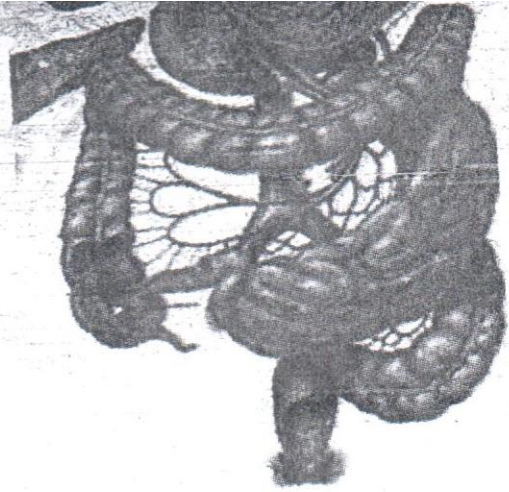
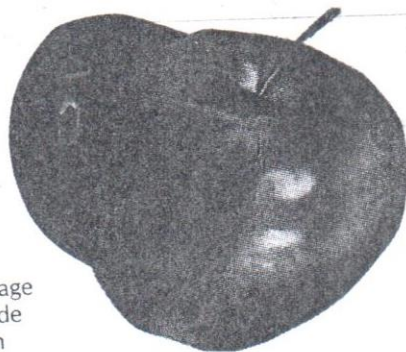


An apple a day keeps constipation at bay



GOOD LIVING
BY SOLOMON KARANJA

As young village boys, we fed on different kinds of roast meat. My late grandfather was a renowned hunter and meat was not in short supply in his house. After a hearty meal of blood and meat we would occasionally get constipated. A little oil spread on our tummies and grandpa's massage while we rested on our backs made an appropriate manual expulsion procedure of the stomach contents. Within an hour we would all have our bloated stomachs emptied.



that has laxative properties that facilitate proper bowel movements. Apples cure both diarrhoea and constipation. Pectin, a hydrocarbon in apples that is not absorbed in the intestines, forms most of the insoluble vegetable fibre.

It retains water and various waste products in the intestines, acting as an intestinal broom that

Constitution is a medical condition characterised by slow and difficult transit of contents of the intestines with infrequent evacuations and excessively firm stool. Most cases are functional in nature due to weakness of musculature of the large intestines. Organic causes of constipation include cancer of the lumen or rectum. Infrequent emptying of contents of the intestines can cause haemorrhoids. So, bowel emptying is essential for good health.

In the US over \$250 million was spent on laxatives and other bowel elimination aids in 1974 due to a preoccupation with the size, frequency and consistency of stools. This makes bowel movement a real economic issue. From two bowel evacuations to once daily is considered normal.

Improper diet with insufficient water and/or fibre causes under-stimulation of the intestinal lining, thus weakening the intestines. Irregular bowel habits due to nervousness or ignoring the biological call to defecate can interfere with intestinal reflex.

Abuse of laxative drugs may create a state of inflammation (swelling) in the intestinal mucosa, which could result in desensitising it to normal stimuli. Worms can physically obstruct the bowels. Lack of physical exercise necessary to stimulate normal bowel reflex can lead to constipation.

A proper diet rich in fibre is essential to reduce constipation. Water keeps the body hydrated and prevents the large intestines from extracting water from bowel contents, thus increasing the volume of stool. Fibre-rich diets improve the flow of stool. Bran contained in whole grain bread contains 42 per cent insoluble fibre and enhances bowel movements.

Fruits such as apple, grapes and figs contain soluble fibre, which increases the volume of intestinal contents. Vegetables and legumes are also high fibre foods. Honey contains fructose, a sugar

facilitates the elimination of toxins with the stool. Tannins in the apple dry the mucosa and reduce inflammation. A study in 1995 in Japan showed that apple pectin is capable of preventing the growth of cancerous tumours of the colon. This preventive action provides steady support for recommending abundant apple consumption to patients at high risk of colon cancer as well as for those diagnosed and/or treated to avoid its relapse.

Plums contain soluble fibre that soothes and protects the intestinal walls. A study conducted at the University of California showed that 100 gms a day increase the weight of faeces by 20 per cent, making them softer and easier to expel. Plums also reduce lithocholic acid and biliary acids in the stool. The higher the presence of these acids in faeces, the greater the chances of colon cancer. Therefore, regular plum consumption is an appropriate prophylactic for those at risk of colon cancer.

The stool putrefies and produces toxic substances, which are absorbed in the blood, resulting in auto-intoxication of the body. Many headaches, eczema, allergies, increase in cholesterol levels, rheumatism, apathy and depression improve by simply decreasing constipation.

Constipation that appears without any obvious cause must always be referred to a doctor – sometimes it may be an early manifestation of an intestinal tumour, colon cancer or other maladies. Constipation is a common complaint in pregnancy. Baked foods, white bread, chocolates, meat should be consumed with care. My late grandpa – a hunter and a man of meaty habits – knew we needed to empty our bowels to grow healthy and strong. An apple a day keeps the doctor and constipation at bay.

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