

# Watch your pH level

The body operates optimally in very precise limits of pH, the measure of acidity or alkalinity. The ideal pH ranges between 7.35 and 7.45. The average blood pH is 7.4, which is slightly alkaline or basic.

The body's tendency is towards acidity and there is consequently an equally constant struggle to eliminate excess acids from the normal metabolic activities and consumption of acidic foods such as grains, legumes, eggs and meat.

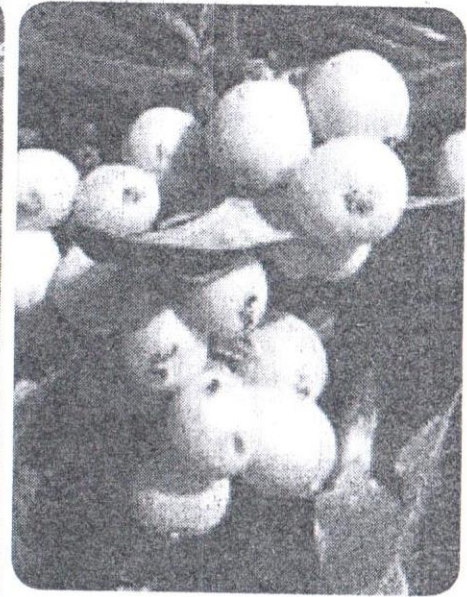
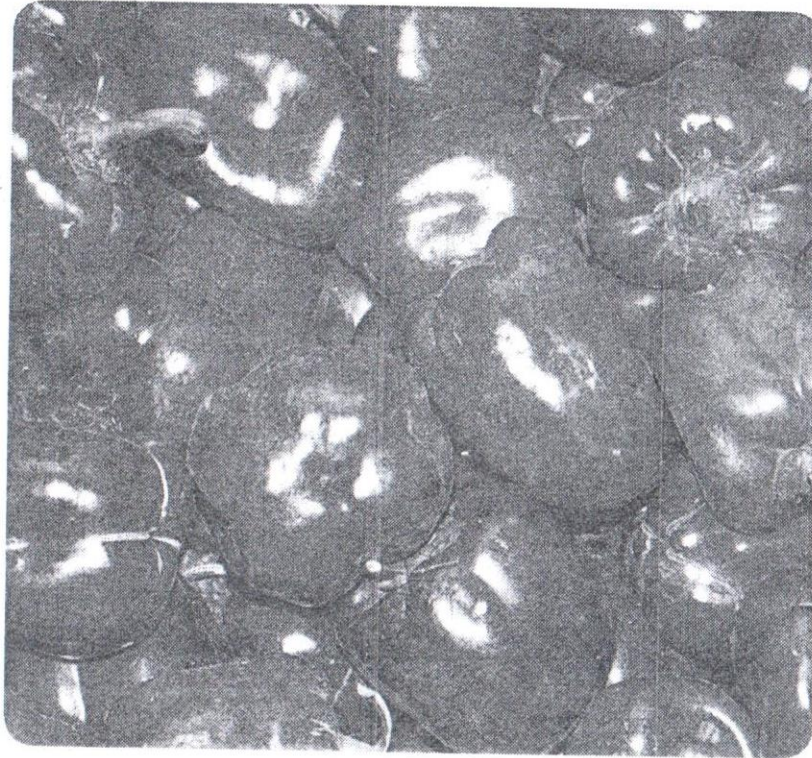
If one consumes excess acidifying foods, the body's buffering mechanism may be unable to maintain pH within the tolerance levels. This results in a state called acidosis, which is harmful to the body. High acidity increases the risk of developing cystine calculi or urates in the kidneys (from calcium, magnesium phosphates or calcium carbonate).

Increased acidity increases the retention of fluid in the tissues and oedema develops as a result. There is increased bone de-calcification, which leads to osteoporosis and arthritis.

The risks of coronary disease and arteriosclerosis increases when one ups the consumption of diets that tend to increase acidity in the body.

Yoghurt and milk tend to increase the body's alkalinity, whereas cheese, a dairy by-product, does quite the opposite. The predominant chemical elements in acid-forming foods are phosphorus, chlorine and sulphur, whereas potassium, calcium, magnesium and sodium are alkalising.

Diabetes, diarrhoea, prolonged fast-



## GOOD LIVING

BY SOLOMON KARANJA

ing and kidney failure tend to lower the pH, thus acidifying the blood.

Acidity in the body can be avoided by increasing the consumption of alkalising foods, e.g. vegetables and fruits. By drinking plenty of water and eating diuretic fruits and vegetables, you stimulate kidney function and increase urine production. The increased urine production is beneficial in reducing fluid retention that occurs in cases of kidney and heart

diseases. Most of the foods that increase urine production have very low levels of sodium and are rich in potassium. Grapes, loquats, pears, watermelons, apples, green beans, celery, eggplant and cauliflower have significant diuretic properties. By restricting the use of acidifying foods, especially meat-based products and eggs, it is possible to lower the body's acidity.

Since the blood must remain slightly alkaline (at 7.4), acidosis is said to exist when it drops below 7.35. This may occur after a hearty meat-based meal or factors like uncontrolled diabetes, severe diarrhoea, prolonged

fasting or kidney failure.

Plant-based foods increase alkalinity and help the body fight metabolic acidosis. Citrus fruits, lemon and tomatoes alkalise the blood despite their acidic content because the acids are converted to basic substances during metabolism.

Redbeets, bananas and potatoes are examples of food items whose mineral salts are rich in calcium, magnesium and potassium, and have been noted for their alkalising effects both in the stomach and blood.

The path to healthy living is not a mystery; it takes effort and the right eating information. The rush to consume healthy meals is on and it's going to be world-encompassing, unrestrained, and even hysterical.

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