

# Adolescents need a special diet

GOOD LIVING

BY SOLOMON KARANJA

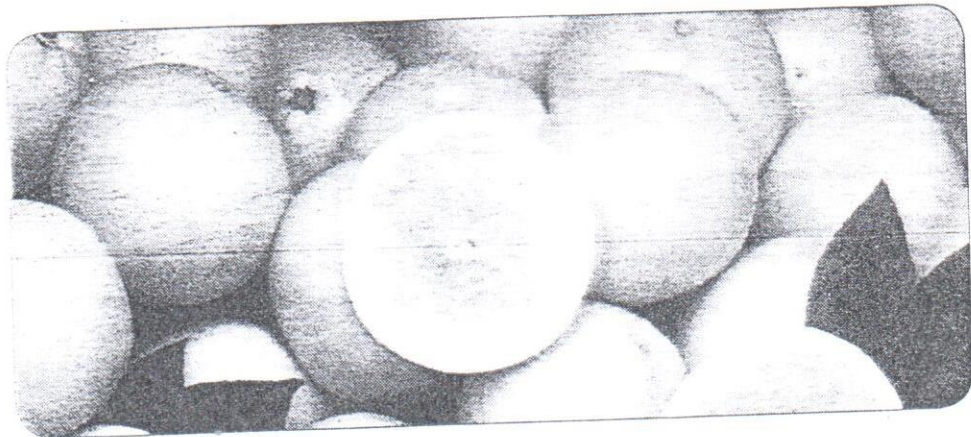
When it started, HIV/Aids was never a health issue. It was a moral issue and Africans have borne the brunt. Our churches appear to have finally got the hint and now are acting. Reports indicate that boys and girls are being counselled to live righteous lives. Even as those "fishers of men" implore our youth to uphold morality, they too need to be guided on good eating habits.

As future parents, adolescents need to take their health seriously. Parents have a responsibility to feed them to grow healthy and strong. Compared to adults of equal body weight, these young adults need to eat more. They need a special diet.

Agostoni C and Riva E at the Department of Paediatrics of the University of Milan concluded in a study conducted in 1992 that, in developed countries, one-year-olds consume excess animal protein, which is detrimental to their health. In 1994 and 1995, in a study published in the American journal of clinical nutrition, Sanders T.A. noted in Kings College of London that a strict vegetarian diet is satisfactory in children as long as iron and vitamin B12 deficiencies are avoided. Vegetable protein is needed.

Boys need 50–70 grams of proteins a day and girls about 45–65 grams. Legumes, oil-bearing nuts and potatoes can more than adequately meet the protein requirements of young adults. Adding eggs and yoghurt or milk can boost the protein content.

The recommended calcium per day for bone development of these young people is



1,200mg.

Oranges, cabbage and broccoli are good calcium sources. So are milk and dairy products. Girls need over 50 per cent (15mg) more iron than adults daily because they are at a greater risk of losing iron because of puberty and the onset of menses, among other reasons.

While feeding young adults, it must be noted that bran and astringents such as tea and coffee can reduce the absorption of iron in the gut, whereas vitamin C facilitates its absorption. It follows, therefore, that oranges and fresh fruits and vegetables should be consumed in greater quantities during this age.

The proper development of the reproductive organs is a subject that cannot be left to chance for these young adults if the survival of the human species is to be assured. Zinc, a vital and necessary trace element found plentifully in wheat germ, squash seeds, as well as oil-bearing nuts such as macadamia and cashew nuts is vital. Today's youth eat less fibre than necessary (20–25 gm daily)

due to readily available fast foods. It is important to focus on plant-based foods, whole grain diets, fruits, vegetables and legumes when catering for young adults.

It is necessary to give a good breakfast to adolescents for optimal physical and intellectual performance. In addition, a diet for students should be rich in glucose and Vitamin B1. Students are involved in intense mental activity and are in need of whole grain diets and oil-bearing nuts to reduce physical and mental fatigue. They should be encouraged to eat nuts as they help in the development of the nervous system.

Avocados, and green peas are good sources of B group of vitamins, essential fatty acids and phospholipids essential for proper functioning of neurones.

Oats, passion fruits and lettuce have mild sedative action that induce sleep and helps the brain and neurones to rest after a hard day's work.

Dr. Karanja is a pharmacist based in Naivasha  
skaranjag@yahoo.com