



INFLUENCE OF DIET, EATING HABBITTS AND ENVIRONMENT ON LIFE STYLE AND LIFE STYLE DISEASES

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Abstract

Food is one of the fundamental factors that determines the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of every human being. Evidences from ancient scriptures to modern scientific researches supports the validity and unique role for food in leading a healthy life. The paper envisages how modern life style and environment can influence, accelerate and spike certain life style diseases which invariably dilapidate individual human health and life span. High intake of packed/processed food, alcohol abuse, occupational demands, late nights, excessive use of TV, PC etc. can contribute and accelerate life style diseases. Shocking statistics of premature death, low life span and spiking life style diseases cautions us to be beware of certain chronic diseases that haunts the whole world. It is possible to prevent many life style diseased by following a few changes regarding diet, environment, daily routine work and self-disciplined life style. Above all learning and practicing to lead a stress less and contented life can eliminate or at least control the life styled diseases.

Key words: Diet, environment, life style, life style diseases

Introduction

Environment, food, conditions, human relationships with other fellow beings around us etc. are all key factors causes the growth and development of life style diseases. Life style diseases are mostly invisible in the initial stages but can convert themselves into chronic ailments and premature death. Life style diseases are mostly man made diseases resulting from the way of life one follows. The choices are varied but in Modern life situations and occupational environments people are inclined to eating processed/packed foods, following sedentary life style and are forced to social drinking and smoking. Unhealthy food habits and alcohol consumption lead to various life style diseases including heart diseases, High blood pressure, diabetes stork, asthma, heart failure etc.

Food and environment play a major role in many chronic diseases. Life style diseases are habit prone as a result of people's maladjustment with their environment and eating habits. The findings of WHO on human life style death rate is a shocking revelation to every individual to be beware of one's personal health and life style.

According to WHO many people die prematurely every year due to tobacco use (60 million) alcohol (3.3 Million), lack of physical activity (3.2million) and 1.7 million die due to inappropriate life style and wrong eating habits of consuming large quantities of fat and salt.

Factors that affect life style and can enhance lifestyle diseases

- Unhealthy eating habits
- Packed food/processed food
- Intake of high energy food /fat/salt etc.

- Social influence/showbiz industry
- Regular parties and get together
- Comfort and affluence
- Lack of self-discipline
- Late nights and over eating
- Smoking and alcohol abuse
- Lack of training and public awareness

Consumption of Junk food and Obesity

Affection to food, boredom, genetic factors and environmental temptations yields obesity in people. Psychological researches show that depression and stress tempt people into overeating. Modern social food habits, abundance of junk foods and high energy drinks invariably affect our food habits. Excessive fat and energy content along with high level salt range makes junk food and processed food tasty but regular uncontrolled use of such food items makes people obese. A study conducted on students from Government and public schools in Delhi in November 2005 showed that 26 percent of the kids 14-17 years had Syndrome X (caused by obesity.)

Researches on physical health and Health Psychology show that children grow up to be obese could suffer from inferiority complex along with other physical ailments like liver diseases, hypertension, arthritis, cancer, stroke, diabetes etc. Obesity has a higher rate of heart diseases. According to Shanthi Mendis, the lead author of WHO's Chronic Diseases Prevention and Management report, life style diseases are epidemic and this causes a severe threat to public health than any other contagious or epidemic diseases known to mankind.

Alcohol consumption and drug addiction

Consuming alcohol is part of modern life style customary in Western society and among the affluent Asian societies. Social get together, social demands, friends, occupational needs, Psychological temptations etc. are the other reasons why people consume alcohol. But excess use of alcohol harms one's own physical, mental and as well as economic stability. Alcoholic abuse and drug addiction will lead to family breakdown and interpersonal relationships. Since alcoholic content in the blood stream brings down serotonin levels and there by inducing aggressiveness and violence. Alcohol abuse in modern life situations stimulate violence and rape in some cases.

Consumption of cancer prone food

Unhealthy diet and life style contributes to the growth and development of cancer especially in women. Affluence as well as busy life schedule force people spend less hours for shopping and cooking. Naturally they opt for high calorie processed food items like juice, alcoholic beverages and packed food readily available in supermarkets. It was noted that People in many prosperous countries as well as the rich class of the third world countries use diets high in animal products. And their use of packed food with high levels of preservatives, fat and sugar has lead to the growth of different types of cancer both in men and women. For example, cancer of breast, prostate, endometrium and lung etc.

On the other hand, vegetarians (with no meat) and people from developing countries (less intake of meat) have less cancer rates comparing to the people from advanced countries. Studies show that people who migrated from less advanced countries to rich environments later show the same cancer rates of the people in their host country envisages how environment and eating habits cultivates life style diseases.

Working environments and late nights

Long working hours, night shifts, late nights, work demands etc. affect the health of people. This happens because they experience a shift in the natural rhythmic biological functioning of the body. Late nights and sleepless nights dilapidate the internal functioning and metabolism of the body leading to insomnia, hypertension, head ache, nausea, body pain, restlessness, irritability. Psychologically speaking, they are more prone to mood fluctuations, irritability, stress, mental trauma and in extreme cases lead to paranoid unless proper remedy is envisaged.

Poor working conditions and unavailability of balanced diet have no choice for the employees except succumb to the available food items normally junk food or packed food. The high energy content and salt/fat levels along with lack of sleep may shatter both the physical and mental stability in course of time. The low level nutrition and high consumption of salt/fat lead to life style diseases like diabetes, intestinal cancer, insomnia etc.

Life style diseases caused by the environmental factors

People working in extreme weather conditions, heat, sound smoke, extreme temperature and pollutants are vulnerable to life style diseases. Underwater divers and Petroleum refinery employees, miners, workers in radiation prone areas have to face high levels temperatures and pressures and often end up in organ failure, loss of appetite, heart failure, high BP, Psychological stress and other related illness.

Western life Style characterized by convenience of food, TV, PC etc.

Western life style and affluence stimulates social get together along with formal drinking and eating. Over indulging in food and alcohol intake can result from routine parties.

According to researches heavy computer users are more likely end up in eye vision problems. Spending long hours in front of TV or working with PC without break can cause numbness, split

disc and wrist pain etc. Not only this, the habit of drinking, smoking, nibbling extra calorie food items while watching TV for long hours lead to overweight and obesity problems.

Anorexia nervosa

Not only over eating but also deliberately abstaining from eating can cause life style diseases. Anorexia nervosa involves a psychological pressure on some people for maintaining slim figure can cause mal nutrition, bone damage and psychological stress. This is mostly prevalent among fashion conscious ladies especially in the modelling fashion designing, film world or showbiz industry.

Increased risk of heart diseases and HP

A diet of Junk food and processed food items may subside hunger but the high saturated fat and trans fat present in them increases cholesterol levels. Raising levels of blood sugar can damage the lining of the blood vessels which assists the cholesterol particles to stick to the damaged walls of the arteries, blocking the smooth flow of the blood to the heart and back to the system. Thus a slight mistake in the right choice of diet makes human heart vulnerable to heart attack and bursting of arteries.

Increased risk of Hyper Tension.

The high salt content of processed food triggers the taste buds making the person crave for these food items and there by stimulate hunger and over eating. Unfortunately, the high salt and fat content of processed/packed food topples the sodium-potassium balance of the system leading to blood pressure and related problems.

Conclusion

Diet, environment and negative behavior traits can jeopardize our life. Fortunately, there is still hope that life style diseases can be prevented by preparing people to make simple changes in

daily life routine, consuming healthy diet, and following a self- disciplined life style. These basic changes include adjusting one's routine work, quitting unhealthy habits of smoking and drug abuse, limiting alcohol intake, selecting suitable work environment, avoiding junk food high in fat and salt content, having a balanced diet rich in fiber and vitamins, opting for more fresh organic vegetables and fruits and of course staying fit through regular physical exercises. Above all learning and practicing to lead a stress less and contented life is the key to happiness.

Public awareness should be created among people especially children not to spend too much time slouching in front of the TV or PC. Special training in School and Occupational contexts can encourage people to find physical activities or sports that they enjoy. Authorities should take initiative to provide opportunities for regular exercise on daily basis. Arranging outings, picnics with parents and schoolmates; friends and fellow colleagues etc. can replace Pizza evenings or drinking parties. Thus a few basic changes in modern life style can eliminate various life style diseases.

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