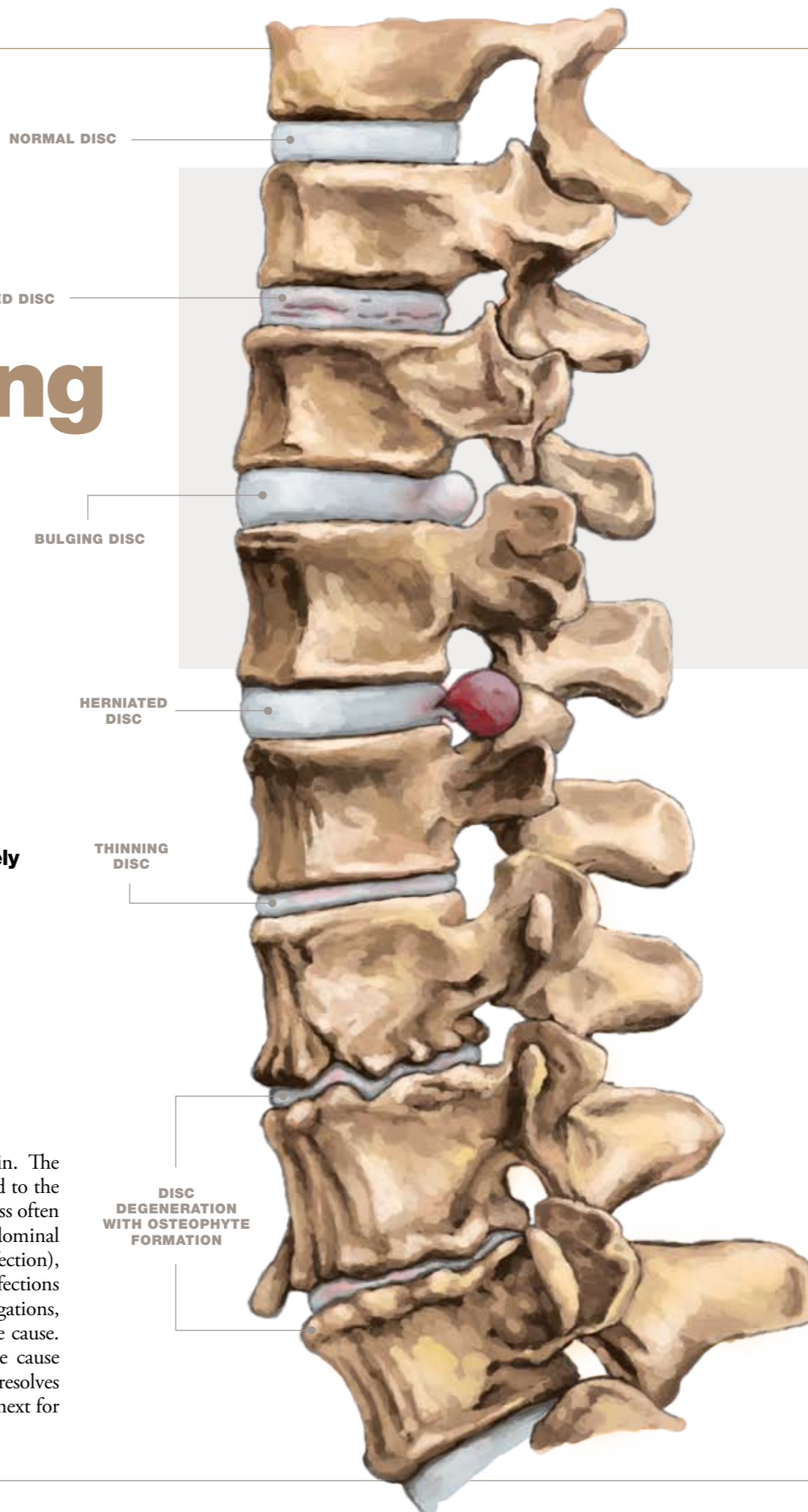


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# Managing Back Pain

**Back pain is an extremely common complaint. 90% of the adult population would have experienced back pain at some point in their lives and approximately half of these people would have experienced recurrent back pain.**

Many conditions give rise to back pain. The most common source of pain is related to the spine and structures surrounding it. Other, less often encountered causes include disorders of abdominal organs (pancreatitis, kidney stones or infection), blood vessel injuries (aortic dissection) and infections affecting nerves (shingles). Despite investigations, some cases of back pain have no attributable cause. The good news is that, no matter what the cause of the pain is, the majority of back pain resolves spontaneously within six to eight weeks (see next for important exceptions to this).



## Causes of Back Pain

The following are common causes of back pain related to the spine and surrounding structures.

### Degenerated lumbar disc

A lumbar disc is the soft tissue found between each vertebra. It is responsible for spinal stability, mobility and absorption of shock transmitted through the spine. 80% of the composition of a normal disc is water. This gives it a springy consistency and allows for normal function. When a disc undergoes degeneration, it loses some of its water content. As a consequence of this, the disc loses its thickness and bulges at its periphery. This bulging irritates nerves found at the edge of the disc, giving rise to back pain. This pain can radiate down to the buttocks and is aggravated by prolonged sitting. The reason for this is that the disc is under increased pressure with the spine flexed. On prolonged sitting, one would tend to slouch and this flexes the spine, increasing the pressure on the disc. This further irritates the nerve, thus worsening the pain in the back and buttocks (discogenic back pain).

### Herniated lumbar disc (slipped disc)

A herniated lumbar disc occurs when the central jelly-like part of the disc (nucleus pulposus) bulges through

a fissure in the outer capsule (annulus fibrosus) of the disc. This herniation often causes pressure on nerves supplying the lower limbs resulting in leg pain, in addition to back pain. There can also be lower limb weakness and numbness due to impairment of nerve function secondary to compression. Occasionally, the herniated disc can cause compression of the nerves supplying the bowel and bladder resulting in incontinence (cauda equina syndrome). This is an emergency condition which requires urgent surgery. If there is a delay in the treatment of cauda equina syndrome, incontinence can be permanent.

### Spinal stenosis

Spinal stenosis is characterized by back pain associated with leg pain after walking for a certain distance. This phenomenon is known as neurogenic claudication. The walking distance achievable is predictable and the leg pain can also be predictably relieved by sitting down but not by standing still. This condition is caused by narrowing of the opening of the spine through which the nerves supplying the lower limbs exit. The narrowing is often due to arthritis of the small joints of the spine (facet joints) which results in enlargement of the joints from growth of bone spurs (osteophytes). The narrowing is also contributed by bulging, degenerate discs.

## Myofascial pain

This is pain originating from the muscles and supporting soft tissues surrounding the skeletal portion of the spine. It is characterized by tenderness over localized areas on the back (trigger points). Pain is typically relieved by stretching the involved muscle group or by trigger point release (massage) or injection.

## Spinal fractures, infections and tumours

While uncommon, these are particularly sinister causes of back pain associated with poor outcomes if not detected and treated early.

## When to Seek Treatment

These are factors that may point towards a condition that requires urgent treatment such as a fracture, infection or tumour ("red flags").

- **Recent trauma** such as a fall from a height or motorcycle accident.
- **Recent mild trauma in an individual above the age of 50** such as a fall onto the buttocks.
- **History of prolonged steroid use.**
- **Someone with a history of osteoporosis.**
- **Any person above the age of 70** due to increased risk of cancer, infection and non-spinal cause of back pain.
- **Previous history of cancer.**
- **History of recent infection.**
- **Temperature over 38.5 degrees Celsius** associated with back pain.
- **Intravenous drug use.**
- **Back pain worse at rest** which is associated with infections and tumours.
- **Recent unexplained weight loss.**

Other characteristics of pain which warrant urgent medical attention include –

- **Prolonged back pain.**
- **Back pain associated with acute onset weakness or numbness of the lower limbs or lower limb pain.**
- **Back pain associated with incontinence.**

## Assessment and Treatment

A doctor's assessment of back pain includes obtaining a history regarding the pain, associated symptoms and conditions. This is followed by an examination of the back and nerve function of the lower limbs.



If a spinal condition for back pain is suspected, a X-ray will be performed. A MRI scan may also be requested for if there is any impairment of nerve function or presence of any "red flags".

The majority of back pain is treated with rest, medications and physical therapy. In very selected conditions, surgery is necessary. HT



**Dr Lim Kay Kiat**

MBBS (Singapore) – Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery  
MRCS (Edinburgh) – Member of the Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh  
MMed Orthopaedics (Singapore) – Master of Medicine in Orthopaedic Surgery  
FRCSEd (Orthopaedics) – Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh (Orthopaedic Surgery)

**Dr Lim Kay Kiat** is an orthopaedic surgeon with a subspecialty in Foot and Ankle surgery. He has a special interest in sports injuries. After completing his undergraduate education and postgraduate training in Orthopaedic Surgery, Dr Lim, as a fellow in the University of Toronto, underwent subspecialty training at St Michael's Hospital in Toronto, Canada. Dr Lim treats a wide spectrum of foot and ankle disorders. He counts among his many patients, elite athletes active on the international sporting scene. *Synergy Orthopaedic Group* [www.sog.sg](http://www.sog.sg)

# Say NO to spine problems now!

Experiencing neck or back pain and want a long term solution to this perennial problem?

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## Services

Having been featured consistently on various TV and radio channels including the BBC, Channel News Asia, Channel 5 and 93.8 FM, Dr Prem Pillay – with over two decades of experience – specializes in various no-surgery and microsurgical interventions for the brain, spine and the nerves. He also performs keyhole spine procedures, including day procedures, for many spine problems causing back and neck pain.

**Act now**  
So visit the Singapore Brain, Spine, and Nerves Centre today to embark on the journey towards a pain free life.



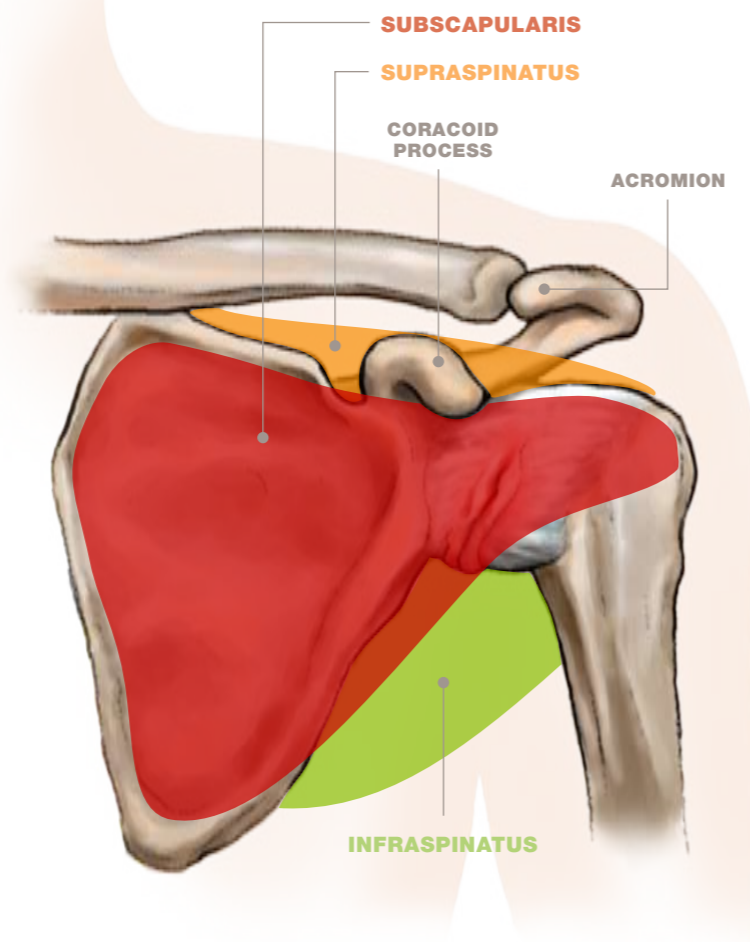
**Dr Prem Pillay**  
MBBS (Singapore), FRCS (Edinburgh)  
FAMS (Neurosurgery), FRCS Canada  
(Neurosurgery)  
Contacts:  
[www.drprempillay.org](http://www.drprempillay.org)  
[www.spine-neuro.org](http://www.spine-neuro.org)

Singapore Brain, Spine, Nerves Centre  
#15-03, Mt. Elizabeth Medical Centre  
3 Mt. Elizabeth  
Singapore 228510  
Tel (65) 6835 4325  
Fax (65) 6835 4326



# The “50-year-old shoulder”

## Rotator Cuff Tears and Frozen Shoulder

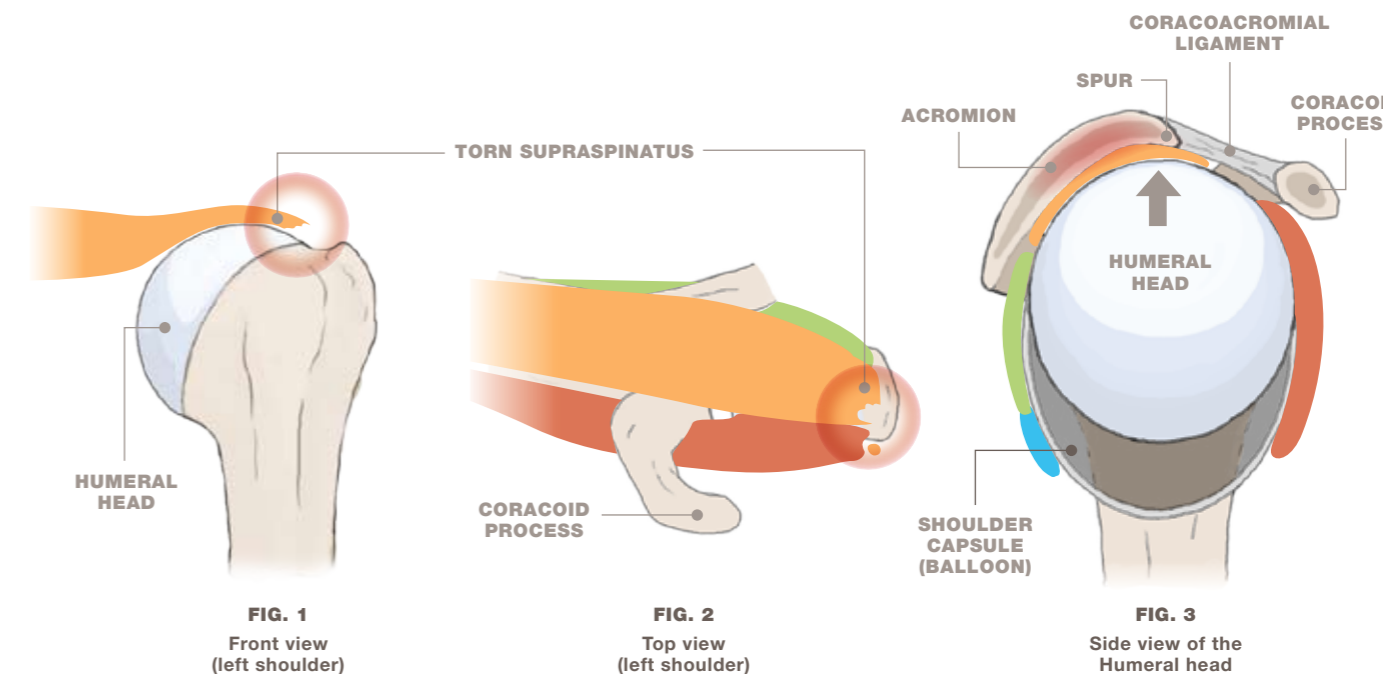


**In Chinese and Japanese, the “50 Shoulder”, or sometimes also called the “40 Shoulder” refers to pain and stiffness of the shoulder occurring without any apparent cause. It is not confined to the 50 year old, and may occur typically in the 35-65 age group. This is also known as the Frozen Shoulder (or Adhesive Capsulitis in medical terms). However some of these patients may have Rotator Cuff Disease or even Osteoarthritis, both of which also present as pain and stiffness. In many of these cases, the symptoms overlap with the frozen shoulder and some form of imaging (Xrays, Ultrasound or MRI scans) may be needed to differentiate them.**

The Frozen Shoulder is a problem involving the shoulder capsule (Fig. 3). This is basically a balloon that surrounds the joint, the primary function of which is to hold in the joint fluid. This balloon gets thickened and inflamed in a frozen shoulder resulting in the pain and stiffness. The Rotator Cuff is actually a number of muscles which surround the shoulder ball, sitting just outside the capsule (Fig. 1-3). It is commonly inflamed (tendonitis) or even torn in this age group. Arthritis is damage to the joint cartilage itself.

Usually, the pain starts gradually. In some cases, there may be some form of mild injury or overuse, but in most cases, the patients cannot remember any precipitating event. The shoulder becomes stiffer and more painful over the course of a few weeks to months.

The natural history of a **frozen shoulder** is that it eventually gets better on its own in most cases, but may



take anything from 6 months to even 2-3 years. With treatment however, this period can be shortened dramatically. The primary treatment is that of a stretching programme. The majority of patients will respond to a home programme of capsular stretching but there are always a few that do not.

Those who have too much pain to stretch, or do not respond, may need further intervention. This can be in the form of a simple Manipulation, under Anaesthesia or an Arthroscopic Capsular Release. This intervention is merely a way to get over the “hurdle” as the patient still needs to continue stretching for 2-3 months after this.

**Rotator cuff disease** is a spectrum of disease, ranging from Tendonitis, to Partial Thickness Tears, Full Thickness Tears, and a special form of arthritis known as Cuff Tear Arthropathy. The patient with a rotator cuff problem sometimes in a similar way to a frozen shoulder. In others it is due to an injury such as a fall or overuse injury. The symptoms are slightly different, as the pain is more pain on exertion or they may have a painful arc.

The rotator cuff is set of muscles, surrounding the shoulder capsule. The most commonly involved muscle is the Supraspinatus (See Fig. 1-3). The treatment depends very much on the patient symptoms, size of tear etc.

For example if the symptoms are just a painful arc (Impingement Syndrome) and the scans are negative

for a tear, then non operative treatment is often successful. This may involve a stretching programme, rest, anti inflammatory medication or even steroid injections. If surgery is needed, it is relatively simple Day Surgery Arthroscopic Surgery in which some bone may be removed to reduce the friction and rubbing on the rotator cuff from the adjacent bone.

On the other hand if there is full thickness tear (Fig. 1-2), the symptoms may be more of weakness and pain on overhead activity. In this case, a Surgical Repair of the Torn Supraspinatus Tendon may be needed. Steroid injections are not recommended as they mask the symptoms only and also may compromise the results of surgical repair.

In some cases, a patient may have both a Rotator Cuff Tear, as well as a form of Frozen Shoulder which occurs secondarily to the Rotator Cuff Disease. This complicates the treatment and usually results in slower recovery. **HT**

**Dr Yung Shing Wai**  
Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon  
MBBS (Singapore), FRCS(Ed) (Gen Surg), FAMS (Orth Surg)

Dr Yung is a consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon currently practicing in Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre. He has a special interest in the field of Foot and Ankle Surgery and Shoulder Surgery. Prior to starting private practice in 2000, his previous appointment was Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon, Chief of the Foot and Ankle Service at the Singapore General Hospital. He graduated from the National University of Singapore in 1985 and obtained his Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in 1990. After completing Advanced Surgical Training in Orthopaedic Surgery in Singapore, he went for further fellowship training in Foot and Ankle Surgery and Shoulder Surgery at the University of Washington in Seattle. [www.swyung.com](http://www.swyung.com)



## Don't let an injury keep you away from your favourite sport...

**Sprains, fractures, dislocations and other forms of sports injuries can prevent you from pursuing an active lifestyle. If not treated promptly, these injuries can lead to further damage of the joints and even chronic pain. At Synergy Orthopaedic Group, we provide holistic and affordable care for your orthopaedic needs.**



**Dr Lim Kay Kiat**

An orthopaedic surgeon with a subspecialty in Foot and Ankle surgery, Dr Lim Kay Kiat has a special interest in sports injuries. He treats a wide spectrum of foot and ankle disorders, and counts

among his many patients, elite athletes active on the international sporting scene. An avid sportsman himself, Dr Lim fully understands the needs and demands of his patients for optimal performance. Treatment for each patient is individualised, in order to best achieve their desired goal.

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820 Thomson Road  
#02-20 Mt Alvernia Medical Centre A  
Singapore 574623  
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Fax: (65) 6725 8491

**Mt Elizabeth Novena Medical Centre**  
38 Irrawaddy Road #06-59/60/61  
Mt Elizabeth Novena Medical Centre  
Singapore 329563  
Tel: (65) 6884 6788  
Fax: (65) 6725 8491

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### MEDICAL MATTERS



SEVERE HAND SWELLING, DEFORMITY AND PAIN AFTER AN INJURY OFTEN MEAN A FRACTURE OR DISLOCATION IS PRESENT.

# Fractures of the Hand and Wrist

**Good hand function** depends on healthy and intact bones and joints. 31 bones form the skeleton of the hand and wrist. Between the bones are joints that allow the fingers and wrist to move. Muscles and tendons attach to the bones, moving the joints when they contract and relax. The nerves and blood vessels are supported and protected by the solid bones.

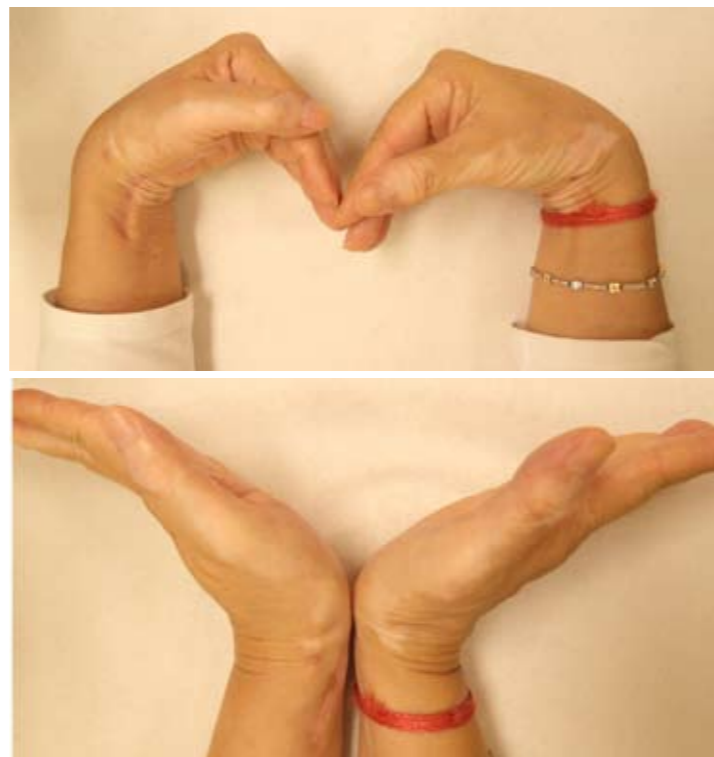
With sudden forceful impact or twisting, the bones may break causing a fracture. This can happen when one breaks a fall with the hand; during sporting activities particularly contact sports such as martial arts, basketball or football; in traffic accidents, or when working with tools. When this happens, pain, swelling

and deformity will severely impair hand function. In more severe injuries, the soft tissues such as nerves and blood vessels may be injured, jeopardising the entire finger or hand. All fractures and dislocations must be treated quickly and properly to ensure that good hand function is restored.



Before

After



EXCELLENT HAND AND WRIST FUNCTION CAN BE RESTORED WITH PROPER TREATMENT OF SEVERE FRACTURES.

However, some fractures are too unstable and may shift in the cast. A surgery called “open reduction internal fixation” or ORIF is needed to fix them with metal wires, plates or screws.

### How do I know if there is a fracture?

If you have hit or twisted your finger or wrist, or fallen hard on your hand, you may have fractured a bone. If the hand or wrist is obviously deformed and looks abnormal, then there is probably a bad fracture or dislocation. However, even if there isn't any obvious deformity but there is swelling, bruising and pain when trying to move a finger or the wrist, then you should suspect there is a fracture.

### When should I see a doctor?

If you think you may have a fracture or dislocation, it is important to see a doctor as soon as possible to have an X-ray taken. X-rays show the bones and joints under the skin, revealing any breaks in the bone or dislocated joints. You should see a doctor immediately if you also have an open wound, numbness in the injured finger

or hand, or if the injured finger is turning blue or pale. These are signs that there is also injury to the skin, nerves and blood vessels respectively, all of which need urgent surgical treatment.

### Can I use traditional or “alternative” medicine instead?

You should never allow a “bone setter”, chiropractor or traditional medicine practitioner to manipulate an injured finger, hand or wrist without an X-ray confirming that there isn't a fracture or dislocation.

Such manipulation may cause more injury or delay the diagnosis, making the treatment more difficult and the outcome poorer.

### How are fractures treated?

All fractures require immobilisation of the bone to allow it to heal. Usually, healing takes six weeks for adults and three to four weeks for children. During this time, the broken bone ends and the joints at either end of the fractured bone must be immobilised. Fractures that are displaced or deformed need to be manipulated to make the bone straight and bring the ends together to allow them to heal without deformity. The most common way to immobilise the fracture is to put the hand or wrist in a cast. However, some fractures are too unstable and may shift in the cast. A surgery called “open reduction internal fixation” or ORIF is needed to fix them with metal wires, plates or screws. ORIF is also necessary when perfect alignment is needed. Even simple fractures that are not badly displaced can benefit from ORIF, which allows immediate use of the hand, instead of putting it in a cast for four to six weeks.

Physical therapy is frequently needed after the fracture heals to regain mobility, strength and function in the hand. If the fracture has been fixed surgically, therapy starts immediately after surgery, without waiting for it to heal, as the metal implants prevent the fracture from moving. This allows much faster return to full function.

### What is the outcome?

It is vital for hand and wrist fractures to be treated by an experienced hand surgeon. Poorly fixed or badly managed fractures result in permanent deformity and stiffness, greatly impairing hand function. More complex surgery may be needed later to correct the deformity and restore function. If diagnosed and treated appropriately, most fractures heal with minimal deformity and good hand function can be expected by within three to six months. However, fractures with a lot of soft tissue injury and those close to the joints tend to heal with stiffness, even with the best treatment. **HT**

#### Dr Andrew Yam

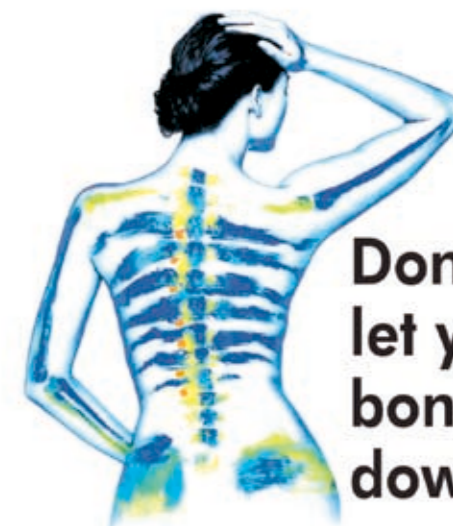
MBBS (Australia), MRCS (Edinburgh), MMED(Surgery), FAMS (Hand Surgery)



Dr. Yam obtained his medical degree from the Flinders University of South Australia in 1997. He became a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons (Edinburgh) in 2003 and obtained a Master of Medicine (Surgery) from the National University of Singapore in 2004. He trained in Hand Surgery at Singapore General Hospital and National University Hospital and was accredited as a Specialist in Hand Surgery in 2007. Dr Yam did his fellowship in Peripheral Nerve and Brachial Plexus Surgery at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in London, the premier centre of excellence for nerve surgery in the UK. He also completed workshops on cerebral palsy, tetraplegia and brachial plexus reconstruction at internationally renowned centres. Upon his return, he was appointed Director of the Peripheral Nerve and Paralytic Upper Limb Service at Singapore General Hospital. He was also the Associate Program Director of the SingHealth Residency Program for Hand Surgery and Adjunct Assistant Professor at Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School. During his tenure as consultant in the Dept of Hand Surgery, Singapore General Hospital, Dr Yam was awarded several awards for health service quality and teaching excellence. [www.charmsingapore.com](http://www.charmsingapore.com)

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# Pain in the Neck

**There is an increase in the problem of neck and arm worldwide. An important reason for this is our modern 21st century lifestyle. We are sitting for long hours at work and at home. Many modern office workers and executives are now suffering from neck pain and back pain as a result of this. Neck pain can also come out to the shoulders and hands and cause pain, numbness, tingling and even weakness.**

Neck pain used to be seen mainly in those who worked in physically demanding jobs like builders, bricklayers, plantation workers, heavy industry workers, construction workers and miners. However, nowadays, there are more executives who

come to us for neck pain. We have identified prolonged sitting, a poor posture, overuse of computers, frequent business travel and an unhealthy executive lifestyle as major reasons for this problem. When you sit too long, there is increased pressure in the spine discs.

**A poor posture while sitting such as looking down at a computer screen especially with laptop use is also bad for the neck. The spine is not one bone but about 33 bones with a soft gel like substance called the disc in between.**

The disc allows flexibility and movement in the spine. Executives and office staff now work with computers and this prolonged activity with poor posture can cause the spine discs to break down and come out or slip out. These slipped discs can pressure on the nerves and cause neck pain, arm pain, numbness, tingling, and as the problem gets worse even weakness in the hands, arms and even the legs. The worst case scenario is becoming unable to walk, unable to pass urine or pass motion. This can happen gradually or in some people it can happen suddenly. The reason for this is nerve damage from the slipped disc or spinal narrowing.

Executives who are bothered by neck pain often go for massages to various types of therapists. If the pain does not get better after three visits to the therapist or comes back after massage therapy, it is recommended that you see a neurospine specialist. But do take note that massage therapy or physical therapy done in the wrong way by unqualified people can make the problem worse. A proper spine and nerve examination followed by an MRI of the spine can reveal and confirm the problem. X rays alone cannot show the nerves or pressure on the nerves from a slipped disc. In some older executives, the neck pain or arm pain is caused by spine stenosis. This is a narrowing in the spine canal which squeezes the spine nerves. A common story that we hear is that the person cannot walk steadily or has weakness in the hands.

Executive neck pain and arm pain can often be treated without surgery. The proper medications and

therapy organised by a spine specialist can help the person recover faster and return to his normal lifestyle.

Some people require spine injections to reduce pain. The better type of spine injections treats the root of the problem. This involves a laser like spine injection to the disc to reduce the disc pressure on the nerves. This can be done as a day procedure without any surgery. In some executives, the problem has become too serious and requires surgery. Fortunately, modern surgery including microsurgery and micro-neurospine surgery has advanced to a stage that the risks are low and the recovery can be quick. Monitoring of the spine nerves can be done during surgery to make it safe.

**In conclusion, more executives and office workers are suffering from back pain. If this back pain is frequent or spreads to the legs, we recommend that you see a spine and nerve specialist for a proper check up to find out the root of the problem.**

A healthy lifestyle with less sitting, a good posture and the right exercises with a good diet can also lessen the chance of frequent neck and arm pain. **HT**



**Dr Prem Pillay**  
MBBS (Singapore), FRCS (Edinburgh)  
FAMS (Neurosurgery), FRCS Canada (Neurosurgery)

Dr Prem Pillay is the senior consultant neurosurgeon at Singapore Brain, Spine, Nerves Centre located within the Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre. He was featured consistently in the past on various TV and radio channels including the BBC, Channel News Asia, Channel 5 and 93.8 FM. With over two decades of experience, he specializes in various neo-surgery and microsurgical interventions for the brain, spine and the nerves. He also performs keyhole spine procedures, including day procedures, for many spine problems causing back and neck pain. [www.drprempillay.org](http://www.drprempillay.org) [www.spine-neuro.org](http://www.spine-neuro.org)

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### MEDICAL MATTERS



## Managing Oral Cancer

**Oral cancer** can form in any part of the mouth. Most oral cancers begin in the tongue and in the floor of the mouth. Anyone can get oral cancer, but the risk is higher if you are male, over age 40, use tobacco or alcohol. In Singapore, some 150 to 200 patients are diagnosed with oral cancer every year. An estimated 75 to 90% of these cases are attributed to the high consumption of cigarettes and alcohol. Symptoms of oral cancer include –

- White or red patches in your mouth
- A mouth sore that won't heal
- Bleeding in your mouth
- Loose teeth
- Problems or pain with swallowing
- A lump in your neck
- An earache
- An ulcer or swelling on the lip

Other common abnormalities include lumps or a swelling, or an ulcer that doesn't heal in two weeks to ten days. Ulcers are painful, and soft, and they heal. An ulcer which is cancerous however tends to be hard and it might not always be painful. If the cancer is spread to the tongue, then the patient might not speak well or even have difficulty eating.

Over the last few years, there has been an increase in the incidence of younger patients with oral cancer. It was found that a significant number of these patients had human papilloma virus infection. The human papilloma virus (HPV) is known to cause cervical cancer and since the mucosa lining of the genital tract is similar to that in the mouth, it is not unlikely that the same cancerous changes could be induced by the HPV. So far, most of these forms of cancer are of the oropharyngeal type near the back of the mouth, and the prognoses of these cancers seem to be better. The cancer which is also associated with the number of oral sex partners, and recent vaccination against HPV for young girls who are not yet sexually active for prevention against cervical cancer has prompted some quarters to recommend the same for males.

**Lip cancer is often related to sun damage especially in Caucasian skin and present as a non healing ulcer which may bleed. Tongue cancer can also present as a non healing ulcer which may not be painful.**

Any ulcer that does not heal in more than 10 days or 2 weeks MUST be investigated to exclude cancer. Jaw cancer will usually present as a swelling together with ulceration which can be painful or cause the lower lip or cheek to be numb.

Unfortunately, many mouth cancer patients do not experience any symptoms until it is too late. (See above). Such patients are diagnosed only when the cancer is advanced and have to undergo more disfiguring operations with higher chances of relapse and death.

Sometimes the cancer has spread so far, that half of the patient's jaw and even an eye might have to be removed. In many severe cases, the cancer often recurs in less than six months. Nine in 10 patients survive beyond five years when the cancer is detected early. But, when it is caught at an advanced stage, this figure drops to fewer than two in 10.

Early detection of oral cancer also means avoiding any chemotherapy or radiotherapy – unlike patients who are diagnosed later. Medication may also be omitted from treatment, with just regular checks to make sure the cancer has not returned.

**Early detection can mean an 80 to 90% chance of survival, but if cancer is detected late, then the chances drop down to 20 to 30%.**

The main form of treatment is surgery where the cancer, if possible, is cut out entirely from the patient's mouth. Reconstructive microvascular surgery can help to replace structures that were removed - such as part of the tongue, mouth or even part of the jaw and help the patient resume normal oral functions such as eating and swallowing. This gives the patient the best chance of survival and if the cancer is late staged, additional radiotherapy can help to "mop" up the area to decrease the chance of recurrence. Sometimes in the more advanced cases, chemotherapy may be needed to kill off cancer cells that may have metastasised to distal places such as lungs, liver and brain.

The "best" treatment is still early detection and patients are advised to do their own oral self examination (*see [www.orofacialsurgery.com.sg](http://www.orofacialsurgery.com.sg)*) and consult a doctor if any suspicious areas are found. A specialist oral and maxillofacial surgeon with an interest in oral cavity cancer would be able to biopsy the lesion and help in making an early diagnosis. Most oral surgeons are dentists do not deal with primary treatment of oral cancers. But, specialist oral and maxillofacial surgeons are usually doctors doubly qualified in medicine and dentistry (i.e both a dentist and doctor) which enable them to have specialised knowledge of the mouth and teeth as well as the general surgical experience to deal with the major oncologic and constructive surgery in the treatment of such cancers. **HT**

**Dr Victor Fan**  
Senior Consultant Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon  
MB BCH; BAO (UK), BDS (Singapore), FDSRCS (England), FRCS (Eng),  
FRCS (OMFS) Intercollegiate Board, FAMS

Dr Victor Fan is one of the two medically qualified Oral and Maxillofacial surgeons in Singapore. His present practice in Gleneagles Medical Centre covers dental implant surgery, dental surgery, and major maxillofacial surgery which includes oral cancer surgery and reconstruction, facial aesthetic and orthognathic surgery. [www.orofacialsurgery.com.sg](http://www.orofacialsurgery.com.sg)



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Dr Yeap has more than 20 years of rich experiences in plastic and reconstructive surgery and still strives to keep up with the latest methods and technology in his specialty by attending conferences and courses. His patients form an even mix of Asians and Westerners from a wide variety of backgrounds ranging from celebrities in the entertainment industry, socialites, company board directors, and high level executives to middle management executives, working women and men, homemakers and teenage students. A highly dedicated professional, Dr Yeap employs the latest technology in aesthetic enhancement, and takes special care to individualise treatment for all his patients to help them achieve their desired goals.

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# How to have a Healthy Pregnancy

**Every couple wants the perfect child! The secret that most couples are unaware of is that the egg and sperm that form their perfect child have been trying to become the best egg or sperm that they can be for up to three months prior to the moment of conception. Hence, anyone who is seriously trying for a baby should definitely plan for this moment! Up to 85% of couples will succeed in conceiving a child within the first year of trying to do so. So take heart, the odds are in your favour!**

A baby's vital organs are formed in the first few weeks of the pregnancy, before the mother is aware that she is pregnant. At this critical stage, eliminating exposure to toxic substances and avoiding certain activities would be best.

Hence, consciously planning for a pregnancy will certainly help the couple to conceive more easily, have a healthier pregnancy and reduce pregnancy complications. It should also result in the birth of a healthier baby and reduce their risk of adult health issues as well as allow the mother to recover more quickly after delivery.

## How to Prepare Yourself

**01** The couple, especially the mother to be should get a general health check and ensure that there are no underlying medical illnesses that need to be controlled to reduce the risk of miscarriages e.g. Diabetes or Thyroid disease. If there are any chronic medical diseases in either parent to be, their condition should be well controlled with medication if required, that is suitable for pregnancy i.e. the medications will not lead to decreased fertility or run the risk of causing fetal anomalies.

**02** If there are medical conditions in one's family, the couple may need to seek the help of a genetic counselor to examine the risks of their baby being affected. Understanding what can and cannot be done will help clarify the situation and empower the couple to decide how best to move on.

**03** If there has been a past history of an abnormal fetus or having repeated miscarriages, a fetal maternal specialist should be sought to give advice prior to the next conception to reduce the risk a recurrence.

**04** Keep to an optimal BMI. Being too obese or too slim is not healthy, as either condition will adversely affect fertility. Being overweight increases the risk of developing high blood pressure and gestational diabetes for the mother while being underweight may lead to poor growth of the fetus. At both extremes, one's pregnancy could be adversely affected.

**05** Take your prenatal supplements. For women, do take a minimum amount of foliate 400 mcg daily to reduce the risk of neurotube defects and likely a host of other anomalies. For men, do consider, taking more zinc and anti oxidants to reduce the percentage of abnormal sperms.

**06** Reduce or stop intake of alcohol and other harmful substances e.g. recreational drugs. Quit smoking and reduce one's exposure to secondary smoke if you can, as all these noxious substances will adversely affect one's fertility.

**07** Observe one's diet and reduce exposure to raw and unclean foods, which may harbour infections or disease. Increase one's intake of good quality proteins and good omega 3 oils.

## How to Prepare Your Environment and Mind

**01** Minimise stressful situations if possible and harness positive energy from engaging in activities, which help to enhance one's wellbeing. Decide how much work stress one can cope with to decrease the harmful levels of hormones, which might decrease one's fertility.

**02** Regular exercise and getting adequate sleep are both extremely important ways of reducing stress and increasing the body's abilities to cope with the future pregnancy.

**03** All round fitness is important and requires three types of exercises, i.e. cardiovascular exercise to strengthen the heart and lungs, strength training to increase abdominal tone and strength of the back to reduce pregnancy discomfort and lastly flexibility training which will help to enhance overall wellbeing and improve circulation.

**04** Identify one's caregivers early, as that would reduce the stress of trying to determine where to go for antenatal care. This includes not only the gynecologist for delivery but also the hospital for delivery and perhaps the midwife or nanny that one wants to have to assist the mother post delivery. Early planning allows time for review of one's choices.

**05** Buy medical and life insurance plans that cover the cost of the pregnancy care and for the baby from birth. One does not want to be caught out with the sudden need for finances when faced with unexpected complications during the pregnancy, premature delivery or should the baby require urgent medical care post delivery. Having adequate coverage will go a long way in boosting one's confidence and giving the couple the peace of mind that they are not compromising care.

**Having prepared both the body and the mind and environment, the couple should be well placed to achieve a successful conception and enjoy the process of the pregnancy knowing they have covered all their bases and become successful parents in the near future! HT**



**Dr Ann Tan Sian Ann**

MBBS (S'pore), MRCOG (London), M Med (O&G) FAM (S'pore)

A Public Service Commission Scholar, Dr Tan has won several prestigious awards in her field of specialisation including the HMDP Scholarship for Fetal Echocardiography at Yale School of Medicine in 1995, the Young Investigator Award by the International Society of Ultrasound in Obstetrics in 1995 & Gynaecology & the Young MRCOG Award by the Hong Kong Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists in 1993. She is the first Singaporean to hold the Diploma of Fetal Medicine from the Fetal Medicine Foundation. She is dedicated to the field of prenatal diagnosis and care of both mother and foetus. Dr Tan has authored medical papers and serves as a reviewer on peer-reviewed journals. She has also presented papers at numerous medical forums in Singapore and internationally. She is the ex-Chief of Fetal Maternal Medicine at the Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology at the Singapore General Hospital and past President of Perinatal Society of Singapore. [www.anntan.com.sg](http://www.anntan.com.sg)

# Tuck that Tummy

**Tummy tuck is an operation commonly performed by plastics surgeons to restore the anatomical distortions in the tummy of females as a result of difficult, multiple or repeated pregnancies.**



These distortions are the result of the progressive increase in the size of the uterus in pregnancy. The intra-abdominal pressure causes the three main abdominal muscles to be displaced sideways from the usual central fusion in front. When the muscle dehiscence or separation is permanent, the front portion of tummy weakens and budes.

An umbilical hernia may also develop simultaneously. The patients often complain that relatives or friends would think that they are perpetually pregnant. They also have difficulties in wearing fitting clothes. Due to the weakness of the tummy muscles, they often have difficulties in exercising and hence may have an additional problem of increasing obesity. In very severe cases, the front portion of the tummy wall is so thin that the movement of the intestines can be seen when they lie down. It is sad to realise that the once beautiful, slim, well proportional and admired body contour has now degenerated to a distorted and pathetic one. This will often cause the patient to lose her self-confidence.

**Can this be restored or rectified?** Yes it can, but with some costs. The operation specially designed to restore the anatomical distortions is call the abdominoplasty or tummy tuck operation. The prime objectives of this operation are to tighten the dehiscd abdominal muscles, repair the weakened umbilicus (or belly button), and remove the excess overhanging

and often damaged skin with varying degree of stretched marks. In most patients except with those not obese, liposuction is often necessary to give the extra finishing touches. The final desired results are a flat and tight tummy wall, deeply positioned belly button, less obese tummy and a good waist line. The costs – a transverse scar across the lower end of the tummy and scar around the newly created umbilicus.

It must be stressed that certain patients are more prone to scarring and therefore stringent post-operative care like laser treatment and appropriate anti-scarring creams can help to prevent adverse scar formation.

**How can one maintain the newly restored body contours?** It must be the patient's determination to have a balanced diet and engage in regular exercise. Excessive indulgence of food with neglect of regular exercises may cause the body contour to deteriorate once more. It will be a waste if this is allowed to happen again. **HT**

**Dr Yeap Choong Lieng**  
Plastic Surgeon



**Dr Yeap Choong Lieng** is a graduate of the Medical College of the University of Singapore. He was Consultant Plastic Surgeon and Deputy Head of the Department of Plastic Surgery at the Singapore General Hospital, until he resigned to start his private practice at the Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre/Hospital. Dr Yeap actively keeps pace with the latest developments in the field of Aesthetic Surgery and goes on yearly teaching trips to under-developed countries to educate surgeons on reconstructive surgeries. [www.dryeaplasticsurgery.sg](http://www.dryeaplasticsurgery.sg)

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# Treatment of Primary Hyperhidrosis using BOTOX

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Most people would be familiar with BOTOX to treat wrinkles. But did you know that it can be used to treat excessive localised sweating?



BOTOX is actually the proprietary name of purified Botulinum Toxin A manufactured by Allergan. This neurotoxin, derived from the *Clostridium Botulinum* bacteria, when injected into the skin, will block the nerve signals which regulate perspiration. The result is a reduction in sweat secreted.

Typically, patients will start feeling “drier” within a few days of injection and can expect the effects to last six to nine months in the case of axillary hyperhidrosis. The mean duration of action for palmar hyperhidrosis is shorter at four to six months.

Properly done, the side effects are minimal but potentially include bleeding, bruising, infection (as per all injectable procedures), transient itching and, specific to treatment of palms and feet, there may be temporary weakness of the intrinsic muscles.

### NOT EVERYONE is suitable for BOTOX injections.

It should not be done on pregnant or breastfeeding women, people with certain conditions affecting their nervous and muscular systems and people who are allergic to it. Some medications such as penicillamine, quinine, calcium-channel-blockers (a type of anti-hypertensive medication) and aminoglycoside antibiotics can potentiate the effects of the toxin. So, be sure to alert your doctor if you are on any of them.

The main drawbacks of BOTOX injections for hyperhidrosis are costs and pain from the multiple injection sites required.

### Do your HOMEWORK.

It is important to get a clinician who is trained for the procedure. Prices may vary, so do call up for a price estimate and check if there are separate charges for consultation fees or if the price quoted is all inclusive. While the initial outlay may be high, for patients who are plagued by hyperhidrosis, it is often a small price to pay for being “dry”. Some

TABLE 2. Primary vs. Secondary Hyperhidrosis

Primary Hyperhidrosis	Secondary Hyperhidrosis
Often localised (face, armpits, hands, soles)	Often generalised
Onset in childhood & adolescence	Onset anytime
No known cause	Caused by underlying disease or medications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acromegaly • Anxiety disorders • Cancer • Carcinoid syndrome • Certain medications and substances of abuse • Glucose control disorders • Heart disease • Hyperthyroidism • Lung disease • Menopause • Parkinson's disease • Pheochromocytoma • Spinal cord injury • Stroke • Tuberculosis or other infections</li></ul>

patients elect to just treat their dominant hand to save costs and that makes practical sense. Others get treatment just before important occasions like getting married, concert performance, job interviews and school dances.

The pain from axillary and facial injections can be readily minimised by use of topical anaesthetic creams. Injections to the palms and soles are much more painful as they have more nerve endings. Seasoned patients get by with topical anaesthetic creams and ice. For those with want more intense anaesthesia, regional nerve blocks can be used but will necessitate a few extra injection points. Everyone’s pain threshold is different, so do speak to your doctor about the available anaesthetic options.

Most people with hyperhidrosis are otherwise healthy individuals. We call this primary hyperhidrosis. However, excessive sweating may also be a symptom of serious underlying disease. (Table 2) In these cases, the sweating is usually more generalised (involving the whole body). Proper management of secondary hyperhidrosis would be to treat the underlying condition first. Once that is resolved, the hyperhidrosis which occurred secondarily will often subside as well. It is therefore important to seek medical advice if you have excessive sweating, especially if it is a recent occurrence and if it happens mostly at night when you are asleep. HT



Dr Suzanne Pei Lin Wong  
MBBS (Hon 1) (Sydney), GDFM (S'pore), GDFP Dermatology (S'pore)

Dr Suzanne Wong graduated with First Class Honours from the University of Sydney in 1999. Since returning to Singapore in 2002, she has been active in the field of Family Medicine. She went on to obtain a Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine and Family Practice Dermatology (NSC Chan Heng Leong Book Prize Winner) from the National University of Singapore. With increasing public interest in aesthetic medicine, Dr Suzanne decided to explore for herself if the many advances in the field were truly safe and effective, and most importantly, if they made good economic sense for her patients. She then went on to pursue proper and relevant training accredited by the Singapore Medical Council's Aesthetic Practice Oversight Committee and is pleased to provide this additional aspect of care to all her patients whom she views as partners in the management of their own health – within and without. Dr Wong practices full time at the China Square Central branch of The Chelsea Clinic.

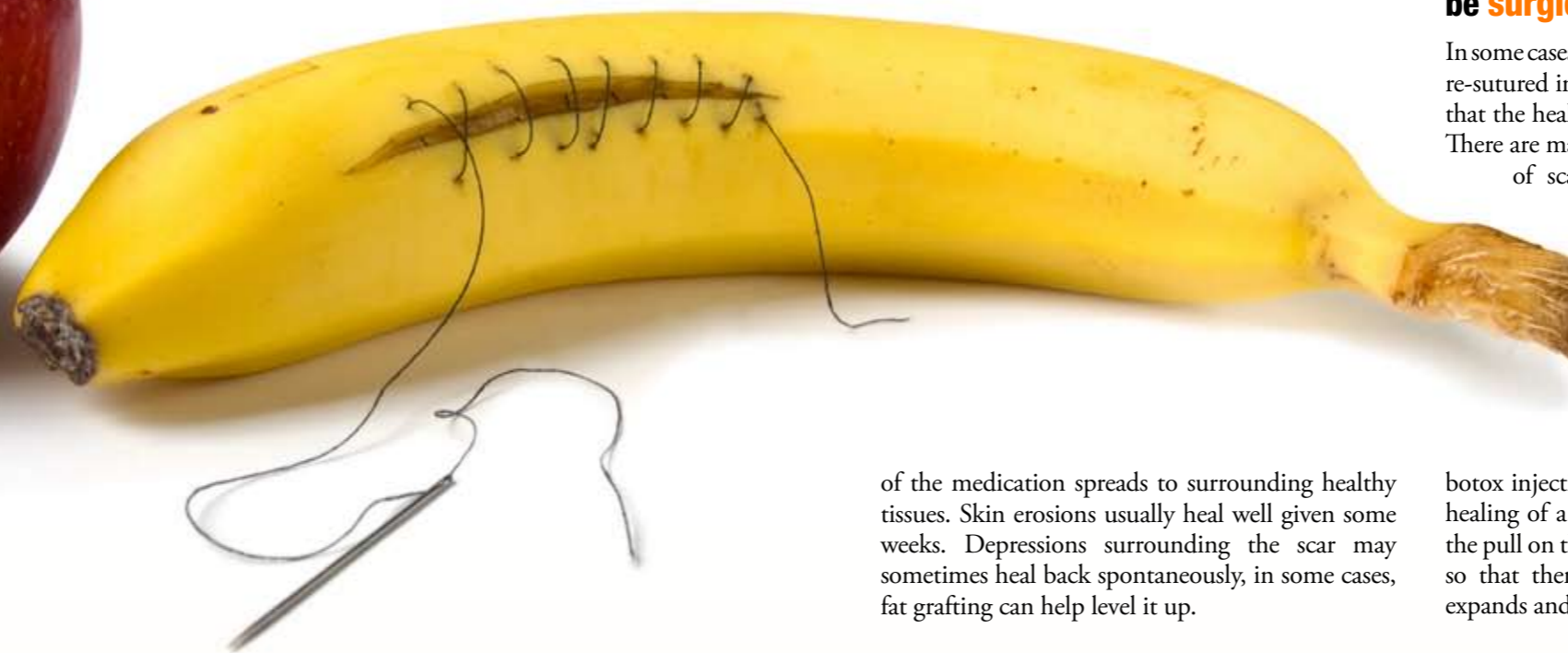
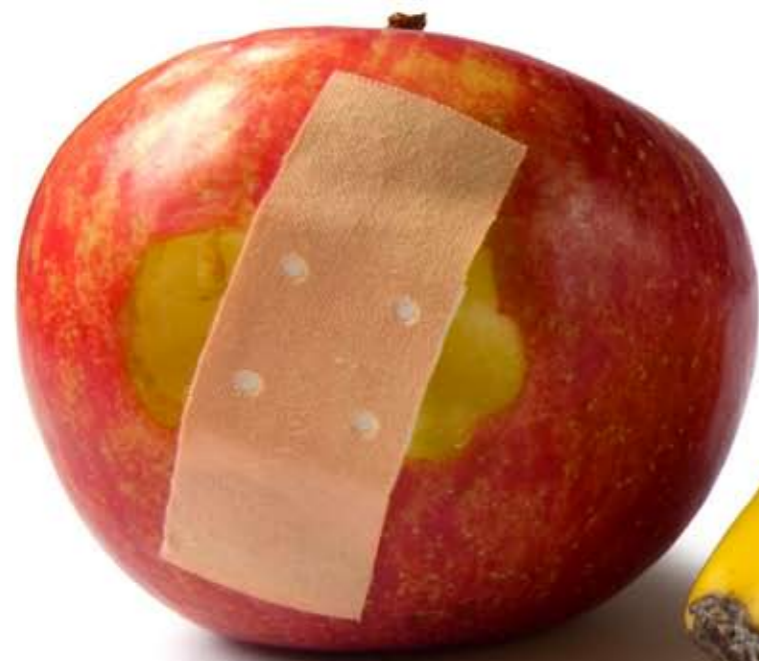
In sunny and humid Singapore, we tend to sweat a lot. It is part and parcel of the body’s thermoregulation process. We also perspire more often when excited, nervous or anxious. This again is a normal physiological response. However, about 2 to 3% of the population will experience excessive, unpredictable and embarrassing sweating due to hyperactive sweat glands. The medical term for this condition is hyperhidrosis.

TABLE 1. Treatment options to reduce excessive sweating

Anti-Perspirant sprays or creams (ranges from over the counter preparations to prescription strength)	Low cost. Contains Aluminium salts. Works by physically plugging the sweat ducts. May cause skin irritation and stain clothing.
Iontophoresis (a low current is passed through a tap water bath which patients soak their hands or feet in for about 20mins)	FDA approved procedure which uses electricity to temporarily reduce sweat gland activity. Suitable for hands and feet only. Daily sessions may be required initially with subsequent weekly-monthly maintenance treatment. Time consuming. May cause skin fissures.
Botulinum Toxin A	(See main article)
Endoscopic Thoracic Sympathectomy	Surgical procedure requiring general anaesthesia to treat facial and palmar hyperhidrosis only. Permanent. Effective but risky. Complications include compensatory sweating elsewhere in the body, lung and nerve damage. Often last resort in patients who have failed to respond to other treatment options.

People suffering from hyperhidrosis, will often complain that they sweat even when they are relaxed, at rest and in air-conditioned comfort. For many of them, controlling and hiding their perspiration becomes a daily burden with significant negative impact on self-esteem which, in turn, affects their social functioning – being too self-conscious, avoiding handshakes, having to change clothes repeatedly. There are practical problems too. Having wet hands makes it hard to hold the steering wheel when driving or hold a pen when writing. Clearly, hyperhidrosis can be occupationally disabling..

There are various treatment options available, depending on which areas are affected (Table 1) but most are temporary solutions that will need to be repeated at varying intervals. The treatment of hyperhidrosis using BOTOX is one such solution. Nevertheless, it has become increasingly popular with doctors and patients alike because of its excellent efficacy (70-98% reduction in sweat production) and relative safety. Currently, it is mostly used for axillary (armpit) and palmar (hands) hyperhidrosis. It can also be used to treat facial and plantar (soles) hyperhidrosis.



# Scar Removal

**It is common to develop scars after injections or surgery on any part of the body but it is somehow even more common in certain people. It seems to run in the family. In addition, scar development is also dependent on the area of the body treated. Surgery in some areas like the chest and the upper parts of the arm are prone to much greater risk of scar formation.**

## What can we do if scar does develop?

You really don't have to live with the scars. There are plenty of things you can do about it and these are often safe and effective treatments.

**Starting from the simplest thing, you can apply some silicone gel or sheets on the scar. It will have some effect to reduce the thickness of the scar by blocking oxygenation of the scar tissue. It does sound strange but in most cases it works albeit in a limited fashion.**

## The other option you can consider would be **injections**.

These may be steroid or 5-FU injections or a mix of these medications. It works by making the scar tissues less active or even stop growing. Scars develop when the tissues needed for healing go into overdrive. These tissues grow too much and then they pile up and thicken the wound forming scars. The medication injected stunts the tissue and stops the overdrive. This is usually safe but it may cause skin erosions if it is too effective. Sometimes, it may cause depression of surrounding tissue when some

of the medication spreads to surrounding healthy tissues. Skin erosions usually heal well given some weeks. Depressions surrounding the scar may sometimes heal back spontaneously, in some cases, fat grafting can help level it up.

## The next option one can consider and add on would be **lasers**, such as the *Pulsed Dye Lasers*.

These machines work because the laser energy targets blood vessels. Have you even wondered why scars often look red? Sometimes, you may even be able to see tiny vessels on the surface of the scar. These are usually young scars. The answer is quite intuitive. Remember that the scar tissues are on an overdrive and they need to be fed in order to maintain their activity. To achieve that, they release factors that stimulate growth of blood vessels so that they can be well fed. When we use such lasers on the scar, the blood vessels are targeted and begin to shrink and die off. With the blood supply to these active tissues reduced / cut off, they cannot obtain sufficient nutrients and have no choice but to shrink. For scars that are white in color, these are old scars; such lasers will be of little help.

## The last option would be **surgical revision**.

In some cases, the scar can be removed altogether and re-sutured in a fine and careful fashion in the hope that the healing this time would be more effective. There are many factors leading to the development of scars, poor surgical technique or post surgery problems like infection which may have led to the development of such scars. In such cases, surgical revision may be a good option but there is no guarantee that upon healing, the scars will not re-surface. Another option that needs to be brought up will be botulinum toxin injections – botox injections. These only really help during the healing of a fresh wound. Botox injections reduce the pull on the wound from the surrounding tissues so that there is a lesser chance that the wound expands and develop scarring.

## All in all, scar treatment is usually effective by using a **combination** of options.

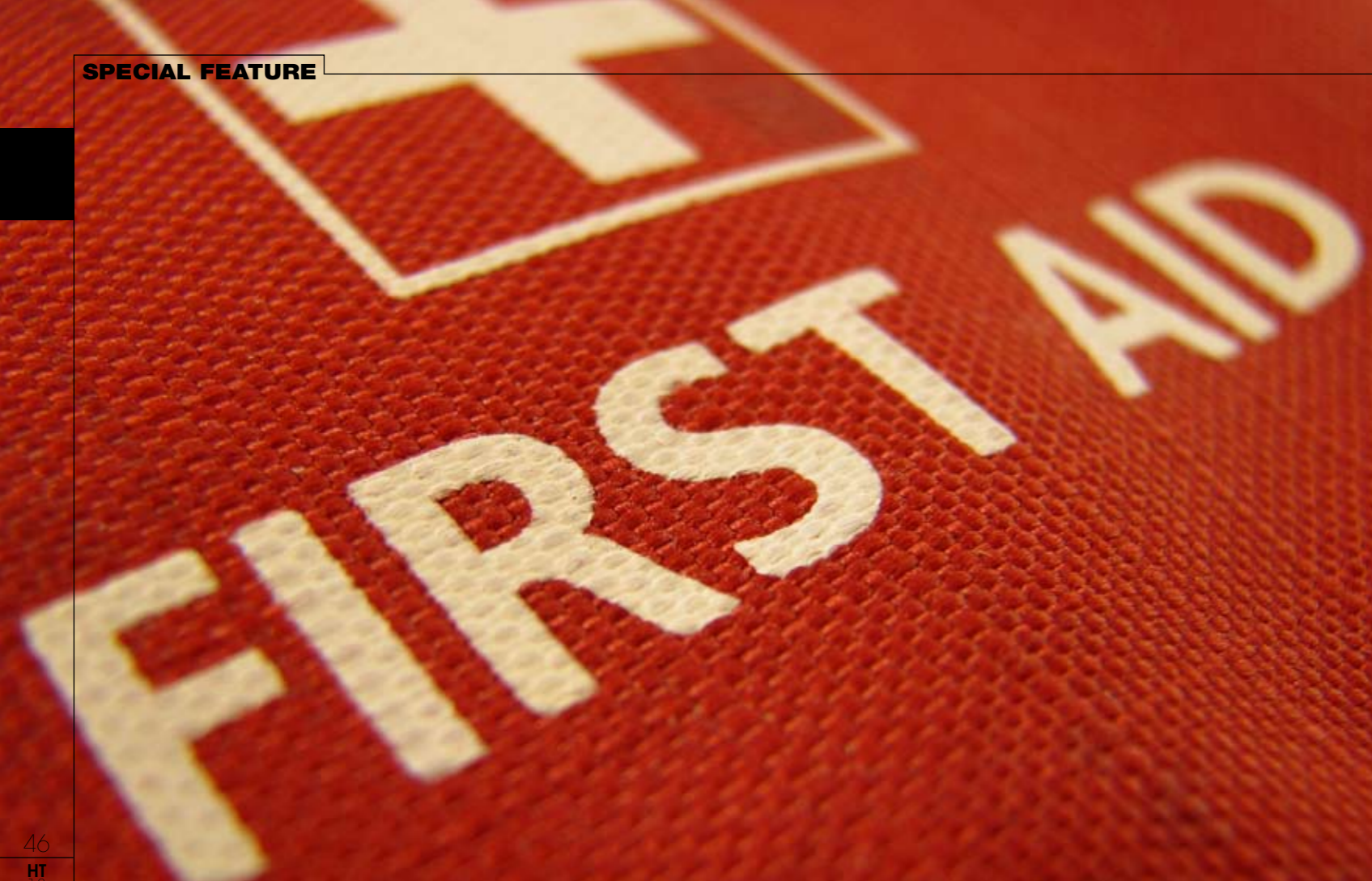
We are usually able to reduce the thickness of the scar as well as the colour of the scar. Young scars are easier to treat compared with old scars. So the “take-home” message is...

**Don't live with the scars, they can be treated. HT**

**Dr Donald Ng**  
MBBS (Singapore),  
Diploma of Dermatology  
(University of Cardiff, Wales, UK)



Dr Donald Ng is an experienced physician with great interest in cosmetic medicine and surgery. He constantly looks for better and more effective treatments with a network of doctors. To this endeavour, he has taken formal fellowship training and board examinations in cosmetic medicine and surgery. In addition, he has travelled all over Asia and trained with the best in the field. He has also trained in liposuction in Belgium, Italy and Canada. Dr Ng does not train in any reconstructive work, only cosmetic work.



# BEWARE of these FIRST AID MYTHS...

Some household remedies do nothing, or worse, aggravate certain conditions!

## THE TRUTH BEHIND THE MYTH

## THE BEST SOLUTION

### 01 NOSEBLEED “Tilt your head up to stop bleeding”

Do not tilt your head back as blood will trickle down the back of your throat causing vomiting and possibly choking.

Press the fleshy part of your nose firmly for 10 minutes by the clock. If a nosebleed lasts for more than 15 minutes, occurs following a serious injury, or is accompanied by severe blood loss, you should call your doctor or go to the emergency room.

## THE TRUTH BEHIND THE MYTH

## THE BEST SOLUTION

### 02 SCALDING “Apply toothpaste, butter, soap or ice on your wound”

Not only are these treatments useless in healing burns, the chemicals may trigger allergies or infections. Ice should not be used as this can produce a cold burn on top of the hot burn.

Gradually cool the affected area by running tap water over it. Do not prick blisters if they arise. Cover the scaled area with a loose dressing and see a doctor if it is extensive.

### 03 CUTS/SCRAPES “Spread coffee powder on wound”

This has no recorded medical benefit.

Control bleeding with direct pressure. Clean the wound with water or gauze with antiseptic solution. Then, cover it with a plaster to minimise the risk of an infection.

### 04 BRUISES “Put a boiled egg to the bump and it will subside”

This has no recorded medical benefit.

Place an ice pack on the bump to reduce swelling due to bleeding of the small blood vessels under the skin.

### 05 NAUSEA/FAINTING “Apply medicated oil under your nose”

People believe the minty scent helps wake the person up but they forget that they risk causing an allergic reaction.

Lay the person down and elevate the legs (we first have to ensure there is no broken bones in the legs) to increase blood and oxygen flow to the brain and other vital organs. Loosen any tight clothing so the person can breathe properly.

### 06 FITS “Put a spoon in the mouth to prevent the person from biting the tongue”

The spoon may injure the palate, teeth and gums, or even worse – the spoon itself may break, or the spoon may loosen or break the teeth, in turn causing choking.

Do not put anything in the mouth as it is very rare for someone to bite his own tongue during a seizure. After the seizure, while waiting for the paramedics to arrive, place the person on his side with the head sideways to clear the airway or in the recovery position to maintain a clear airway.

### 07 BEE STINGS “Squeeze out the stinger right away”

Squeezing the stinger may allow venom still in the sac to get into your system.

Pull out the sting swiftly with a pair of tweezers to the part of the stinger that's exposed above the skin or scrape the stinger out with the edge of a credit card. When using a pair of tweezers, be careful not to squeeze on the barb of the stinger.

## THE TRUTH BEHIND THE MYTH

## THE BEST SOLUTION

## 08 SPRAINS “Put a warm towel over the sprain”

On the contrary, cold compress should be applied to a fresh sprain.

For a fresh sprain injury, it is advisable to apply a cold compress to reduce swelling under the tissues.

## 09 JELLYFISH STING “Pee on jellyfish sting”

Urine has not been scientifically proven to help in jellyfish stings.

Reassure the victim and pour copious amounts of vinegar or sea water to stop the stinging cells from releasing venom. Dust dry powder over the affected skin. The stinging cells stick to the powder and brush off the powder with clean gauze.

## 10 SNAKE BITE “Suck on the snake bite to extract venom”

Do not use suction as this can introduce more germs and bacteria. You may also accidentally swallow some of the venom or cause severe allergic reactions in the oral cavity.

An ounce of prevention is worth a ton of first aid, so stay safe in the first place. If it happens, get away from the snake and call 995 at once. Tell the victim to remain still and calm, and apply a firm roller bandage above the snake bite.  
**DO NOT USE A TOURNIQUET.**

## 11 DROWNING “CPR is a ‘kiss of life’ that is bound to revive the casualty”

Not all will see immediate results but this does not mean you are not possibly helping to save their life.

**The first few minutes are critical.**

In drowning cases, the rescuer must perform repeated chest compressions until the water or the obstruction of the airways is removed, then continue with CPR if there is no breathing.

**Cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR)**, which includes rescue breaths and chest compressions, helps to keep the key organs alive until the ambulance arrives. With adults, you should give 30 chest compressions followed by two rescue breaths. Continue until the ambulance arrives or the person shows obvious signs of recovery. The procedure is different for babies and children.

**It is ideal for every home to have a first-aid kit stocked with essential items to help treat a host of common injuries.**

- Waterproof plasters
- Elastic bandage
- Tweezers
- Antiseptic cream **HT**
- Non-adherent dressing
- Triangular bandage
- Dressing scissors
- Sterile gauze
- Surgical tape
- Sterile saline

*Expert opinions given by – Mr Stephen George De Souza, Senior Training Instructor, Singapore Red Cross Academy*

**About Singapore Red Cross Training Centre:** The Singapore Red Cross Academy (RCA) has trained about 40,000 individuals in first aid and conducted at least 300 awareness talks which benefited some 20,000 over the past five years. Established in 1992, the RCA trains Red Cross Youth school units, adult volunteers and the general public on First Aid and CPR (Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation). The RCA also provides structural teaching for those who need First Aid skills as part of their job requirement e.g. childcare personnel, teachers, hotel workers, manufacturing and construction workers, security, transport and service personnel, sports coaches, etc.

List of First Aid Courses: <http://www.redcross.org.sg/articles/learn-first-aid>

*This article is a special contribution by the Singapore Red Cross Training Centre*



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# The Doctor Speaks...

**Becoming a doctor isn't an easy option.** It is an investment of years of study and hard work. We talk to four medical experts who talk to us about what makes them tick when it comes to their profession.

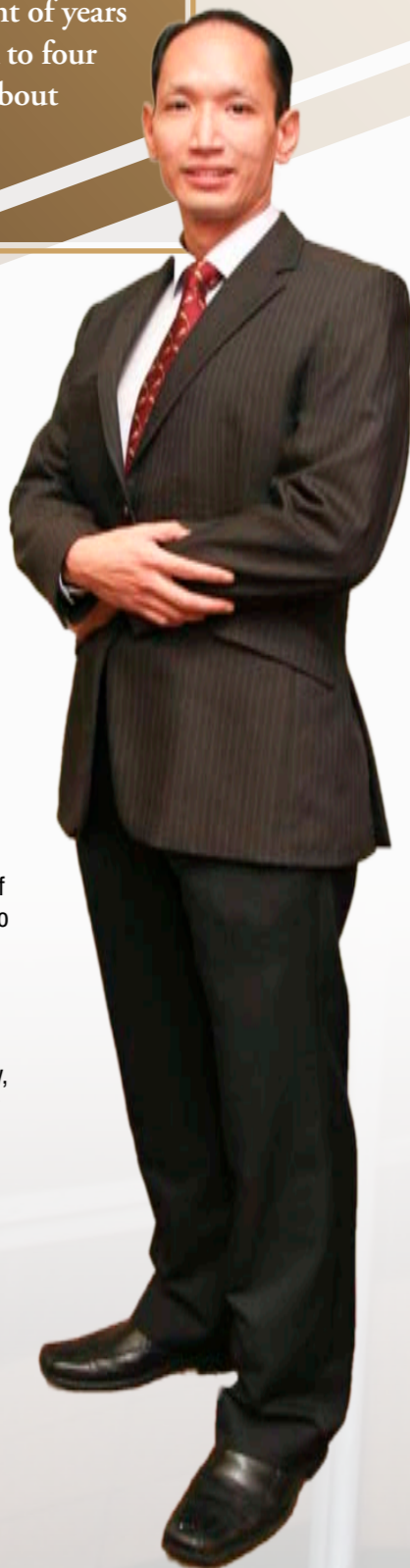
## Dr Andrew Yam

### Hand Surgeon

“

#### Why did you choose this field of medicine?

Of all our body parts, the brain and our hands are the most unique to us as human beings. Hand surgery is an exciting and unique field of surgery, where the goal is to restore function to hands that are injured or impaired by various conditions. During my early medical training, I was also greatly impressed by the ability of plastic surgeons to reconstruct all sorts of defects with tissue transfers and microsurgery, and by the technology of orthopaedic surgery that allowed bones to be fixed and joints to be replaced. During rotations through hand surgery, I realised that as a hand surgeon I would be able to practice all three of these specialties at the same time! That realisation along with the realisation of how important our hands are, how easily we can lose their function and the satisfaction of seeing it restored propelled me into this field.



#### What motivates you about your job?

My greatest motivation is the satisfaction of seeing a patient using their hand again after a serious injury that would have resulted in complete loss of the hand 40 or 50 years ago. Seeing patients able to use their hands again is the best reward for a complex 10 hour operation followed by months of therapy.

#### What are some of the misconceptions about this field?

Hand surgeons do not just take care of hand problems. We also manage wrist disorders; do soft tissue reconstruction for both upper and lower limbs, brachial plexus nerve surgery in the neck and vascular repairs in the upper limbs. Surgery is not the only solution to many hand problems, nor is it even the best in some cases. Often, the hand problem is only a symptom of a bigger problem such as poor work habits and posture that affect the entire patient. The hand surgeon must be able to identify this and treat the underlying problem, not just the hand, in order to restore function.

#### What does it take to excel in this field?

Patience and endurance (both physical and mental) to sit through a long microsurgical reconstruction that may take 10 or more hours, meticulous surgical technique, empathy to understand and feel the pain the patient is going through and tireless dedication to working with the patient and therapists towards returning the affected hands and the patient as a whole to full function.

”



## Dr Suzanne Wong

### Family Physician

*with special interest in Aesthetics*

#### Why did you choose this field of medicine?

Aesthetics is still an emerging field in medicine. It is exciting to be part of something with constant innovation. I also enjoy the hands-on component of the job.

#### What motivates you about your job?

Without a doubt, seeing a patient's self-esteem and self-confidence restored when his/her skin issues improve. My personal goal is to “de-mystify” aesthetic treatments. I would like to make them more accessible and affordable for the average person here in Singapore.

#### What are some of the misconceptions about this field?

A common misconception is that the treatments are not based on sound scientific evidence. On the contrary, the treatments I offer have been validated and are accepted worldwide as safe and effective.

Admittedly, there is still a sense of fear and incredulity towards aesthetics medicine (even amongst medical professionals). This is not necessarily a bad thing. We should not rush to embrace every single new product, machine or procedure in the field. That is why I believe that doctors are well placed to be aestheticians as we have a professional code of ethics to adhere to and the medical training to help us discern what is sound from what is not.

#### What does it take to excel in this field?

One needs to have an eye for beauty and a steady hand, but more importantly, one needs to have a heart for his/her patients. I wouldn't recommend any treatments to my patients that I would not do on myself or on my sister.

”

“

#### Why did you choose this field of medicine?

As a family physician, I had many patients who approached me to treat their acne and pigmentation problems. Many of them were quite distressed by these problems as their facial appearance was marred and this impacted on their self esteem. Twenty years ago, treatment options were mainly limited to creams and lotions. Now we have so much more to offer including laser and light treatment, Botox, fillers, skin tightening machines like Thermage and Ulthera and many more new and effective creams. As these new technologies appeared on the market, I learnt how to use them to give my patients better results and improve their self image.

## Dr Charlotte Yung

### Family Physician

*with special interest in Aesthetics*

#### What motivates you about your job?

Patient satisfaction is my prime motivator. If my patients are satisfied and happy, I feel that I have done my job.

#### What are some of the misconceptions about this field?

A very common misconception is that when Botox and fillers wear out, the face will look worse and sag more than before treatment was started. I reassure patients that the effects wear off gradually and they return to what they looked like previously. In fact, frown lines become much less obvious with repeated treatments of Botox.

#### What does it take to excel in this field?

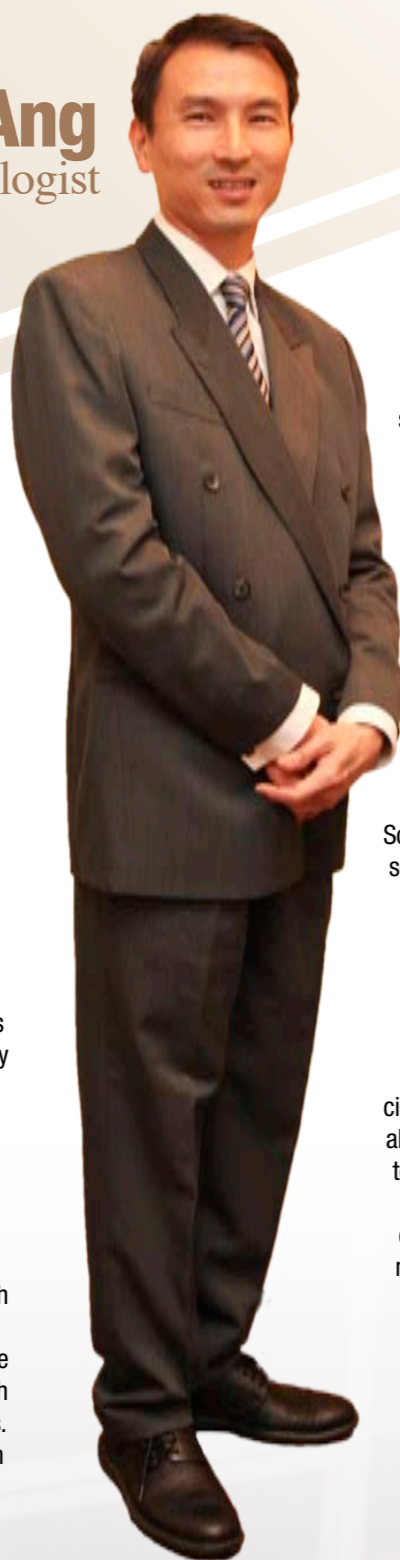
Going for training regularly and conscientiously keeping up with new research and technology hones clinical skills, but just as important are empathy and effective communication with patients.

”



## Dr Peter Ang

Medical Oncologist



“

### Why did you choose this field of medicine?

When I completed my training in internal medicine, and had to choose a subspecialty, few people wanted to do medical oncology. For me, I saw the rapid development in the knowledge and explosion of research in the field. We were treating patients to cure them and over the last few decade of practice, this has proven to be so with improved cancer survival rates documented in many countries! Of course, there will be triumphs and failures. What it has taught me is that cancer is such a varied disease and knowing the disease well is key to treatment and also avoiding unnecessary treatment. For example, with bone cancers now, limb preservation instead of amputation is what we aim for with a combination of chemotherapy, radiation and surgery.


### What motivates you about your job?

In our field, we develop a close relationship with our patients, and learn about them and their families. When a family member has cancer, the whole family is affected. Family members reach out in support and strength for their loved ones. Learning about the love and strength of human character in such difficult circumstances invigorates my mind. It tells me that whatever circumstances any illness throws at you, the human spirit will overcome. I am often humbled by my patient's will and strength in adversity. It makes me want to do my best for them.

### What are some of the misconceptions about this field?

Many patients still regard cancer as a death sentence. It is a serious illness but many people are cured of cancer nowadays. Stereotypes of treatment related side effects like hair loss and incessant vomiting are portrayed in movies. In reality, there are many new cancer medications that can avoid hair loss. Many people also assume cancer to be a single type of illness but in reality, technology allows us to differentiate the tumours not just based on where the biopsy was taken. Tissue typing and DNA tests allow us to know the cell type (for example in lymphoma) that the cancer started from. Some tumours are cured by chemotherapy alone, some by surgery or radiotherapy, and some by a combination of modalities.

### What does it take to excel in this field?

Knowledge in the specialty is an expected requirement for the job. However, to excel requires meeting the patient where he is. The circumstances of a particular patient are different all the time. The issues to discuss when it comes to treatment are not taught by books or internet searches. Empathy and life experience helps; communication with the patient and his family needs patience and time. Caring for the patient keeps me going daily. 

”

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## Male Urinary Incontinence Defined

“Male urinary incontinence is the loss of urinary control or any involuntary leakage of urine in men. It can be a distressing problem, and have a profound impact on quality of life,”

says Dr Lee Fang Jann, Associate Consultant, *Department of Urology, Singapore General Hospital.*

## Different types of Urinary Incontinence

There are several types of urinary incontinence. Dr Lee highlights four of them –

### • Stress incontinence

This refers to the leakage of urine when the pressure of the abdomen on the bladder becomes too great for the bladder outlet to withstand, causing urine leakage when one sneezes, coughs, laughs or exercises. This is more common in women whose pelvic muscles are weakened after multiple child birth. In men, this can occur after prostate surgery.

### • Urge incontinence

This refers to the leakage of urine due to an overactive bladder. The bladder muscle contracts too early and normal control is reduced. You have an urgent need to go to the bathroom, but leak urine before getting there.

### • Overflow incontinence

This refers to the leakage of urine due to a persistent obstruction to the outflow of urine. The patient is not able to empty his bladder adequately, resulting in the leakage of urine whenever the bladder is full. An enlarged prostate is the most common cause in men.

### • Functional incontinence

This occurs when physical problems such as arthritis or cognitive problems such as dementia prevent the patient from getting to the bathroom in time.

# Understanding Male Urinary Incontinence

In the United States, as many as 5% of males aged 15 to 64 years, are affected by urinary incontinence. Whereas, in Singapore, the condition is relatively under reported and there are no local studies on the prevalence of urinary incontinence in men. Male incontinence can be embarrassing. However, with proper management and treatment, it can be controlled.



## Symptoms

According to Dr Lee, typical symptoms of male urinary incontinence include –

- **A sudden, strong urge to urinate** (*urgency*)
- **Urinating frequently** (*frequency*)
- **Waking up two or more times throughout the night to urinate** (*nocturia*).  
Bed wetting can also occur.

## Causes

Male urinary incontinence can be caused by everyday habits, underlying medical conditions or physical problems. Dr Lee summarises them into the following –

### TEMPORARY CAUSES

- **Constipation**
- **Urinary tract infection**
- **Over hydration.** Increasing the amount of urine that the bladder has to deal with
- **Bladder stimulants and irritants** such as alcohol, tea and coffee
- **Drugs** used to treat conditions such as heart medication, blood pressure medication, sedatives and muscle relaxants that either result in increased urine production or affects the bladder control mechanism.

### PERSISTENT CAUSES

- **Ageing** of the bladder leads to a decrease in the bladder's ability to store urine and an increase in overactive bladder symptoms.
- **Prostate conditions.** Prostate enlargement is common in older men and incontinence can be a presenting symptom. Severe obstruction from prostate enlargement can result in chronic retention of urine and overflow incontinence. Stress incontinence can occur after a resection of the prostate operation to treat obstruction. It can also occur following a prostate removal operation or radiation therapy to treat prostate cancer.
- **Bladder cancer or bladder stones.** Incontinence, urinary urgency and painful urination can be the presenting symptoms.
- **Neurological conditions.** Stroke, spinal cord injury, Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis can affect the nerves involved in bladder control resulting in incontinence.

## Diagnosis

**“A doctor will typically take a thorough history to determine the nature, severity of the incontinence and elicit possible causes,”**

comments Dr Lee. Physical examinations will include a check for prostate enlargement or nerve injury.

A voiding diary records your fluid intake over a three day period, the number of trips to the bathroom and any episodes of leakage. Studying the diary gives the doctor a better idea of your problem and help direct further tests. Urinalysis should be performed to rule out infection and hematuria.

“Abdominal ultrasound imaging can detect stones and cancer in the bladder and determine the degree of prostate enlargement. Urodynamic testing focuses on evaluating the bladder's ability to store and empty urine effectively, and on the sphincter control mechanism.”

## Treatment

Treatment of urinary incontinence depends on the underlying cause and its severity. It is important that a doctor be consulted. Dr Lee points out a few treatment options. These include –

- **Behavioural therapy.** Limiting fluids at certain times of the day, planning regular trips to the bathroom called timed voiding and Kegel exercises to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles.
- **Medications.** These can help in different ways. Some medications help incontinence by blocking the abnormal signals that stimulate bladder contractions at the wrong time. Some work by reducing the amount of urine production. If prostate enlargement is the cause, there are medications to shrink the prostate size and improve bladder emptying.
- **Surgery.** This is only employed as a last resort. An artificial sphincter or a male sling procedure can help in men with weak sphincter muscles secondary to nerve injury or previous prostate operations.

## Prevention

Although urinary incontinence is not completely preventable, it can be managed with some lifestyle modifications. Dr Lee emphasises on the following tips –

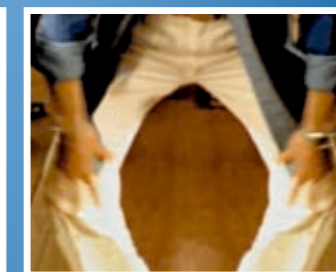
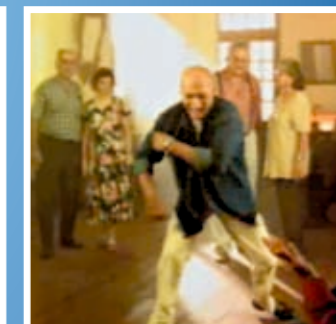
- **Do not drink too much or too little.** Reducing fluid intake to decrease urine may produce further irritation of the bladder and promote infection.
- **Avoid caffeine and carbonated drinks** that act as bladder stimulants.
- **Reduce weight,** which causes extra abdominal pressure and **stop smoking** which causes increased coughing and resultant leakage.
- **Eating more fibre** by including more it in your diet or taking fibre supplements can help prevent constipation. **HT**

By Puvanes Balakrishnan in consultation with Dr Lee Fang Jann, Associate Consultant, Department of Urology, Singapore General Hospital

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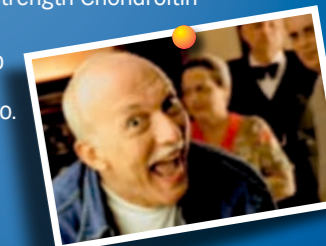
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# Explaining Miscarriages

**Losing a pregnancy can be extremely distressing. Unfortunately, miscarriages are fairly common, especially in the first trimester. While miscarriages usually cannot be foretold or prevented, taking good care of oneself and following a health care provider's recommendations, the chances of a healthy pregnancy can be increased.**

**"A miscarriage is defined as the loss (death) of a baby before the 24th week of pregnancy. About 15% of recognized pregnancies will end in a miscarriage,"**

**E**xplains Dr Tan Wei Ching, Senior Consultant, *Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Singapore General Hospital*. According to Dr Tan, more than 80% of miscarriages occur within the first three months of pregnancy.

## ♀ ..... Causes of Miscarriage

The causes of miscarriage are varied, and more often than not, the cause cannot be identified. According to Dr Tan, most miscarriages occur due to problems with the baby's genes or chromosomes as the embryo divides and grows; and not due to hereditary conditions from the parents.

Sometimes, a woman's health condition, such as uncontrolled diabetes or abnormalities with the uterus or cervix, may also lead to a miscarriage. Miscarriages can also be caused by a variety of other factors, including infections, hormonal problems, uterine abnormalities, incompetent or 'weak' cervix, disorders of the maternal immune system, severe kidney disease amongst others.

Often, however, the cause of miscarriage isn't known. Dr Tan adds that there is no proof that stress, physical or sexual activity causes miscarriage.

## ♀ ..... Symptoms

"Vaginal bleeding or spotting is the commonest symptom, with or without cramps; this bleeding may occur very early in the pregnancy," says Dr Tan. Other symptoms include mild to severe lower back pain or either constant or intermittent abdominal pain or cramping, passage of a blood-clot-like material, or a gush of clear or pink fluid from the vagina. Less commonly, some women may complain of nausea, decrease in signs of pregnancy, or loss of breast sensitivity.

## ♀ ..... Diagnosis and Treatment

Dr Tan explains that a miscarriage can be diagnosed when no fetal heart beat is seen on the scan or when fetal tissue is being passed out of the womb. If there is no fetal tissue left in the womb (a complete miscarriage), no further medical treatment is required. However, a miscarriage can have a significant emotional effect, and the couple may need counselling or support.

If there is fetal tissue left in the womb (an incomplete miscarriage), this needs to be removed as there is a risk that it could become infected. This can be done by minor surgery to remove the tissue, the use of medication to 'expel' the tissue or waiting for the tissue to pass naturally out of the womb (expectant management).

However, miscarriages cannot be prevented by medical treatment. Treatment depends on the presence of fetal tissue in the womb and is aimed at avoiding heavy bleeding and infection, and at looking after the patient, physically and emotionally.

## ♀ ..... Pregnancy following a miscarriage

A miscarriage does not mean that getting pregnant again is never possible. "A miscarriage is usually a one-time occurrence. At least 85% of women who have miscarriages have subsequent normal pregnancies and births," highlights Dr Tan. A miscarriage does not equate with fertility problems. On the other hand, less than 5% of women have two consecutive miscarriages and about 1% to 2% of women may have repeated miscarriages (three or more). Some researchers believe this is related to an autoimmune response.

There is no strict rule about the waiting period before trying again. According to Dr Tan, from the medical perspective, a woman can start once she has the next period. From an emotional perspective, some couples may opt to take some time to mourn their loss and start trying again when they are emotionally ready.

## ♀ ..... Prevention

**"Genetic abnormalities in the foetus cause most miscarriages, and there is not much that can be done to prevent a miscarriage. However, two or more consecutive miscarriages may indicate an undiagnosed condition in either parent,**

**explains Dr Tan. "If a specific problem is identified with testing, then treatment options may be available depending on the condition, and hence prevent subsequent miscarriages." HT**

*By Puvanes Balakrishnan in consultation with Dr Tan Wei Ching, Senior Consultant, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Singapore General Hospital*

# Managing Adjustment Disorders

**Adjustment disorder is very common and can affect anyone, regardless of gender, age, race, or lifestyle. A person with adjustment disorder develops emotional and/or behavioral symptoms as a reaction to a stressful event. However, developing healthy coping skills may help to deal with the condition. Dr. Richard Mellor, Associate Consultant, General Psychiatry, Institute of Mental Health, Singapore, tells us more.**

**Defining adjustment disorders.** The definition of any mental disorder can be a challenging task, perhaps none less so than that of Adjustment Disorder. Such a disorder indicates a maladaptive reaction to any new life circumstances, such as breakdown of a relationship, being diagnosed with a serious illness, or maybe a change in occupation or school. The difficulty is partly in delineating what represents a pathological reaction. After all there is a continuum between normal stress and that representative of any definite mental disorder. However, an essential criterion for an adjustment disorder is that the psychological distress is severe enough to significantly interfere with a person's everyday functioning.

**What are the causes?** Adjustment Disorders are the result of disruption of the normal emotional process of adapting to a life event result resulting in a range of psychiatric symptoms. However, the exact factors which account for such disruption remain unclear and subject to ongoing research. It is most likely that these include interplay of a number of contributory factors including an individual's genetic makeup, chemical changes in the brain, personality type as well as the quality of the social support available.



**How common is it in Singapore?** Most large surveys of the general population in Singapore and indeed, worldwide, have lacked prevalence data for Adjustment Disorders. This is most likely indicative of the challenges discussed in making such a definite diagnosis. However, there are strong clinical indicators of a large prevalence of this disorder worldwide. For example, a large study carried in the United States, Canada and Australia concluded that 12% of all persons referred to psychiatric services were diagnosed with Adjustment Disorders<sup>1</sup>.

**What are the symptoms?** An Adjustment Disorder can take up to three months to surface after the stressful life event has occurred and usually improves within six months. Although, the clusters of symptoms as a whole do not meet the diagnostic criteria required for clinical depression, the overall picture can be similar and distressing. Such symptoms may include a persistently depressed mood, anxiety, poor concentration, irritability, sleep and appetite disturbances as well as suicidal thoughts. An Adjustment Disorder can affect all ages and one of the main indicators in younger people may include a deteriorating performance in school.

**Are there any risk factors?** Adjustment disorders are more likely to occur in those who do not have a supportive social network, who have previously found changes in their life circumstances difficult and in those who suffer from other mental disorders. The type of stressor most likely to precipitate an adjustment disorder varies significantly, as for some a particular stressor may overwhelm their coping mechanisms whereas for another the same potential stressor may be regarded as no more than an inconvenience.

**When does one have to see a doctor?** If the symptoms of an Adjustment Disorder are preventing the sufferer from attending to their normal activities and responsibilities, then this would usually be the time to seek medical advice. However, this should be sought immediately if suicidal thoughts or marked irritability are present.

**What can be expected during treatment?** Specific treatment by clinicians is not always required for those with an Adjustment Disorder. Often, the condition will improve and

remit completely within a few months. However, if treatment is necessary this usually takes the form of psychotherapy focusing upon the core symptoms of the condition but also on the development of coping skills to reduce the risk of such difficulties re-emerging in the future. At times psychotropic medications are required for specific debilitating symptoms such as insomnia or marked anxiety.

**Can adjustment disorders be prevented?** For many people, ensuring that they are surrounded by a supportive network of friends or family will assist them in successfully adapting to most potentially stressful life events. For those who have experienced previous adjustment difficulties due to a life change, the risk of these later re-emerging can be minimised by the optimisation of coping skills in the context of counselling or other psychotherapies.

**How can family members help an individual with adjustment disorders?** Family members can significantly help those experiencing adjustment difficulties by allowing their relative to express their feelings openly, and if possible assist them to find practical means to reduce the severity of the stressful event.

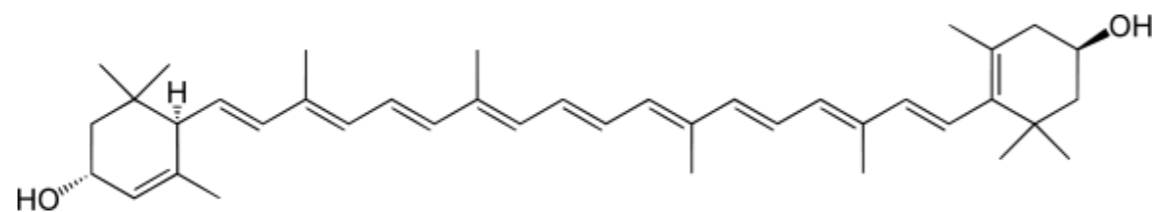
**How can affected individuals help themselves?**

**Those suffering with a possible adjustment disorder should be encouraged to discuss their emotional difficulties with friends or family and if possible any practical steps required to lessen the impact of the stressor.**

They should remind themselves that such difficulties almost invariably have a good prognosis, but if there is no significant improvement with such steps within a few weeks, then contact with a general practitioner would be recommended. However, such help should be sought urgently if the individual is experiencing either severe distressing symptoms or suicidal thoughts. **HT**

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# The Wonders of Lutein

*In an increasingly health-conscious society, the role of dietary supplements has grown to become a major one in our fast-paced lives. Products such as ginkgo biloba, which increases mental sharpness, or evening primrose oil, which is useful for improving skin conditions, are well-known to consumers. But one very important source of nutritional support that tends to get neglected is lutein, which is vital to the health of our eyes.*

**What is lutein?** It is a nutrient which belongs to a class of organic antioxidants known as carotenoids. It adds yellow and orange pigment to many fruits and vegetable; including capsicums, carrots, spinach and bok choy. Egg yolks are also a rich source of lutein. It is also naturally present in our eyes, concentrated in the macula (the area of the retina which enables sharp vision and visual acuity).

Lutein is important to our vision because as an antioxidant, it helps to combat the ravaging effects of free radicals in our eyes. It does so by filtering out most of the harmful oxidizing blue light in both sunlight and indoor lighting from reaching our eyes.

Though found in the macula, our bodies are actually not able to reproduce lutein, hence the only way of continually replenishing the supply in our eyes is to consume it in the form of dark green and leafy vegetables such as spinach and Chinese broccoli, or specially formulated eye vitamins like *Bausch & Lomb's Ocuvite*, which will meet your daily lutein requirement.

**Because our bodies are not able to produce lutein, the only way of replenishing the supply in our eyes is to have a high regular intake of fruits and vegetables, or consume specially formulated eye vitamins...**

Crucially, it has been discovered that lutein plays an important role in reducing the risk of Age-Related Macular Degenerated (AMD), the leading cause of blindness among the elderly in the developed world.

In a study of AMD patients published in *Optometry*, a medical journal, in April 2004, doctors observed that patients who had consumed lutein as a nutritional supplement enjoyed improved visual functions compared to those who did not.

Besides its role in the maintenance of healthy eyes, it has also been discovered that lutein also plays a part in the prevention of the clogging of arteries known as atherosclerosis, a process which leads to heart attack and stroke. In a study published in *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*, June 19, 2001, researchers found that an increase in the dietary intake of lutein could help prevent the development of early atherosclerosis.

So with a regular and sufficient intake of lutein, together with eating your greens, good health is something we can look forward to, in spite of our stressful lifestyles. **HT**

#### References:

1. Richer, S., et al., Double-masked, placebo-controlled, randomised trial of lutein and antioxidant supplementation in the intervention of atrophic age-related macular degenerated: the Veterans LAST study (Lutein Antioxidant Supplementation Trial). *Optometry*, 2004, 75(4): p. 216-30. PubMed
2. "The Story Behind Lutein" From the Lutein Information Bureau. Retrieved July 16, 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.luteininfo.com/about>
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This article is supported by: Bausch & Lomb (S) Pte Ltd. 151 Lorong Chuan, #04-03A New Tech Park, Lobby C Singapore 556741. Tel: 68349112

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- 20mg Eyebright
- 408mg Grapeseed oil
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- 20mg Acer Nikoense
- 6mg Astaxanthin



#### 3 capsules of LUTEIN GOLD contain –

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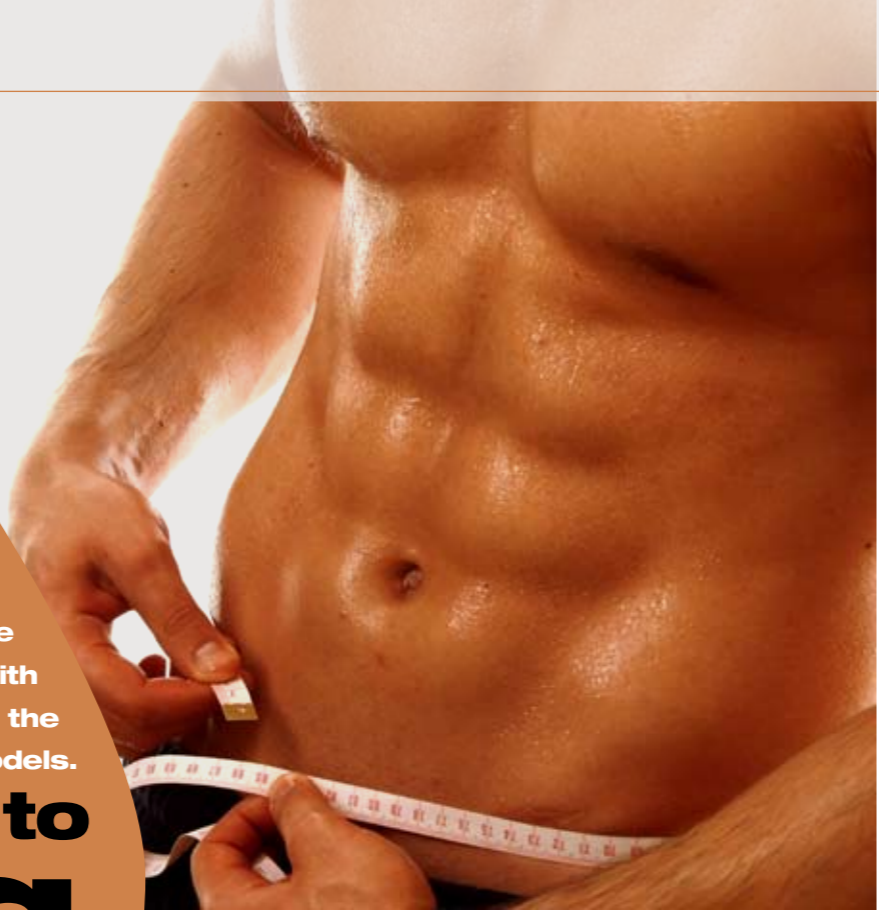


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Sub-cutaneous fat can be stored in several places on the body – hip, thighs abdominals and buttocks. Of them all, the excessive accumulation of fat in the abdominals is responsible for many people’s dissatisfaction with their body image. Everyone wants the amazing ‘six pack abs’ of fitness models.

# The Essentials to Losing Belly Fat



every inch increase of waist circumference is associated with a 10% rise in blood pressure, 8% rise of blood cholesterol and 15% decrease of high-density lipoprotein (‘good’ cholesterol). According to the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, the table below is a categorisation of your health risk based on your waist circumference.

## The Dangers of Belly Fat.

Belly fat does not solely exist to make you look bad in tighter outfits. Belly fat actually serves as an indicator of your health risk. There is actually a strong correlation between belly fat and health risks like type 2 diabetes, hypertension and hypercholesterolemia. Also, studies suggest that

HEALTH RISK	FEMALE	MALE
Very Low	<27.5 in / <70 cm	<31.5 in / <80 cm
Low	27.5 - 35 in / <70 - 89 cm	31.5 - 39 in / <80 - 99 cm
High	35.5 - 43 in / <90 - 109 cm	39.5 - 47 in / <100 - 120 cm
Very High	>43.5 in / <110 cm	>47 in / <120 cm

## The Causes of Belly Fat.

### Overeating

Accumulation of excessive abdominal fat happens when there is an energy imbalance. Simply put, you’re consuming way more than you need. Excess carbohydrates you consume will be converted to fats and stored as triglycerides. Therefore it isn’t just about eating fatty food, but eating too much.

### Sedentary Lifestyle

If eating too much is an active evil, its passive twin will be that of a sedentary lifestyle. Not exercising or leading an active lifestyle further increases the gap between your consumed calories and expended calories.

### Cushing’s syndrome

Cushing’s syndrome is a condition where you experience high level of cortisol, a hormone released under stress, over an extended period. High levels of cortisol have been associated with excess abdominal fat.

The lifestyle of the modern man is characterised by a fast paced, highly stressful work environments, surrounded by food stalls at every corner coupled with ample distraction to keep you glued to your screen when you get home. It is not hard to see how easily we fall for all three major factors that contribute to belly fat. Next, we look at how we can stay lean in a pro-belly fat society.

## Fighting Belly Fat.

### Diet Control

One of the main ways to losing your belly fat is to modify your diet. Although simple, it can be one of the hardest change for many. Here are a few things that can help you adopt a healthier diet without sacrificing much of your lifestyle.

**1 Keep a food diary.** Having a food diary creates awareness of what you are eating and how frequently or how much you are eating. Once you have recorded three days to a week of food journal you should have be able to analyse your eating patterns. From there, you can decide how you can change your eating habits.

**2 Out of sight, out of mind.** If you are prone to snacking, keep the snacks far from you especially when you work or watch shows. When your attention is on something else you will not be aware of how much you are eating and before you know it you are at the end of another bag.

**3 Healthy Alternatives.** This is probably the most important strategy one can adopt for a healthier lifestyle. Instead of starving yourself, swap what you usually eat with healthier alternatives. Instead of cornflakes and white bread, replace them with oats and whole grain bread. Instead of having a full plate of white rice, ask for half a plate and substitute your carbohydrates from a few extra fruits. What you eat is just as important as how much you eat.

### Exercise

The truth is no matter how many sit ups you do, your six packs will never appear until you lower your fat percentage. You cannot opt to lower your belly fat; when you lose fat, you lose fat as a whole. Therefore, the only way your abdominal muscles will show is when you have a low fat percentage.

The good news for the busy man is that you do not need to spend long hours exercising. In fact short bursts of high intensity exercises are actually preferred and can actually burn more fats as compared to running for hours. However, for people who are not used to exercising, start slow and gradually progress. High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) is one of the most effective way to reduce body fat as it raises your body metabolism way beyond after your workout so 15 minutes of HIIT can actually help you burn fats for hours. Choose multi-joint full body movements like burpees and squats for a good workout. Just twice a week of HIIT of 10-20 minutes combined with a 30 minutes of cardio once a week should get you burning fats like a firestorm.

### Stress Relieve

Unfortunately, stress is often part of the nature of many jobs. Fortunately, exercising also has an effect on reducing stress levels so picking up an active lifestyle is the way to go. Also learning relaxation methods like meditation and breathing techniques or picking up mind-body exercises like yoga will be helpful. Most of all, a good social support system will be essential in your fight against stress and its belly fat inducing effects.

## Belly Fat Begone!

At the end of the day, there is no secret technique to suddenly lose your belly fats. It takes consistency and discipline – just a little bit and the benefits will be immense. You will feel better about yourself, become more confident, be less prone to potential health hazards and just be able to enjoy life better on the whole. It will not be easy at the start, but once you make healthier choices and active living a habit, you will never look back. – Dave Tai HT



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## FITNESS

# PRE & POST workout



# EATING RIGHT



...  
How many hours in a week do you spend working out? Even if you are a hardcore fanatic who spends 2 hours, 6 days a week working out (not recommended for the sane), that will only add up to 12 hours of workout, 1/14 of your week.

Therefore, getting and staying fit is just as much, if not more about what you do outside of your workouts. No matter how well planned your workout is, if you are not getting the right rest and nutrition for your body to recover, your body will break eventually. Therefore, in this article we will discuss the importance of what you eat and when you eat it.

.....

## Not All Meals Are Made Equal.

The question, 'what is the most important meal of the day?' is actually a trick question. All meals are important but today we will look at two meals that are more important, especially for people who lead active lifestyles.

Firstly, an hour or so before your workout comes your pre-workout meal. The purpose of this meal is to charge you up for the upcoming workout. Also reports from the American Journal of Physiology have found that insulin dilates blood vessels and increases blood flow to skeletal muscles. Therefore, a pre-workout meal will enhance nutrient delivery to muscles during workout. If done right, you

should feel charged, energised and ready to hit whatever your goals are for the session.

Next, after your workout comes your post-workout meal. After you have worked your body out and depleted it of its resources, it goes into a recovery phase making it the ideal time to introduce nutrient rich food. In 2003, Sports Medicine published that a rapid phase of glycogen synthesis occurs 30 to 60 minutes after exercise. In another 2001 report in American Journal of Physiology, analysing post workout effect on protein synthesis saw protein synthesis elevated threefold when consumed after a workout as compared to three hours after exercise. Therefore, it is best to consume a recovery meal preferably within 30 minutes of your workout.



## POST-Workout Meal.



As stated previously, within 30 to 60 minutes after your workout will be the optimal timing to consume your post workout meal.

You have about a good hour to consume your meal so there is no need to panic and drink up a whole bottle of protein shake right after you stop exercising.



## PRE-Workout Meal.



As a guideline, one hour ought to be a good estimation.

However, we all respond differently and you might want to experiment over a few sessions to find the most suitable timing for you. Some people might prefer the meal 30 minutes before their workout while others work best with 90 minutes.



Carbohydrates will be the main source of fuel during your workout.

However, do take note of the glycemic index of your choice of carbs. Glycemic index of a food determines how fast blood sugar levels rise after consumption. If you consume food with high GI, you will probably experience a sugar high followed by a crash during your workout. To avoid that, go for food with low GI to produce a steady flow of blood glucose as you exercise.

**Low GI food you might consider include...**  
Apples, Oat, Wholemeal Bread, Plain Yoghurt, Peanuts, Whole Milk, Oranges, Grapes, Banana and Pears

**High GI food you ought to avoid...**  
White Rice, Watermelon, Mashed Potato, White Bread and Cornflakes.

As you can see there is a lot of fruit in the Low GI category. So, a hearty fruit platter will do wonders for your upcoming session. Also a little protein from lean meats and eggs will help with your workout.



Your post-workout meal protein and carbs will still be the main stars.

For carbohydrates this is the time to make the switch to high GI foods. Do take caution that this is not a green light for you to let loose on all the candy and chocolate in your secret stash. Nutrient rich high GI options like **honey, wholemeal rye bread and raisins** make good post-workout snacks.

For post-workout proteins, some people opt for a protein shake. However I always believe that whole foods make up a more wholesome diet. Besides, not everyone will have a tin of whey protein lying in their cabinet. As mentioned previously, **eggs** are excellent sources of protein. **Lean meat and fish** are also great low fat sources of protein. Watch out if you are opting for a juicy beef steak instead. Although, it provides a high amount of protein, it also comes with a high amount of saturated fat as compared to the rest of the mentioned sources.



## Most Important of All...

Over the next few weeks, experiment with different timings and foods that produce the best results. Stick to these guidelines and you should find yourself well fueled for your workouts and quickly recovered after them. The most important thing to keep in mind, however is to develop a meal plan that you enjoy. If you have a plan chock full of nutritional goodies you do not enjoy, you might as well forget about it because you will not stick with it for long. **Getting fit is only the beginning, in order to stay fit, it has to become a way of life.** — Dave Tai



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# Egg on!

They get scrambled, boiled, poached and whipped into a hearty omelette.

● **Eggs** are relished in more than one way all around the world, but seldom considered hearty as they are reputed to shoot cholesterol levels up. A large egg contains about 185mg of dietary cholesterol. Experts recommend that people should focus on limiting their total cholesterol intake to 300mg a day, while heart patients and those at risk should cut the amount to less than 200mg. That would mean that the humble egg is still a safe choice in our daily diets. However, there is more to this breakfast gem that makes it a nutrition powerhouse.



## Weight loss

For those who have always believed that eggs are fattening, it might come as a surprise that studies have found that eating eggs for breakfast helps limit your calorie intake all day, by more than 400 calories. That means a loss of up to three pounds or more per month. Eggs being protein rich tend to keep us fuller for a longer time – meaning the likelihood of reaching for a mid-morning snack or lunchtime bingeing is much lesser.

## Essential minerals

Eggs are rich in **iron**, **zinc** and **phosphorus**. For instance, women need plenty of iron due to menstruation, and not getting enough could leave them fatigued and prone to mood swings. Zinc keeps the immune system in top form and helps the body turn food into energy. Phosphorus is essential for healthy bones and teeth.

## Low Calorie Protein Power

Eggs contain up to 6 grams of **protein**. They are one of the few foods considered to be a complete protein, because they contain all nine essential amino acids. Amino acids are considered the “building blocks for the body” because they help form protein. In addition to providing energy, the body uses the protein to...

- build and repair body tissue and cells
- grow strong hair and nails
- build and maintain healthy muscles
- help fight infections
- help keep body fluids in balance

## Improve Eyesight

**Lutein** and **zeaxanthin** are antioxidants found in egg yolk. These antioxidants are believed to help improve eyesight and reduce the risk of age-related macular degeneration as well as the risk of cataracts.

## Strengthen Bones

Eggs are an important source of **vitamin D**, which is important in strengthening the bones and improving immunity. **HT**

## Brain Development

The egg yolk contains **choline** which stimulates brain development and function. Choline is necessary for brain development, but is not produced by our bodies in sufficient amounts. As such, a continuous new supply must be provided by our diet.

## Take your vitamins

Eggs are packed with several vitamins essential to health. These include...

- **Vitamin B2**, which helps the body to break down food into energy
- **Vitamin B12**, vital for producing red blood cells
- **Vitamin A** which helps eyesight
- **Vitamin E** which fights off the free radicals that can cause tissue and cellular damage



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### FOOD & NURTITION

# Celebrate School Hols the Healthy Way!

The best way to inculcate healthy eating habits in your kids is by setting an example with your own eating trends. Children are natural followers of their elders; if you tend to consume fatty, sugary foods; they will be prone to do so too. However, if you provide healthy meals and snacks, and sit and eat them with your children whether at home or out, they will eventually pick up these healthy habits and apply them to their own lifestyle.

Besides setting good healthy eating examples, as parents you also need to educate them on why having a balanced diet is important to avoid falling sick often, nourish their bodies, and help them learn and develop. Children tend to be more motivated if they understand the reason why they should make healthy choices and if they have control over their meal choices too.

### INGREDIENTS.

2 eggs beaten

Pinch of salt and pepper

2 tbsp olive oil

4 strips streaky bacon or chicken ham

4 large sheets of dry seaweed for sushi

4 slices of bread, remove edges

### METHOD.

Season the beaten eggs with salt and pepper.

In a heated non stick pan, add the olive oil and cook the egg - omelette style by filling the pan base. Once the eggs are cooked, remove from the pan and cut into 4 long strips.

In the same pan, sauté the bacon and set aside.

To assemble the sushi bread rolls, on a flat plate place a sheet of seaweed followed by a slice of bread in the centre, the egg strip and lastly the bacon strip on top.

Roll the sushi sandwich up and secure with a toothpick if required. Trim the excess seaweed at the sides and slice them into 2 cm thick pieces. Repeat for the rest of the remaining ingredients and serve immediately.



Seaweed, Egg and  
Bacon Sushi Bread Rolls Makes 4.  
Preparation time: 10 minutes Cooking time: 10 minutes

74  
HT  
13

**INGREDIENTS.**

**For the vanilla crepes:**  
 ½ cup all purpose flour  
 ¼ cup thickened cream  
 1 beaten egg  
 ¼ cup fresh milk  
 Pinch of salt and pepper  
 ½ teaspoon vanilla paste or essence

**For the yogurt cream:**  
 ½ cup whipping cream  
 150 grams mango yogurt  
 Juice of 1 orange  
 1 cup orange slices

**Garnishing:**  
 ½ tsp icing sugar for dusting  
 6 strawberries, halved

**METHOD.**

*In a mixing bowl, combine all the vanilla crepe ingredients and mix well until it forms a light batter consistency. If the crepe batter is too thick, add in more milk and stir well.*

*Using a heated non stick pan, add a thin layer of crepe batter onto the pan and cook on low heat until the edges are slightly browned. Flip to cook on the other side. Fold the crepe into a triangle and place on a plate. Repeat for the remaining batter.*

*To make the yogurt cream, whisk the whipping cream until stiff then add in the mango yogurt and orange juice and mix evenly.*

*Place the cream into a cup or serving bowl topped with the oranges slices and serve with the crepes. Lastly, dust the icing sugar over the crepes and top with strawberries before serving.*

**Sweet Vanilla Crepes with Mango and Orange Yogurt Cream** Serves 2-4.  
 Preparation time 15 minutes Cooking Time: 10 minutes

## FOOD & NURTITION

Every child differs in their taste preferences and can also be different from their parents, but the key is to find out what healthy foods your children enjoy and include them in their meals at the same time, encouraging them to try new things from time to time. For example, if your children do not like fresh fruit, try giving them smoothies with blended fresh fruit or dried fruit as an alternative. Here are some interesting ideas that could promote a healthy eating environment for your child...

**01 Have a fruit bowl filled with fresh fruit** like apples, bananas and pears in a prominent place like on a dining table.

**02 Stock a snack shelf with various healthy foods** such as apple chips, dried fruit, and nuts.

**03 If your kids are not fans of vegetables, you can slowly change their minds** – with a bit of patience. Introduce lean mince and blended vegetables

such as boiled carrots, spinach, onion and garlic by stirring them into dipping or pasta sauces.

**04 Incorporate healthy ingredients if you are baking**, such as fruit muffins, oatmeal and raisin cookies.

**05 Don't completely cut out foods that may be unhealthy**, but set simple rules such as one serving of fruit or freshly blended juice a day, one serving of chips or ice cream once a week etc.

**06 When going on long outdoor trips pack, bring along healthy snacks** rather than stopping by the convenience store.

**07 Bring your kids to the supermarket** and let them select healthy snacks within your budget.

**08 Don't make snacks a reward.** If your child's behaviour is good, reward with praise or other positive incentives. Treats like a trip to the fast food restaurant, ice cream or chips should be avoided.

**09 You can freeze fresh fruit juice into ice blocks** or mix fresh cut up fruit into low fat ice cream or yoghurt for a healthier alternative.

**10 Use a small cookie cutter that comes in fancy shapes** on foods like potatoes, carrots, papayas and apples when getting your child to eat up his or her food. Presenting food that is fun and colourful may motivate even the fussiest kid into eating them. HT

Recipes by Irene Jansen.  
[www.culinaryadventures.com.sg](http://www.culinaryadventures.com.sg)



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# 3 steps to buying Eco Cosmetics for a Safer Make-up Routine

Your skin is the largest organ you have, and as such is a huge conduit for bringing toxins into your body. Yet daily, you probably apply 12 or more cosmetics to your body which may contain ingredients that are absorbed through your skin and transferred to your internal systems – your nervous, endocrine, immune, and digestive systems, to name a few.



Though you may have never considered the impact your eye shadow, eye liner, lipstick, blush, foundation, pressed powders, nail polish, and so on have on your health, you should! Contained within these everyday products may

lurk dozens of health hazards that not only endanger your wellbeing, they damage the planet as well. The following three steps will help you choose safer, eco cosmetics to green-up your daily make-up routine.



**01 DON'T Buy Cosmetics Made With Harmful Ingredients.** To start, you need to begin to weed out those cosmetics that contain ingredients that are harmful to your health. Conventionally-made cosmetics often contain chemicals that are linked to cancer and are toxic for neurological, immune, reproductive, and developmental systems. The science of chemical toxicity is complex and involved, but to get you started you should avoid cosmetics that have any of the most dangerous components on their ingredient lists, including –

- Butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA)
- Coal tar dyes (known as D&C or FD&C colors)
- Formaldehyde
- Heavy metals (mercury, lead, chromium, and so on)
- Hydroquinone
- Nanoparticles
- Nitrosamines
- Octyl-dimethyl and Octyl-methoxycinnamate
- Parabens
- Polyethylene glycol
- Polyvinylpyrrolidone (PVP)
- Quaternium-15
- Resorcinol
- Silicon
- Talc (talcum powder)

Unfortunately, many products do not list their ingredients – avoid those products without ingredient break-downs as they may well be hiding things that are harmful to your health.

**02 DO Buy Cosmetics Made with Natural, Organic Ingredients.** One of the most important lessons every green consumer needs to learn is that you can't always trust marketing claims. Although many packages will use words like "natural" or "pure" or "gentle", these terms are not regulated and therefore cannot be verified in terms of their truthfulness. In particular, look for these ingredients commonly used to make eco-friendly cosmetics –

- **Safe minerals.** These are minerals that have no negative side effects, and include options such as titanium dioxide, iron oxides, and mica.
- **Certified organic ingredients.** Today there are many certifying organisations that provide a verifiable system for ensuring the ingredients used in your consumer goods are grown without synthetic chemicals. Check labels on the packaging, then do some research to determine whether or not the certifications are trustworthy.

- **Fruit and vegetable ingredients and oils.** These ingredients should be less chemically processed and closer to the farm, making them much safer for your body and the planet. Options include shea butter and cocoa butter, as well as calendula oil, jojoba oil, coconut oil, castor oil, argan oil, and citrus oils. You may also read things like brown sugar, sea salt, mineral salts, honey, and beeswax.



Consult the "Campaign for Safe Cosmetics" website for lists of companies that have made *The Compact for Safe Cosmetics* part of their business model. Of course, truly eco-friendly make-up is also cruelty-free. After all, animals are part of the environment, and using them to test products is not only unnecessary, it's inhumane. Look for products that are "Certified Vegan" or "Cruelty Free by PETA".

**03 Look for Eco Cosmetics with GREENER PACKAGING.** You can go even further in your quest for greener cosmetics by looking into eco-friendly packaging as well. When browsing for eco cosmetics, look for packaging that meets at least one of the following eco-criteria:

- **Packaging that is minimised.** Less packaging means fewer raw materials were consumed to make the packaging and the less energy was required to ship it as well. Look for bottles and boxes made more lightweight with thinner construction (the packaging will usually indicate this). Also seek out single-layer packages – avoid bottles within boxes or tins within plastic shells.
- **Packaging made of recycled plastic, cardboard, glass, or metal.** Look for certifications that verify the packaging is composed of recyclable materials. Seek out the highest recycled content possible.
- **Packaging made of compostable or biodegradable materials.** These materials require less processing, chemicals, and energy during manufacturing and can be tossed into a compost pile to quickly break down, which means a much more closed loop lifecycle from cradle to grave. Look for things such as cardboard, cotton, hemp, or bio-plastics.
- **Packaging that is 100% recyclable.** Virtually all glass and most metals are automatically recyclable, but not all plastics and cardboard are, so look for symbols on the bottom of the package that indicate their recyclability. Also, be sure that materials such as glass, metal, plastic, and cardboard can be separated into component parts so that each type can be recycled appropriately.
- **Packaging that is FSC Certified.** The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certifies forests that are sustainably managed, as well as products made from material taken from these forests. They have several certifications for paper and cardboard packaging indicating either that a certain percentage of virgin pulp from sustainably managed forests was used, or that a certain percentage of recycled content was used. Either way, it's a good sign that the product packaging is sustainable.



Using these three tips will get you well on your way to choosing cosmetics that beautify you and the planet too!

– Maryruth Belsey Priebe



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## NEWS



There were four aspects to the expo – Public Education zone (PE zone), stage activities, forum talks and the exhibition.

## Seniors find lifelong learning a key pillar for active ageing

*50plus EXPO displayed an array of choices for leading an active lifestyle*

Seniors who took up courses and training programmes found lifelong learning to be important and beneficial in a recent survey commissioned by the Council for Third Age (C3A). Although non-learners did not participate in such courses and programmes, they too said they were interested in learning because it is important. This was among the key findings of the study, which was conducted by Fei Yue Community Services late last year.

In line with these findings, this year's 50plus EXPO provided seniors with occasions for experiential learning and self discovery of new hobbies and interests, as well as opportunities for volunteering. Held from 22 to 24 March, Singapore's largest show for baby boomers included a range of learning activities designed to appeal to seniors and encourage them to embrace active ageing.



The event was launched by Senior Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office, and Chairman of the Active Ageing & Employability Sub-Committee, Mr. Heng Chee How. The theme for the event was "Live Well, Celebrate Life!" The growing seniors market is estimated to be close to one million in Singapore, with baby boomers defined as those born between 1947 and 1965, by 2030.

The LEARN zone placed a strong focus on senior-related programmes and new skills that might interest them, such as photo editing, IT skills, an E-book kiosk, as well as workshops on DIY ice-cream making and origami among others. At the CONNECT zone, seniors had the chance to make new friends through hands-on activities. At the ENGAGE zone, seniors discovered how staying in employment for as long as possible could help them stay connected to society and maintain their social circle.

**"The most effective way to learn is through participating. This year's 50plus EXPO was packed with experiential and fun learning. The activities, talks and different exhibits provided seniors with an array of choices for them to engage in an active lifestyle."** Said Mr Gerard Ee, Chairman of C3A. **HT**



# How to raise an Environmentally CONSCIOUS child



It is of the utmost importance that children learn at a young age to be respectful of the environment and learn why we need to take better care of planet earth. As parents, it is important that we raise kids that care about the environment and the world in which they live. It is their choices that will shape the future of the environmental impact we have on earth. How do we do this, ensuring that we are protecting the future of our planet AND our children?

Any parent knows that learning starts at home. Children form their earliest impressions in direct reflection to those that raise them...so raise them well! If given the chance, young people can accomplish anything. Our kids look to us to lead, so we must begin by setting a good example. We must begin by showing them our own respect for the environment, and how important it is that we are good care-takers of this planet. It is up to us as parents to guide our kids in a positive direction and to provide them with information they can relate to and understand.



## What are the things we can do as parents to set a good example?

**Set a Good Example.** Our kids are mirrors of ourselves, so it is important to set a good example for them by showing that we have a deep respect and love for our environment. Expose to them the importance of taking good care of our planet by taking care of the environment yourself. Make it a point to talk about the harm that has been done to the environment and talk about ways you can make it better.

**Recycle.** Set up recycling bins at home and give your kids information about recycling that they can understand. Encourage everyone in the family to recycle by making special boxes for items that can be recycled. You can paint or decorate each box to show what each one is for. Fun facts about recycling will also get children excited about what happens when they choose to recycle.

**Spend Time Outdoors.** Research has shown that kids who spend time outside and experience nature will develop a desire to preserve the environment. It is important to get your kids outside! Spending a day at the beach, taking a hike in the local mountains, or enjoying an overnight camping trip are all great ways to expose kids to the outdoors. Even if you live in an urban setting, parks and playgrounds can offer children the time they need outside.

**Visit Museums, Zoos, and Nature Conservatories.** These can be great places that help children learn the importance of caring for the environment. Museums often have programs for children that will teach them about the environment and get them excited for taking the steps to protect it.

**Be water wise.** Teaching our children that water is a valuable resource and not to be taken for granted is important. More than a billion people in developing countries do not have access to adequate water. Have your children turn off the water when they brush their teeth and take shorter showers. Let them know that water is not to be taken for granted and that many children lack water for even the most basic of needs.

**Plant a garden.** Planting a garden at your home is a wonderful way to connect your children to nature and instill in them a deep appreciation for the natural cycle of life. Gardening is a great way to expose kids to taking care of the environment. They will delight in seeing the fruits of their labor while learning where food really comes from. Even if you don't have the space in your yard, container planting in a sunny window will still give kids a chance to experience taking care of their environment.

It is so important that children understand the necessity of taking care of their environment, and what will continue to happen if they don't care. They are, after all, those who will inherit this earth and set the fate of future generations. By instilling deep values in our children of why it is important to be conscious of our environment there is hope for the future. They will come to understand that we don't really have a choice but to be environmentally aware.

Kids love things they can understand, and their minds are like sponges. When they understand a concept they are exposed to, they will carry that with them for the rest of their lives. This is why it is important to start not just teaching our children, but showing them as well, about the deep care that is needed in taking care of our environment. With the right guidance our children have the potential to become the great environmental stewards this planet so desperately needs.

— Jen Keehn



SNEAK PREVIEW  
of the next issue

29 September 2013

will see the commemoration of

## World Heart Day.

Cardiovascular diseases are the world's largest killers, claiming 17.3 million lives a year. Together with its members, the World Heart Federation says that at least 80% of premature deaths from heart disease and stroke could be avoided if the main risk factors, tobacco, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity, are controlled.

The theme for 2013 focuses on **women and children** with a life-course approach to the prevention and control of cardiovascular disease (CVD). The campaign will highlight what actions can be taken through a person's life to reduce their risk of CVD. **HT**



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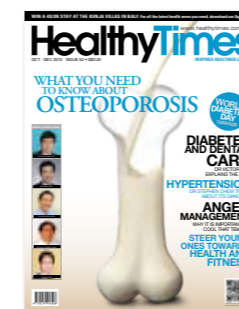
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200g medium prawns (shell removed)  
50g mozzarella cheese  
30g UNISOY™ (1 sachet)  
20g unsalted butter  
15g low protein flour  
2 tsp garlic (minced)  
20g onion (minced)

### SEASONING.

½ tsp sea salt  
¼ tsp chicken stock powder  
Black pepper powder

### METHOD.

Put macaroni in hot water with a little sea salt and cook for about 10 minutes. Drain the water.

Melt butter in a hot wok and cook minced onion and garlic until fragrant then add low protein flour until the colour changes. Add prawns and when cooked, add the seasoning ingredients. Lastly, slowly add in soya milk and cook evenly.

Switch off flame and mix in the macaroni.

Transfer into a baking plate, top it with shredded cheese and bake at 230°C for 8 minutes until it turns golden brown.



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