

# Your body craves minerals

The period in which today's crop grew up was punctuated with weird, if interesting, activities and habits like the impulsive craving for soil.

Houses in the village were mud-walled and grass-thatched. Families that were well-off had their huts plastered with a mixture of ashes and soil, giving the walls a clean smooth whitish-grey finish instead of the all-too-common gaping, cracked red earth.

Interestingly, in our teenage we would pluck pieces of soil from the walls of the huts and literary feed on them—a habit I later learnt was more common during pregnancy in women.

I later learnt we were searching for minerals. Minerals are essential and necessary components of body cells and form the greater portion of bones, teeth and nails. Minerals are essential components of respiratory pigments and enzymes. They regulate cell membrane and capillary permeability.

Muscular and nervous tissue excitability is regulated by minerals, so is osmotic pressure equilibrium. Minerals control water metabolism

## GOOD LIVING

BY SOLOMON KARANJA

and acid-base balance in the body and are essential constituents of secretions of glands.

Life without minerals is unimaginable. Twenty to thirty grams of mineral salts are excreted through urine daily. One kilogramme of calcium and 0.78kg of phosphorus in an average adult body are the most ubiquitous. Potassium (140gms), sulphur (140gms) and sodium (100gms) are vital, as are chlorine (95gms), magnesium (19gms) iron (42gms) and copper (72gms). Iodine (13gms), manganese, fluorine, zinc, chromium and cobalt are important trace elements.

Zinc is important for the health of the prostate gland and cobalt helps in the production of haemoglobin.

Manganese subsists in the pancreas, liver and hair and strengthens muscles as well as increases resistance to disease. It is found in garlic, beet, cabbage and guava. Sulfur is a blood-purifying mineral, which activates the liver and brightens the skin and needed at 0.3gms daily, is found in beets, garlic, radish and

onions. Chlorine, useful in secreting stomach hydrochloric acid, purifies blood and prevents joints from being stiff. It is available in carrots, apricots, French beans, cabbage, tomatoes, bananas, dates, legumes and beets. Magnesium is essential for healthy bone and teeth development and maintains the muscular system. Radish, spinach, potatoes and guava are good sources of magnesium and the body needs 0.6gms of it daily.

Scrofula, a disease where neck lymph nodes swell up, is caused by lack of iodine, which is found in green leafy vegetables. It is useful in metabolism and thyroid function. Its deficiency can cause myxoedema and obesity as well other concomitant conditions like constipation, drowsiness and heart problems. Calcium is needed for bone and teeth development. Ninety-nine per cent of the body's total calcium needs vitamin D for its absorption.

It is needed for muscular strength and also prevents swelling and bleeding. Mental fatigue and stress can interrupt its absorption by the body. At 55 years and above, bones begin to lose calcium in a condition called osteoporosis. Milk, melon, grapes, millet, sesame, beans and leafy vegetables contain plenty of calcium. Iron, seventy percent of which is in the blood haemoglobin, is needed to transport oxygen and is found in passion fruits, millet, meat, mango, sesame and nuts.

One can only sympathise with the modern-day urbanite children whose natural craving for minerals leads to overindulgence in junk food.

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