

Health Pulse magazine

Preventing the Preventable

The Midwife's Role in Ending
Obstetric Fistula



**MADAM
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A midwifery officer at Pentecostal Hospital



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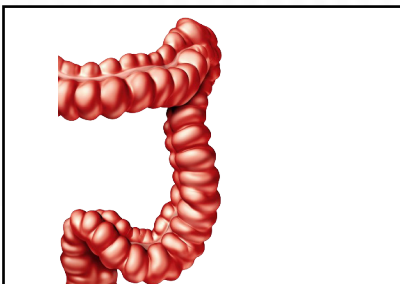
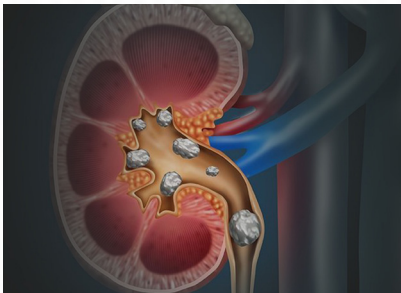
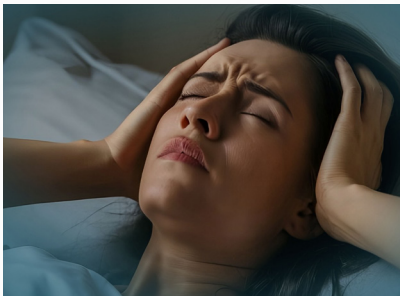
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HCOWAA: Advancing Healthcare Standards in West Africa

The Health Community of West Africa Association (HCOWAA), based in Ghana, is a non-governmental organization dedicated to advancing healthcare across West Africa. Addressing the uneven distribution of medical resources, HCOWAA advocates for regional cooperation through a Health Alliance that unites healthcare stakeholders to create a cohesive health community.

With a mission to improve health outcomes in West Africa, HCOWAA facilitates collaboration, innovation, and research among professionals, leveraging collective resources to enhance healthcare services, policies, and access. HCOWAA envisions a resilient West African healthcare system where institutions and professionals lead groundbreaking research, foster innovation, and influence policies that elevate regional healthcare.

Through initiatives like establishing a regional healthcare database, launching research projects, and hosting policy roundtables, HCOWAA builds strong networks to drive healthcare advancements. Advocacy efforts focus on equitable access, supporting vulnerable populations, and addressing healthcare disparities. The organization's objectives include fostering research and innovation, supporting health policy reforms, and integrating medical equipment manufacturers with healthcare facilities.

HCOWAA also facilitates training programs, academic exchanges, and research grants, ensuring members are equipped with knowledge and skills to address regional health challenges effectively. Networking events like the HCOWAA Medical and Health Industry Investment Summit & Expo connect professionals, offering a platform for partnership and knowledge sharing.

HCOWAA's commitment extends to partnerships with international health organizations and academic institutions, which amplify its impact by introducing global best practices and strengthening West African healthcare infrastructure. Collaborative efforts with international partners promote training, research, and infrastructure upgrades for health facilities, pharmaceutical establishments, and clinics.

In addition, HCOWAA's magazine partnerships, including an MoU with Health Pulse Magazine, provide platforms to publish relevant content, share insights, and enhance visibility for ongoing initiatives. Through these combined efforts, HCOWAA aims to foster a collaborative healthcare environment that not only addresses urgent health challenges but also builds a sustainable, inclusive healthcare future for West Africa.

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The Essence of Health Summits and Expos: Shaping the Future of Healthcare

In today's interconnected world, health challenges are no longer isolated—neither are their solutions. From pandemics to non-communicable diseases, breakthrough technologies to digital health systems, the pace of change in healthcare calls for collective vision and coordinated action. This is where Health Summits and Expos prove their worth. More than just events, they are strategic platforms where ideas meet execution, and where global leaders, experts, and innovators collaborate to shape the future of healthcare.

In this spirit, we are proud to announce the 2025 China-West Africa Medical & Health Industry Expo and AI Diagnosis Deployment & Project Cooperation Summit—more than just an industry gathering, it is a gateway for collaboration, investment, and shared solutions under the theme: "Promoting Trade and Investment for Industrial Development and Sustainable Health Outcomes."

From August 20th to 22nd, 2025, at the Grand Arena of the Accra International Conference Centre, stakeholders from government, private sector, academia, hospitals, clinics, and the global medical technology community will come together to build partnerships that transcend borders. With its focus on modernizing healthcare through AI, boosting local production, and strengthening trade ties between China and West Africa, the Expo will spark investments

with real, lasting impact—from advanced diagnostics and telemedicine to locally assembled equipment and life-saving treatments.

Why Health Summits Matter: Collaboration, Innovation, and Impact

These summits gather professionals, policymakers, innovators, and frontline workers. They spark conversations that lead to life-saving innovations, reinforce international partnerships, and highlight pressing health issues.

Health Summits as Catalysts for Change

Expos connect solutions with stakeholders. Exhibitors present technologies, while delegates discuss strategies—shaping national and regional public health outcomes.

From Dialogue to Action

Summits drive real-world impact. Policies are developed, MoUs are signed, and networks are built. Vision becomes visibility through the Expo platform.

A Gathering for Wellness

Ultimately, this summit is a gathering for wellness—a unified push toward innovation, equity, and sustainable healthcare for West Africa and beyond.



Appendix

By Dovia Richeal Elikem

Appendix, in anatomy is a vestigial hollow tube that is closed at one end and attached at the other end to the cecum, a pouch like beginning of the large intestine into which the small intestine empties its contents.

Often overlooked, the appendix is understood to have potential roles in immunity and gut health. It contains lymphoid tissue, which is part of the immune system, and may act as a reservoir for beneficial gut bacteria.

The appendix originates from the posteromedial aspect of the cecum. It is supported by the mesoappendix, a fold of mesentery which suspends the appendix from the terminal ileum.

The position of the free-end of the appendix is highly variable and can be categorized into seven main locations depending on its relationship to the ileum, caecum or pelvis. The most common position is Retrocecal. They may also be remembered by their relationship to a clock face:

- Pre-ileal – anterior to the terminal ileum – 1 or 2 o'clock.
- Post-ileal – posterior to the terminal ileum – 1 or 2 o'clock.
- Sub-ileal – parallel with the terminal ileum – 3 o'clock.
- Pelvic – descending over the pelvic brim – 5 o'clock.
- Subcecal – below the cecum – 6 o'clock.
- Paracecal – alongside the lateral border of the cecum – 10 o'clock.
- Retrocecal – behind the cecum – 11 o'clock.

Appendicitis a very common condition is an inflamed appendix. It can cause acute (sudden, intense) pain in your lower abdomen. Poop (feces) moving through your large intestine can block or infect your appendix, leading to inflammation. This inflammation causes your appendix to swell, and when it swells, it can burst. When this happens, it spreads bacteria from inside your bowels throughout your abdominal cavity. This infection peritonitis can then spread to your bloodstream, which can lead to life-threatening complications sepsis. Because of this risk, the standard treatment for appendicitis is to remove your appendix (appendectomy).

The catch; the appendix is thought to act as a “safe house” for beneficial gut bacteria, potentially helping to repopulate the large intestine with these bacteria after events like diarrhea or infections although largely considered useless. You might never think about your appendix until one day it starts hurting. If that happens, there's no time for pleasantries that's your cue to head to the hospital.



HCOWAA and Ghana Health Service Officially Announce 2025 China-West Africa Medical & Health Industry Expo-Press Conference.

The Health Community of West Africa Association (HCOWAA) in collaboration with Ghana Health Service (GHS) has officially announced the 2025 China -West Africa Medical and Health Industry Expo and AI Diagnosis Deployment & Project Cooperation Summit in a press conference on Tuesday July 15, 2025.

The press briefing which was held at the headquarters of the GHS in Accra, was under the theme: Focusing on Supply-Demand Cooperation to Promote the Integrated Development of the China-Africa Health Industry.

The primary goal of the Expo is to drive healthcare development and accelerate the transformation of the West African health system. This will be achieved by introducing cutting-edge medical equipment, integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into diagnostics and treatment, and improving the overall quality of healthcare delivery and patient outcomes across the region.

Delivering the welcome address, **Director PPMD-GHS, Dr. Samuel Boakye-Boateng** expressed gratitude for the partnership between Ghana Health Service and HCOWAA in promoting the 2025 China -West Africa Medical and Health Industry Expo stating that it was a much needed collaboration in promoting healthcare across the sub region.

Enla Fees, Director of Stakeholder Engagement for Global Health at Qure.ai, in her opening remarks emphasized the importance of expanding AI-enabled healthcare services across the country. In her address, she highlighted the role of artificial intelligence in advancing health equity, particularly through the deployment of AI-powered X-ray machines designed to detect tuberculosis in asymptomatic patients. She noted that such technology holds great potential to eliminate undiagnosed TB cases across the region.



Mr. Prince Opoku Dogbey, Vice President, HCOWAA

delivering his speech stated that the Expo is more than just an exhibition, it serves as a launchpad for strategic partnerships, health system transformation, and the localization of healthcare technology in West Africa. He further elaborated on the Expo's key initiatives and thematic forums. His address also included an expression of gratitude to stakeholders and a brief overview of the event's objectives.

Prof. Samuel Kaba Akoriyea, Acting Director-General of the Ghana Health Service and Ambassador for AI Delivery,

underscored the significance of the Expo in strengthening healthcare delivery in Ghana. He commended the Health Community of West Africa Association (HCOWAA) for its transformative impact on the region's health systems. Prof. Akoriyea shared a personal breakthrough moment where AI tools played a critical role in the successful separation of conjoined twins—an example of the life-saving potential of AI in medicine. He concluded by calling on all hospital CEOs, Medical Directors, Heads of Clinics, Health Training Institutions, Private Practitioners, and Development Partners to actively participate in the upcoming Expo, which aims to shape a more resilient, technology-driven, and patient-centered healthcare system in Ghana and across West Africa.

The second part of the press briefing featured a demonstration of AI-powered health equipment by HCOWAA and Qure.ai, reinforcing the critical role of artificial intelligence in modern diagnostics and patient care. The event concluded with a

ceremonial ribbon-cutting led by Chief Director David Tai and Vice President Prince Opoku Dogbey of HCOWAA, alongside Prof. Samuel Kaba Akoriyea, Acting Director-General of the Ghana Health Service, and Dr. Samuel Boakyee-Boateng, Director of PPMED. The ceremony was witnessed by members of the press and participants of the conference, marking a symbolic step forward in embracing AI-driven healthcare solutions.

The 2025 China–West Africa Medical & Health Industry Expo and AI Diagnosis Deployment & Project Cooperation Summit

is not merely an industry event it is a strategic platform for advancing collaboration, innovation, and sustainable healthcare solutions under the theme "Promoting Trade and Investment for Industrial Development and Sustainable Health Outcomes."

From August 20th to 22nd, 2025, the Grand Arena at the Accra International Conference Centre will host a diverse gathering of stakeholders from government agencies and healthcare institutions to private investors, academics, and global med-tech innovators.

With a clear focus on harnessing AI to modernize healthcare, promoting local manufacturing, and strengthening trade between China and West Africa, the Expo is poised to drive meaningful change. It will catalyze partnerships and investments that deliver long-term impact enabling access to advanced diagnostics, telemedicine, and locally produced medical technologies that can save lives and transform health systems across the region.

Edge AI: The Tech Revolution That Projects Global Hope for Africa's Health Challenges



Emmanuel Apetsi

(AI/ML Engineer, CEO at SISU AI &
Executive Director At OpenAI4Africa)

Africa faces a critical healthcare paradox: while it bears 24% of the global disease burden, it has only 1.55 health workers per 1,000 people—far below the WHO's recommended 4.45.

Thirty-seven of 55 African countries suffer severe health worker shortages, and over 150 million people are pushed into poverty by healthcare

costs. In 2024 alone, Africa recorded 213 disease outbreaks and 204,115 cholera cases, and continues to account for 94% of global malaria cases. Yet, amidst these challenges lies an opportunity in the continent's rapid digital transformation particularly through Edge AI, which could revolutionize healthcare delivery.

Unlike traditional cloud based AI, Edge AI processes data locally on devices such as smartphones and dedicated medical boxes. This approach reduces dependence on unstable internet connectivity and high data costs, which are barriers for many African communities. By bringing intelligence directly to the point of care, Edge AI ensures instant decision making, stronger data privacy, and access to high-quality diagnostics and treatment even in remote areas.

The economic potential is equally significant. Between 2020 and 2023, African healthcare technology attracted \$550 million in investment. By 2030, AI applications are projected to deliver \$54 billion in annual economic value to African healthcare systems, reducing costs by 30% and improving patient outcomes.

Edge AI alone could cut medication errors by 55%, boost efficiency by 30%, and save over a million lives by 2030. These projections are not abstract; they are already being proven through pilots, with SISU AI's KALON system as a leading example.

KALON's edge AI health solution is purpose-built for Africa's unique needs. Its offline functionality, mobile-first design, low power use, and privacy-focused architecture allow healthcare workers to perform diagnostics, monitor patients, and access treatment recommendations on portable devices without relying on cloud connections. The system's local data processing aligns with privacy laws and cultural sensitivities while ensuring scalable deployment across health networks.



Ghana is well-positioned to lead this revolution. With 67% unique mobile subscribers and strong mobile internet penetration, Ghana has the infrastructure to adopt Edge AI widely. The nation's goal to become Africa's AI hub by 2028 is backed by robust policy frameworks, including its National AI Strategy (2023–2033), which makes healthcare a priority sector. Successful hospital deployments and rising AI awareness among medical students highlight Ghana's readiness to become a model for the continent.

Nevertheless, challenges remain. Infrastructure gaps, digital literacy, and complex regulations must be addressed through community-centered designs, comprehensive health worker training, and careful implementation. Public-private partnerships and regulatory support will also be essential.

Africa's convergence of pressing healthcare needs, expanding digital capacity, and transformative Edge AI solutions creates an unmatched chance for

progress. Organizations like SISU AI and OpenAI4Africa are committed to ensuring that AI does not merely arrive in Africa but is shaped locally to deliver culturally relevant, accessible, and sustainable healthcare solutions.

The Edge AI revolution has begun. Its success depends on how swiftly Africa can scale these solutions to reach all communities and patients in need. With innovative platforms like KALON and visionary countries like Ghana at the forefront, Africa has the potential to become a global leader in AI-driven healthcare.

I will leave you with two of my quotes: "Artificial intelligence is neither good nor bad; it is a neutral reflection of those who imprint it." And, "AI's current best is the least it will ever be."

The future of healthcare in Africa is intelligent, accessible, and happening at the edge.

DEPRESSION or INSOMNIA?

The Vital Link Between Sleep and Mental Health

By Gloria Addo

Historically, sleep problems were seen as a consequence of depression, but recent evidence suggests poor sleep may induce or exacerbate depression.

Over 300 million people worldwide suffer from depression, a mood disorder characterized by sadness or hopelessness. Around 75% of depressed individuals exhibit insomnia symptoms. Many suffer from excessive daytime sleepiness and hypersomnia.

The relationship between sleep problems and depressive symptoms is believed to be mutually

reinforcing. Many of us know that we feel better after “a good night’s sleep” and more grumpy or foggy if sleep deprived. And there is now robust evidence similarly supporting that sleep is critical to not only our physical health but also our mental health. Poor or insufficient sleep has been found to increase negative emotional responses to stressors and to decrease positive emotions.

Brain activity fluctuates during sleep, with different stages affecting brain health and enabling better thinking, learning, and memory. Research shows that brain activity during sleep has profound effects on emotional and mental health. Sufficient sleep, especially REM sleep, facilitates the processing of emotional information and evaluates thoughts and memories.

Lack of sleep can lead to negative emotional content consolidation, mood changes, and mental health disorders, including suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

Tips for creating healthy sleep habits and improving sleep

- Try to keep a consistent sleep schedule, waking up around the same time even on weekends.
- Set a bedtime that is early enough for you to get at least 7 hours of sleep. However, don’t go to bed unless you are sleepy.
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine that helps to transition from your day.

- If you’re having trouble falling asleep, don’t lie in bed awake. If you can’t get to sleep, get out of bed, and do something relaxing until you feel tired.

- Create a healthy sleep environment— avoid bright lights and loud sounds, keep the room at a comfortable cool temperature, and try to limit electronics in your bedroom.

- Exercise regularly (but not within the few hours before going to bed).

- Avoid caffeine and nicotine late in the day and limit alcoholic drinks before bed.

In the quest for better mental health, sleep is not a luxury it’s a necessity. Consistent, quality rest plays a crucial role in regulating mood, reducing stress, and supporting emotional resilience.

Prioritizing sleep may be one of the simplest yet most powerful steps toward a healthier, more balanced mind.



Eat Your Way to A Perfect Skin Glow.

By Gloria Addo

An abundance of skin care products is on the market, but the secret to healthy skin may lie in a person's diet. What you eat can make an enormous difference to how your skin looks and feels and impact on common skin conditions.

Here's a deeper look at how to maintain a balanced diet that will give your skin a natural glow and support its long-term health:

1. Incorporate Antioxidant-Rich Foods

Antioxidants are essential for combating free radicals, which cause oxidative stress and damage to skin cells. Foods rich in antioxidants help your body defend against environmental factors such as pollution and UV radiation that can accelerate skin aging.

Incorporate a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables into your diet, such as:

2. Stay Hydrated

Water is vital for maintaining your skin's moisture levels, which prevents dryness, flakiness, and irritation. Drinking plenty of water also helps flush out toxins that can cause breakouts and dullness. To guarantee optimal hydration aim to drink at least 8 glasses of water a day. Complement your water intake with hydrating foods like cucumbers, watermelon, and oranges.

3. Add Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Healthy fats, particularly omega-3 fatty acids, are critical for maintaining your skin's lipid barrier, which helps retain moisture and keep your skin soft and smooth. Omega-3s also reduce inflammation, which is particularly beneficial for people who suffer from conditions like acne, eczema, or rosacea. Adding these healthy fats into your diet will help reduce redness and inflammation, giving your skin a calmer, more balanced appearance.

4. Limit Processed Foods and Sugar

High sugar intake leads to glycation, a process in which sugar molecules bind to proteins like collagen and elastin, causing them to stiffen and break down. This results in wrinkles and sagging skin. Processed foods, which often contain high levels of trans fats and refined sugars, contribute to skin inflammation, breakouts, and premature aging. By reducing sugar and processed food intake, you'll help your skin maintain its firmness and elasticity over time.

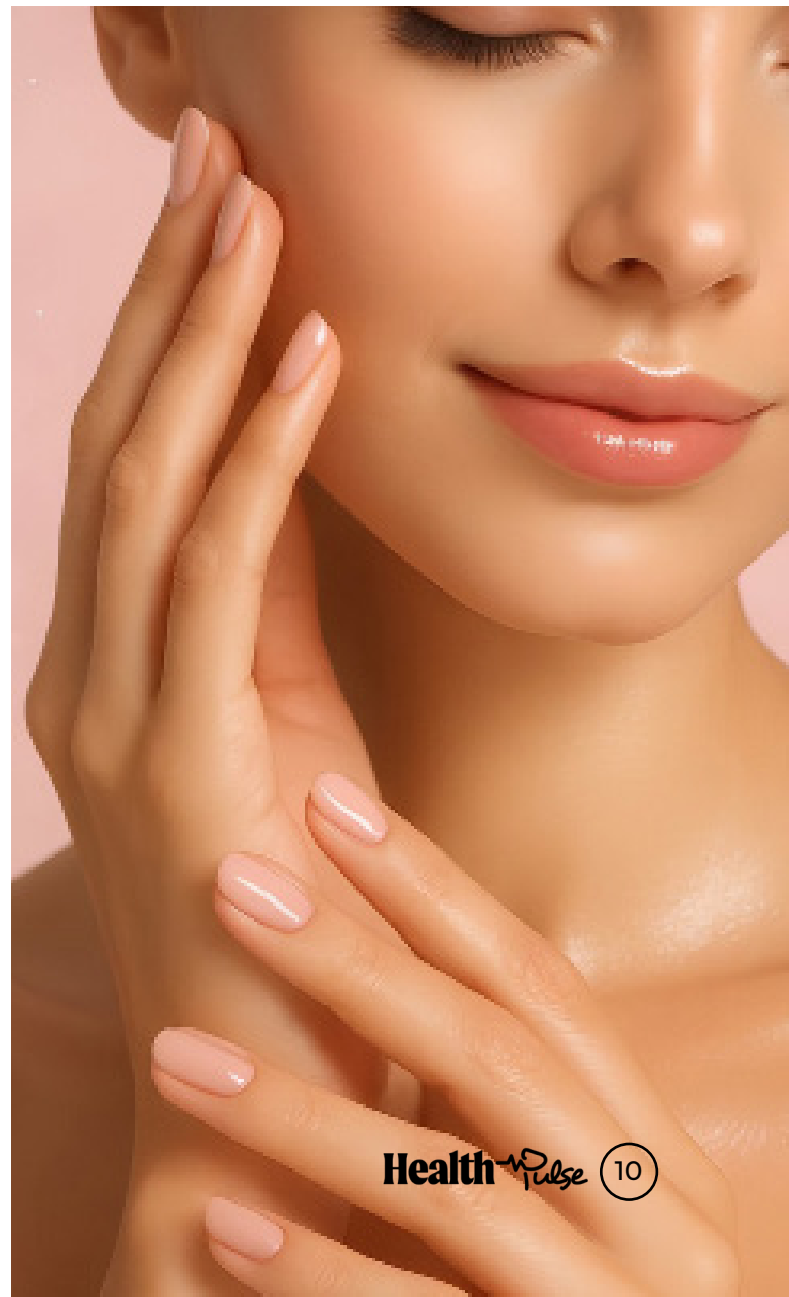
5. Consume Vitamin C and E

These vitamins are essential for skin repair, protection against UV damage, and collagen production. Vitamin C boosts your skin's ability to heal and regenerate, while vitamin E provides powerful

antioxidant benefits. Be sure to incorporate foods high in these vitamins. Citrus fruits, such as oranges, grapefruits, and lemons, and avocados, almonds, and spinach for their vitamin C and E content.

A diet rich in these vitamins will help protect your skin from environmental damage and support a youthful complexion.

Maintaining a healthy diet for optimal skin health is not about extreme restrictions but rather about incorporating nutrient-rich foods that support the body's natural processes for skin renewal and protection.





I2L Pushes for Affordable Cancer Drug in Nigeria & LMICs

An international patient advocacy organisation, Inspire2Live (I2L), has launched a global initiative to make cancer drugs more accessible and affordable for patients in Nigeria and other Lower Middle Income Countries (LMICs).

In a statement, the Netherlands-based organisation described the effort as an urgent intervention to bridge the wide gap in access to essential cancer medicines in poorer countries.

Cancer remains a major public health concern in Nigeria. According to the Global Cancer Observatory, the country recorded about 127,763 new cancer cases in 2020—an incidence rate of 113.6 per 100,000 people. This amounts to nearly 350 new cancer diagnoses daily, highlighting the pressing need for affordable treatment options.

Speaking on the initiative, I2L Founder, Peter Kapitein, said the organisation is working closely with five of the world's top cancer scientists to advise on the project and help make life-saving drugs available to patients who currently have no access to them.

"This movement is gaining the interest and support of several established international organisations that understand

how to deliver this," Kapitein said. "In many LMICs, patients are often diagnosed at a late stage when cancer is most aggressive and there is no pain relief available."

Professor Ifeoma Okoye, one of I2L's scientific advisers and a Professor of Radiology at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, backed the push, calling affordable cancer drugs a basic human right.

"Every day, I watch patients walk into our cancer centres with more fear of the cost than of the disease," she said. "The burden of out-of-pocket expenses for chemotherapy, imaging, and pain relief crushes families and robs them of dignity."

"Inspire2Live's effort to democratise access to oncology medicines is a necessary disruption to a broken system. We must move from global empathy to equitable action. Affordable cancer drugs are not charity they are a human right."

Kapitein noted that about 30 representatives from LMICs have joined I2L's advocacy network to push for wider access to critical medicines.

He pointed to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) current list of 83 essential cancer medicines—13 of which remain under patent—and lamented that many remain out of reach for patients across Africa despite their crucial role in cancer care.

Calling for urgent action, he urged

pharmaceutical companies and international regulators to dismantle barriers that keep these drugs inaccessible.

He suggested that, like the precedent set for HIV/AIDS medicines, African countries should be allowed to produce generic versions of patented cancer drugs under strict safety and quality standards.

"I2L believes that countries could manufacture generics for life-saving oncology drugs while staying within stringent safety regulations," Kapitein said. "Pharmaceutical companies have to cover the costs of research and failures, but once distribution is done in high-income countries, costs for excess production could be cut by 90% for LMICs."

Kapitein added that this approach would benefit both patients and pharmaceutical companies. "They would gain higher Corporate Social Responsibility ratings without losing revenue since these markets are not currently served. Their only extra expense is drug registration—a minor cost compared to the lives that could be saved."

He concluded: "It is inhumane to let people suffer and die when there is a known way to prevent it. We can save lives."

Source: Healthwise@punchng.com



The Truth About Carbs:

Why They're Not the Enemy.

By Priscilla Akorfa Fomevor

Carbohydrates have long been portrayed as the enemy of weight gain, with fad diets banning bread intake and fitness experts warning against pasta. However, the truth is that eating carbs do not cause weight gain; in fact, they are an essential component of a well-balanced diet. The real issue is not the carbs themselves, but how much we eat and the choices we make.

Carbohydrates are the body's preferred energy source. When you eat them, they break down into glucose, which powers everything from your brain to your muscles. Without enough carbs in your system, you might feel sluggish, foggy or even irritable. Athletes, for instance, rely on carb-loading to sustain endurance.

Weight gain boils down to a simple equation: consuming more calories than you burn. Whether those calories come from carbs, fats or proteins, the result is the same. A bowl of quinoa won't tip the scales unless it's part of an overall surplus. On the other side, cutting out carbs entirely might lead to temporary water weight loss—not fat loss—giving a false sense of success.

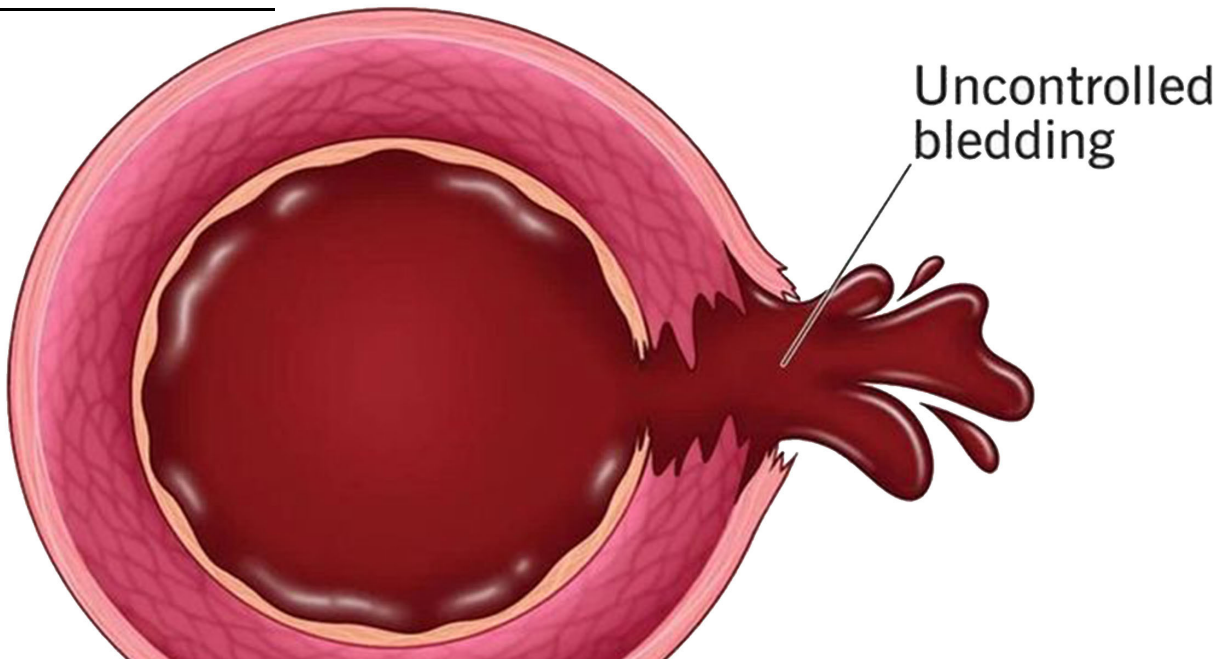
Refined carbohydrates, like white bread, pastries and sugary snacks, spike blood sugar and leave you hungry soon after. But whole, unprocessed carbs—

such as sweet potatoes, oats, beans and berries—are packed with fiber, vitamins and minerals. They digest slowly, keeping you full and energized without the crash.

Instead of being afraid to eat foods containing carbs, focus on smart choices. Pair them with protein and healthy fats to create satisfying meals. A slice of whole-grain toast with avocado and eggs, for example, is far more nourishing than a sugary muffin. Portion control matters, too—no food is weight-loss-friendly in unlimited amounts.

Carbs aren't the enemy. They're an essential part of a healthy diet, and cutting them out unnecessarily can do more harm than good. The secret to maintaining a healthy weight isn't demonizing one nutrient but embracing balance, moderation and mindful eating. So go ahead—enjoy that bowl of brown rice or that crisp apple. Your body will thank you for it.

+ Disease in Focus



Hemophilia

By Gloria Addo

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that approximately 33,000 people in the United States are living with hemophilia. The condition primarily affects men, though in rare cases, women with significantly low levels of clotting factors may also experience symptoms, such as heavy menstrual bleeding.

Hemophilia is a rare, genetic blood disorder that happens when your blood doesn't clot enough to make your bleeding slow down or stop. Hemophilia happens when you don't have the normal amount of clotting factors. Clotting factors help blood clot. Healthcare providers treat hemophilia by replacing missing clotting factors.

The most significant symptom is unusual or excessive bleeding or bruising.

- People with hemophilia may develop large bruises after minor injuries. This is a sign of bleeding under their skin.
- They may bleed for an unusually long time, whether after surgery, after dental treatment or simply from a cut finger.
- They may start bleeding for no apparent reason, such as sudden nosebleeds.

People with hemophilia may need ongoing medical

treatment to prevent bleeding. They may need to avoid certain activities and medications. But there are many things you can do to manage the impact hemophilia may have on the quality of your life.

You should go to the emergency room if:

- You have severe headaches or double vision. These symptoms may mean you have bleeding in your brain.
- You have joint swelling and/or pain and you don't have access to factor replacement medication.

Hemophilia can lead to spontaneous bleeding, which can be difficult to control even with medication. To manage this condition, it's essential to develop an exercise routine, manage stress, maintain good dental hygiene, and aim for a healthy weight. Regular dental visits and awareness from your dentist can help prevent bleeding. Additionally, it's crucial to educate others about the risks of hemophilia, as severe forms may cause difficult-to-control bleeding.

This includes parents, caregivers, and school officials, who should be aware of the necessary steps to manage bleeding issues.

Endo metriosis

More Than Just Cramps

By Priscilla Akorfa Fomevor

For many women, pain is an unwelcome companion that arrives each month at the beginning of every menstrual cycle, dismissed as just another part of being female. But what happens when that pain becomes unbearable—when it lingers beyond menstruation, seeping into daily life, relationships and even the simplest movements? This is the reality for millions living with endometriosis, a condition as misunderstood as it is agonizing.

Endometriosis occurs when tissue similar to the uterine lining grows outside the womb, attaching itself to organs like the ovaries, fallopian tubes, or even the intestines. Unlike the lining shed during menstruation, this rogue tissue has no exit. Instead, it bleeds internally, causing inflammation, scarring and excruciating pain. Yet, despite affecting roughly one in ten women, diagnosis often takes years.

Many sufferers are told their pain is normal, their symptoms exaggerated, or their discomfort merely psychological.

The journey to diagnosis is often a labyrinth of misdirection. Some women endure countless doctor visits, only to be handed prescriptions for painkillers or dismissive advice to “wait it out.” Others undergo surgeries for unrelated issues before a surgeon stumble upon the telltale lesions. The delay isn’t just frustrating—it’s dangerous. Left untreated, endometriosis can lead to infertility, chronic fatigue, and a quality of life eroded by relentless discomfort.

In addition to the physical discomfort, a woman has severe emotional agony. Intimacy that hurts and unexplainable fatigue undermine relationships. When a woman’s productivity declines due to the pain, her career suffers. The loneliness is unbearable because, despite their best efforts, friends and family are unable to fully comprehend the battle going on beneath the surface.

Yet, there is hope. Awareness is growing, and with it, more research into treatments beyond hormonal suppression or invasive surgeries. Support networks, both online and offline, offer solace to those who’ve spent years feeling unheard. And while there’s no cure, proper management—through specialized care, physical therapy, or tailored pain relief can restore some semblance of normalcy.

Endometriosis is a human condition, not only a problem for women. It’s time to quit making abnormal pain seem normal. People who have been silenced for too long need to be given a chance to be heard. Because there is a person battling to be seen behind every number.

Preventing the Preventable

The Midwife's Role in Ending Obstetric Fistula

Obstetric fistula remains one of the most devastating childbirth injuries, particularly in low-resource settings. Often caused by prolonged or obstructed labor, this condition results in an abnormal opening between the birth canal and the bladder or rectum, leading to chronic incontinence. But it is largely preventable—with the right knowledge, care, and intervention.

In this feature, **Madam Aisha Kamagati**, a midwifery officer at Pentecost Hospital, shares her first-hand insights into the causes, challenges, and solutions surrounding obstetric fistula.

Q: What is obstetric fistula, and how does it occur during childbirth?

Aisha Kamagati: Obstetric fistula is an abnormal opening between the vagina and the rectum, bladder, or uterus, and it's mainly caused by prolonged or obstructed labor. When labor is obstructed—due to reasons like an underdeveloped pelvis—the baby's head puts pressure on the surrounding tissues. This pressure cuts off blood supply to the organs, leading to tissue death (necrosis), and eventually creates holes between the organs.

Madam Aisha Kamagati

A midwifery officer at Pentecost Hospital



Q: Which women are most at risk of developing this condition, and why?

Girls under 18 are especially at risk because their pelvises are not fully developed. Also, women suffering from malnutrition or stunted growth—often due to poverty—may not develop the pelvic capacity needed for safe delivery. Women of short stature and those with certain previous birth complications are also considered high-risk.

Q: What are the signs and symptoms a woman might experience if she has developed a fistula?

A woman may suffer constant, uncontrollable leakage of fecal matter or urine through the vagina, depending on whether the fistula is between the rectum or bladder. The condition is often accompanied by pain, foul odor, and frequent urinary tract infections. Social withdrawal is also common due to embarrassment and isolation.

Q: How common is obstetric fistula in Ghana?

It's more common than we think, especially in rural areas. A 2020 study showed over 1,300 cases between 2011 and 2014, with around 200 new cases yearly, or report their condition. However, due to stigma and lack of awareness, many women do not seek help or report their condition.

Q: What role does access to skilled birth attendants and emergency care play in prevention?

A massive role. Skilled attendants can detect signs of prolonged labor early using tools like the partograph and intervene quickly—often through cesarean section. They also educate expectant mothers about antenatal care and safe delivery practices. Without skilled care, women are at much higher risk of developing complications like fistula.

Q: Are there cultural or social beliefs that discourage women from seeking care?

Yes. Some women believe fistula is a punishment from the gods or a result of personal sin. Others are restricted by husbands who prevent them from seeking medical attention, preferring herbal or traditional remedies. These misconceptions delay care and often worsen outcomes.

Q: What is the emotional and social impact of living with untreated fistula?

The emotional toll is devastating. Many women feel ashamed, isolate themselves, or are abandoned by their spouses. The condition affects not just physical health but also mental and social well-being. That's why follow-up care and community reintegration are crucial.

Q: How is obstetric fistula treated, and can women fully recover?

Treatment is surgical. Ghana has facilities with specialists who perform fistula repair surgeries. Recovery is possible, but it doesn't end at surgery. Follow-up is necessary to manage residual symptoms like continued leakage or pain and provide emotional support.

Q: What support systems exist for women post-surgery?

We provide counseling, connect them back with their families, and encourage community reintegration. Some still face lingering symptoms, so ongoing medical and psychological care is essential. We also involve men in the process to reduce abandonment.

Q: As a midwife, how do you identify and prevent high-risk cases?

Through antenatal screening, we assess maternal height, age, nutrition status, and previous delivery history. During labor, we monitor progress using the partograph and look out for signs of obstruction. We also educate communities on early antenatal visits and refer cases promptly.

Q: What changes at the community or policy level could reduce fistula cases?

Discouraging early marriages, especially for girls under 18, is crucial. Traditional leaders should advocate for this. Economic empowerment and vocational training for girls can prevent vulnerability to early marriage. We also need better emergency obstetric services in rural areas.

Q: Finally, what message would you like to share with women and community leaders about prevention?

To expectant mothers: once you realize you're pregnant, report to the hospital and stick to your antenatal schedule. This helps detect and prevent complications. For community leaders: advocate for healthcare access and train local girls to become skilled birth attendants. Together, we can end obstetric fistula.

Closing Thoughts

Midwives like Madam Aisha Kamagati are at the heart of maternal care and prevention. Their expertise, compassion, and frontline experience make them invaluable in the fight to end obstetric fistula. Her story is a powerful reminder: with education, access, and community action, this preventable tragedy can be eradicated.





Prophylaxis

The Power Of Preventive Care

Dovia Richeal Elikem

Many people visit a doctor only when something feels wrong. But what if we told you that some of the most serious health issues like heart disease, diabetes, and even certain cancers, can be prevented or caught early with regular checkups and smart daily choices?

This is the power of preventive healthcare—and it could save your life. Prophylaxis is the medical term for “preventive care.” It’s the care you receive to stay healthy and reduce your chances of getting sick. Common prophylactic treatments include things like vaccinations, cancer screenings and annual checkups. Preventive care also helps healthcare providers detect certain conditions and diseases before they get worse. Prophylaxis is essential for long-lasting health and wellness.

Preventive care is different for everyone. Specific screenings and treatments depend on several factors like your: Age, Medical history, Sex or Health status.

By staying on top of your health before issues arise, you can increase your lifespan, improve your quality of life, and reduce the cost of medical care over time.

Why Preventive Healthcare Matters

- Saves lives: Early detection of diseases like cancer or high blood pressure can be life-saving.
- Reduces healthcare costs: Preventing illness is far cheaper than treating advanced conditions.
- Improves quality of life: Staying healthy means staying active, independent, and happy.
- Lowers health system burden: Fewer hospital visits and complications mean healthier communities.

Here’s how you can start taking preventive care seriously:

- Schedule a yearly physical.
- Know your family health history.
- Stay up to date with vaccines and screenings.
- Eat well, move your body, sleep enough.
- Pay attention to your mental and emotional health.

Preventive healthcare isn’t just about avoiding disease—it’s about choosing wellness every day. By being proactive instead of reactive, you’re investing in a future that’s stronger, longer, and healthier.

Your health is your most valuable asset—take care of it before it demands your attention.

The Healing Power of Family Vacations.

Gloria Addo

In most traditional homes, the thought of taking a vacation can seem far-fetched or an activity that seems unneeded due to today's hectic environment of deadlines, school schedules, and never-ending to-do lists.

However, studies reveal that having a vacation together may greatly enhance the family's physical and mental health in addition to helping to make enjoyable memories. Family trips provide much more than simply a change of scenery; they also promote physical exercise and mental relaxation,

reduce stress, and improve relationships.

One journey at a time, they are a potent prescription for improved health and here are other reasons why:

Improved physical health

Stress can contribute to heart disease and high blood pressure. For both men and women, studies show that taking a vacation every two years compared to every six will lessen the risk of coronary heart disease or heart attacks.

Traveling encourages habits such as walking, healthy eating and social interactions. It may even reduce your risk of premature aging. Living longer means more time for vacations.

Improved mental health

The University of Pittsburgh's Mind-Body Center found vacations increase pleasant emotions while reducing depression. Vacations also provide a greater opportunity to experience moments of awe, which have also been researched and found to generate a boost in mood. Knowing you have a vacation, or even a break, in your future makes it easier to push through the stressful and mundane days.



Greater well-being

One study found that three days after vacation, people's physical complaints, quality of sleep and mood had improved compared to before vacation. These gains were still present five weeks later, especially in those who had more personal time and overall satisfaction during their vacation. This suggests you have some control over how you feel; schedule more personal time and engage in activities that you enjoy, and you will feel better physically, sleep better and be in a better mood for more than a month.

Increased mental motivation

Studies have found that chronic stress can make it

difficult to achieve certain tasks and cause memory problems. Taking time off can be like getting a tune-up for the brain, improving your mental health and cognition.

Boosted happiness

Research shows even the process of planning a vacation can boost your happiness. Some people experience an elevated mood up to eight weeks before the trip and can linger for weeks after returning home. Make sure to get all you can out of your vacation by planning, shopping, packing and daydreaming months before the scheduled start date.

Well, it's time to take the much needed family vacation!

Using AI to Track and Predict the Spread of Infectious Diseases

The spread of infectious illnesses is becoming a greater threat to public safety, economic stability, and global health in a world that is becoming more interconnected. Although conventional epidemiological methods have been effective for many years, the development of artificial intelligence (AI) has created new opportunities for disease prediction and surveillance. Disease outbreaks may

now be detected, tracked, and even predicted with surprising speed and accuracy thanks to AI-driven systems that are powered by massive databases and machine learning algorithms. The way that governments, medical institutions, and researchers address the risks of infectious diseases is changing as a result of this technological revolution.



The capacity of AI to process massive volumes of data from many sources in real time is one of its fundamental advantages in this field. Hospital records, lab results, social media posts, travel trends, meteorological data, and even satellite images are a few examples of these sources. AI algorithms can detect anomalous patterns that could indicate the onset or return of an infectious disease by combining these data streams.

For instance, DeepMind, Google's AI subsidiary, and platforms such as HealthMap have created tools that analyse internet news headlines and health bulletins for early warning indicators in order to monitor disease outbreaks worldwide. Authorities may be able to act before an outbreak worsens thanks to the crucial time advantages that these methods provide. AI is very strong at prediction in addition to detection. By considering variables including population density, climate, vaccination rates, and movement data, machine learning algorithms can simulate the geographical and temporal spread of diseases. AI models were essential in predicting infection peaks, locating high-risk areas, and guiding lockdown and resource allocation plans during the COVID-19 pandemic. These models guided decision-makers on containment tactics by simulating various scenarios using real-time data. AI-powered solutions provide an affordable way to increase surveillance capabilities and predict future health emergencies in nations with inadequate public health infrastructure.

AI is also being used to improve testing and contact tracing. To interrupt the chain of infection, authorities in Taiwan and South Korea quickly identified and isolated anyone exposed to the virus using AI-assisted digital contact tracing tools. By determining which people or geographic areas should be given priority based on anticipated infection trends, AI can also optimise testing strategies. Additionally, by analysing chest X-rays, AI-powered image recognition techniques have been used to diagnose illnesses like pneumonia or tuberculosis, making screening quicker and easier, particularly in low-resource environments.

AI's use in infectious disease surveillance is not without its difficulties, though. Data privacy is one of the main issues. Consent, surveillance, and misuse are ethical issues brought up by the usage of social media activity, geolocation, and personal

health data. It is crucial to make sure AI systems are safe, transparent, and applied in accordance with established legal and ethical guidelines. Furthermore, the quality of AI models depends on the quality of the data they are trained on. Predictions based on inaccurate or biased data may increase rather than decrease the hazards to public health. As a result, human supervision, multidisciplinary cooperation

and ongoing AI model validation are crucial. In the battle against contagious diseases, artificial intelligence is changing the game. Public health responses are changing as a result of its capacity to analyse vast amounts of data, identify trends, and forecast future epidemics. Health officials and researchers may be able to respond to pandemics and epidemics more quickly and strategically as AI technologies become more widely available and reliable. However, to guarantee that AI's contribution to public health continues to be accountable, inclusive, and successful, a delicate balance between innovation and ethics must be achieved. In order to keep humanity safer, worldwide disease surveillance in the future is probably going to be a combination of artificial and human intelligence.

**JOSEPH OPOKU MENSAH**

ADJUNCT LECTURER AT UNIMAC-IJ

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New Malaria Drug Approved for Babies and Young Infants in Africa



For the first time, a malaria treatment specifically formulated for newborns and very young children has received approval and is expected to be introduced across African countries in the coming weeks.

Until now, no approved antimalarial drug existed for babies weighing under 4.5 kilograms (approximately 10 pounds). Healthcare workers had to rely on treatments meant for older children, which posed a serious risk of overdose due to infants' developing liver function and unique way of processing medication a gap in care experts have long described as dangerous.

In 2023 alone, malaria claimed around 597,000 lives, with Africa accounting for nearly all deaths. Devastatingly, three out of every four fatalities were among children under five years old.

To address this urgent need, Swiss regulatory authorities have approved Coartem Baby also known as Riamet Baby in some regions developed by pharmaceutical giant Novartis in partnership with the Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV). The drug will be distributed largely on a not-for-profit basis, targeting countries hardest hit by the disease.

"This marks a significant moment," said Vas Narasimhan, CEO of Novartis. "We're proud to have developed the first clinically proven malaria treatment for newborns and young babies ensuring that even the smallest and most vulnerable can finally receive the care they need."

The MMV, a Swiss-based nonprofit backed by governments and organizations including the World Bank and the Rockefeller Foundation, collaborated with Novartis in developing and testing the drug. Clinical assessments involved eight African nations, which are expected to be among the first to roll it out.

Martin Fitchet, CEO of MMV, called the drug's approval a crucial advancement in eliminating malaria. "This provides a necessary, optimized treatment for an otherwise overlooked group of patients and strengthens the global fight against malaria," he said.

Experts in child health have welcomed the development. Dr. Marvelle Brown, Associate Professor at the University of Hertfordshire, emphasized its potential to save thousands of lives. "Over 76% of malaria deaths occur in children under five, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. For babies with compromised immunity such as those born with sickle cell disease this breakthrough could be life-saving," she said. "Making the drug not-for-profit is also a critical step toward reducing health inequities."

With this milestone, the global health community edges closer to ensuring no child is left behind in the fight against one of the world's deadliest infectious diseases.

SOURCE: BBC



Fueling Your Health Through Fasting

By Gloria Addo

Fasting is when someone chooses to refrain from eating for a certain period of time. Eating patterns that involved periods of feasting and fasting go back to times when people were hunter-gatherers, and food wasn't always available to put on the table.

Fasting provides significant health benefits, not just helping with weight loss and improving blood glucose levels, but also repairing damaged cells and reducing the risk of diseases such as dementia.

Given that fasting is a potential remedy for longevity, it has been the subject of many studies. The American **Heart** Association has stated that regular fasting is associated with lower rates of heart failure and improved metabolism. Thus, fasting could be the key to a long, healthy life. Many studies show that those who fast routinely have an almost 45 percent lower mortality rate compared to those who don't fast during the follow-up period.

It has been suggested that fasting, if done right, can have the following health benefits:

- Decreased resting heart rate (HR)
- Decreased blood pressure (BP)
- Improvements in pumping action of the heart
- Lowered levels of LDL or bad **cholesterol**

- Reduced level of fasting **insulin**
- Increased insulin sensitivity
- Fasting for a short time can produce ketosis, which accentuates weight loss
- Reduced production of inflammatory substances (such as HOMA-IR and **C-reactive protein**) in the body
- Ketosis during fasting triggers several responses, including decreased inflammation, improved blood sugar regulation and better response to physical **stress**

Fasting can slow down **aging**, prevent the development of **diabetes, thyroid disorders, hypertension** and **heart disease** and increase the chances of a long and healthy life. It also promotes weight loss. A healthy body weight automatically translates to healthier joints and a great **body image**.


Fasting also has potential health benefits, including weight loss, improved blood sugar management, heart health, brain function, and cancer prevention. When coupled with a **diet and healthy lifestyle**, incorporating fasting into your routine could benefit your health.

Blocked And Unaware:

How Bladder Stones Impact Men

By Gloria Addo

Bladder stones may not be a common topic in everyday conversations, but for many men, they can quietly develop into a painful and disruptive health issue. Often caused by a buildup of concentrated urine or underlying bladder conditions, these hard mineral deposits can go unnoticed until symptoms become severe ranging from abdominal pain to difficulty urinating.



Despite the discomfort they cause, bladder stones often remain undiagnosed until complications arise. In this article, we explore what bladder stones are, why they affect men more frequently, and how early detection and treatment can prevent long-term damages.

Bladder stones occur when minerals build up in a person's bladder, forming small "stones. " Mostly affecting older males, they can cause pain and discomfort. Small bladder stones often pass naturally, but larger ones may need treatment.

Typical symptoms of bladder stones include:

- lower abdominal pain, which can often be severe (men may also have pain in or around their penis)
- pain or difficulty when peeing
- peeing more frequently (particularly at night)
- cloudy or dark-coloured urine

Surgery is usually needed to remove the stones from the bladder. The most common procedure is a cystolitholapaxy, where a thin tube (cystoscope) with a camera at the end is used to find the bladder stones. The cystoscope will then use stone-crushing

devices, lasers or ultrasound to break up the stones before they're removed.

If you have had bladder stones, they can come back. There are things you can do to try to prevent this happening. You can try to: increase your daily fluid intake to 2 to 3 litres to lower the concentration of your urine, regularly empty your bladder without delaying and urinate again 10 to 20 seconds after your first attempt (if you're unable to empty your bladder completely first time); this is called double voiding and helps empty the bladder more efficiently. Where possible, it's important to treat the underlying causes of bladder stones to prevent new stones developing in the future.

Bladder stones are a serious but often overlooked condition that disproportionately affects men. Early detection and proper treatment are key to avoiding complications. Prioritizing urological health can help men stay ahead of silent threats like bladder stones.



Zucchini Noodles

Zucchini Noodles (Zoodles) are a nutritious and delicious meal option that's low in carbs, gluten-free and rich in vitamins and minerals, supporting weight management and healthy digestion.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1-2 medium zucchinis
- Your favorite sauce (e.g., marinara, pesto, carbonara)
- Optional toppings: Lean proteins (e.g., grilled chicken, shrimp, tofu)
- Vegetables (e.g., cherry tomatoes, bell peppers, mushrooms)
- Spices (e.g., basil, parsley, garlic)

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Wash and trim the ends of the zucchinis.
2. Use a spiralizer or a julienne peeler to create zoodles.

3. Heat a pan with a little oil and sauté the zoodles for 2-3 minutes, until tender but still crisp.

4. Top up with your favorite sauce and optional toppings.

5. Add raw chopped or lightly cooked veggies on top of your zoodles

6. Season with salt, pepper and any spices of your choice to taste.

EXTRA TIPS:

1. Don't overcook the zoodles, or they'll become mushy.
2. Experiment with different sauces and toppings to find your favorite combinations.
3. Use zoodles as a base for salads, stir-fries, or as a side dish.

Enjoy your healthy and delicious zoodles!





Ask The

EXPERT

What Are the Necessary Tests and Procedures to Confirm a Medical Diagnosis?

Confirming a medical diagnosis requires a structured approach that combines patient history, physical examination, and various diagnostic tests. The choice of tests depends on the suspected condition and initial clinical findings.

Patient History and Physical Examination

The diagnostic process begins with a thorough patient history, covering the onset, duration, and nature of symptoms, as well as relevant medical, family, and social history. A physical examination identifies signs pointing to specific conditions; for instance, detecting a heart murmur during a cardiac exam could suggest valvular heart disease.

Laboratory Tests

Laboratory tests play a vital role in diagnosis. Complete blood counts (CBC) can identify infections, anemia, and other blood disorders. Biochemical tests, such as liver and renal panels, assess organ function. Elevated liver enzymes may indicate liver disease, while abnormal renal panels suggest kidney issues.

Imaging Studies

Imaging studies provide a visual assessment of internal structures. X-rays are effective for diagnosing fractures, while ultrasounds evaluate soft tissues and organs like the liver and kidneys. Advanced imaging techniques, such as CT scans and MRIs, offer detailed internal views, crucial for diagnosing tumors, neurological disorders, and complex conditions.

Specialized Tests and Procedures

Some conditions require specialized diagnostic tests. An electrocardiogram (ECG) is essential for detecting arrhythmias and other cardiac conditions. Endoscopic procedures, like colonoscopy and gastroscopy, allow direct visualization and biopsy of the gastrointestinal tract, aiding in diagnosing cancers or ulcers.

Genetic and Molecular Testing

Genetic and molecular tests are increasingly used to confirm hereditary diseases and cancers. These tests identify specific genetic mutations or biomarkers linked to particular conditions.

Health Terms

Here are some health terms to expand your knowledge in health:

- Orthopnea: Shortness of breath that worsens when lying down.
- Dysgraphia: A learning disability that affects writing abilities.
- Hyperacusis: Sensitivity to certain sounds.
- Dyscalculia: Difficulty understanding numbers and math concepts.
- Nocturia: Frequent nighttime urination

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