

Always guard against these four things ✓

GOOD LIVING

BY SOLOMON KARANJA

Panic on most foods and healthy living seems just that. On four issues, however, one needs to take researchers seriously – meat, fats, cigarettes and sedentary lifestyles. They can make life hard.

The first two are dangerous, especially if misused, while the later go against nature and often lead people into harm's way.

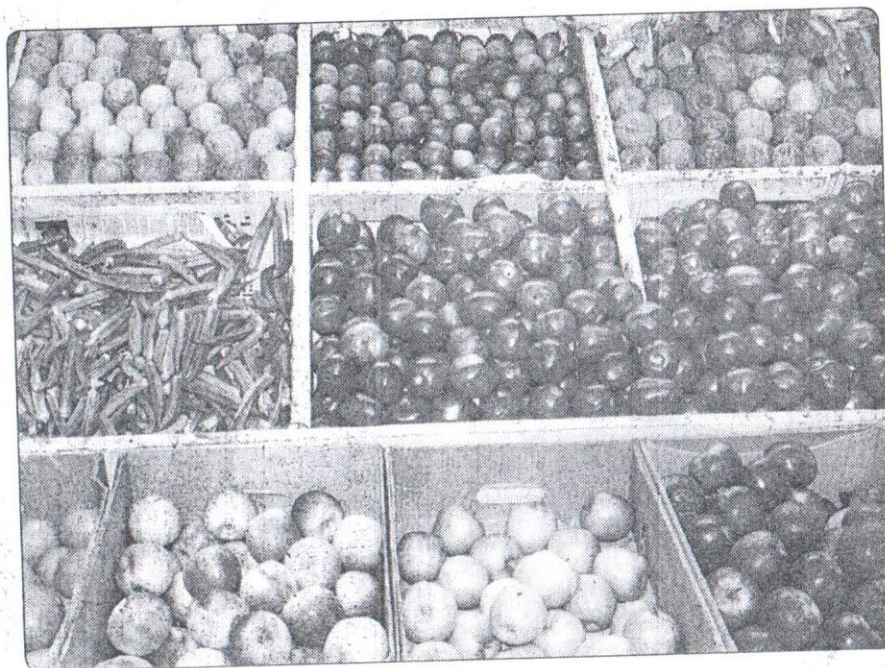
Waking up to light fire in the village that was nothing more than few pieces of live charcoal buried in previous night's ashes; blowing at them to glow into a flame was a morning ritual in the villages. After tea, the morning race to school began. One had to contend with mid-morning physical education lessons from a fire-breathing class teacher.

Evenings culminated in another ritual of drawing water from the local stream, not less than a kilometre away. To fill the water drum took several runs that kept children on their feet, making it impossible for them to lead sedentary lifestyles.

Besides, they had to fetch firewood from the ubiquitous bushes. The interruption would be weeding vegetable farms and sweet potato gardens.

These chores were helpful, although very few knew it. We needed no supplements as one would rummage in the bushes for important vitamins and phytochemicals from wild fruits and edible leaves. These habits kept us healthy.

Tobacco in the village was reserved for the elderly who took it as snuff. To date I am yet to find a good reason why



Poor nutrition, stressful living, consumption of saturated fats, salt and alcohol increase a smoker's chance of developing a fatal disease.

the ageing men and women inhaled this nicotine-filled stuff other than its addictive effects.

Cigarette smokers are at an increased risk of heart and respiratory diseases, cancer of the lung, mouth, throat, stomach, pancreas, bladder, and rectum. About half of smokers die as a result.

Poor nutrition, stressful living, con-

sumption of saturated fats, salt and alcohol increase a smoker's chance of developing a fatal disease. The craving for a puff may be reduced if the rate of excretion of nicotine in the urine is decreased. This can be achieved by increasing the intake of alkaline foods.

Research seems to indicate that a diet rich in omega 3 fatty acids found in fatty fish can reduce the risk of

heart disease in those who can't quit smoking. Limiting damage to passive smokers includes consuming high levels of vitamins, antioxidant loaded meals of fruits and vegetables and plenty of water.

Abnormal cervical smears have been linked to low dietary intake of vitamin C. There is a school of thought that links smoking, low vitamin C to cervical cancer. Smoking and alcohol have been linked to low levels of the B group of vitamins.

Nitrites and nitrates are used in preservation of some meats and sometimes react with food constituents to form nitrosamines, which have been linked to some forms of cancer. A substantial intake of vitamin C has been known to inhibit the formation of carcinogenic nitrosamines.

Cancers of the breast, uterus, and gallbladder are common among overweight people than slimmer ones. Excessive consumption of saturated fats increases chances of obesity and cardiovascular illnesses.

In the village, gooseberries were useful sources of vitamin C, especially for herding boys. These berries have B-carotene, which, together with vitamin C, promote a healthy immune system. Its potassium content, at 198mg per 100gms, makes these fruits useful in those with high blood pressure. With soluble fibre and low in calorific value, gooseberries are good for diabetics.

If we continue walking the path of "goodies" and "sweeties", our life expectancy will be reduced significantly.