

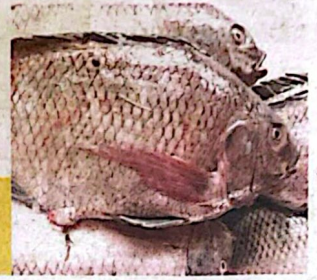
FROM ANIMALS TO HUMANS.

75 per cent of diseases affecting human beings are a result of their association with animals both wild and domestic. - Dr Wondimagegnehu Alemu, Country Representative WHO.

healthy living.

NEXT

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STRESSED BUT GAINING WEIGHT

ASK THE DOCTOR

By Vincent Karuhanga



Chronic stress leads to the release of cortisol, a hormone which is known to increase appetite and encourage cravings.

Dear Doctor: I am stressed by my son who has been taking drugs for about one year. What surprises me is that I have gained weight. Can a stressed person gain weight or do I have another disease?

Anita

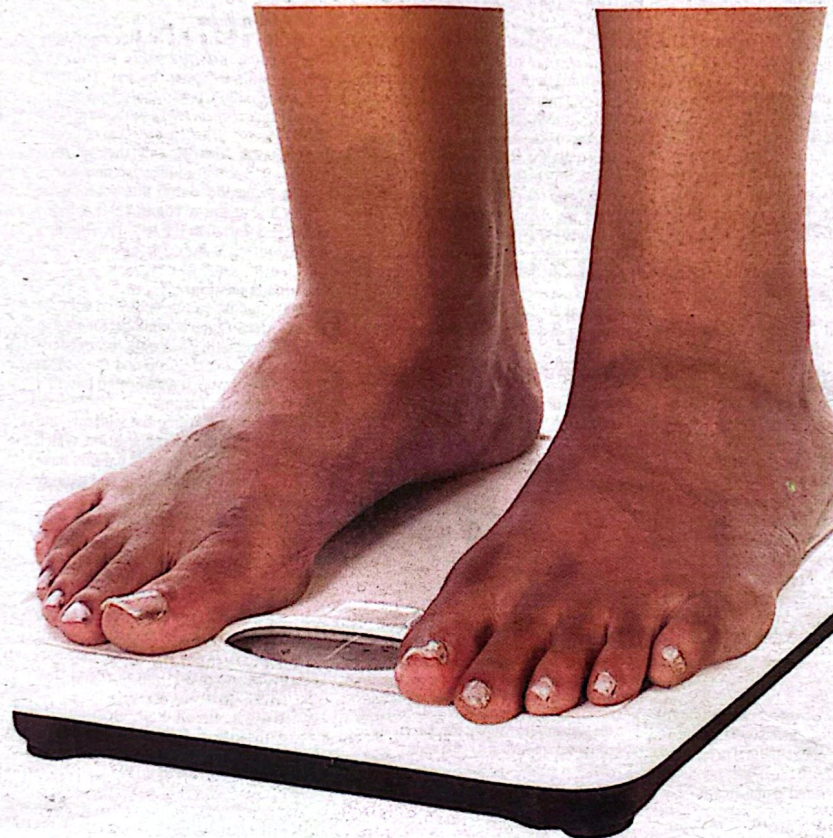
Dear Anita: When a person is stressed, it is expected that he or she loses weight but some people may instead gain weight. The gain in weight may affect the tummy and one may develop love handles (pili) and stretch marks.

Usually, a person gains weight if he eats more than he utilises so that he stores the excess food in form of fat.

Chronic stress is known to release lots of the stress hormone cortisol which is known to increase appetite and may encourage cravings for sugary or fatty foods resulting in their storage in the body in form of fat. Too much cortisol is likely to lead to unusual weight gain around the waistline and love handles apart from stretch marks. Also during the stressful period the feel-good hormone serotonin dips creating a crave for lots of sugar and fat to boost serotonin levels responsible for making one happier and more relaxed. This also leads to weight gain.

In a few circumstances some stressed people find solace in food (stress eating) ending up eating more than they can burn. Alcohol accompanied with pork can make a stressed person even grow a potbelly.

Obesity comes with lots of complications including diabetes, hypertension and arthritis among others. It is necessary that you have your son treated including by counseling so that your stress eases and therefore helps out in weight gain. It is also important that you visit a dietician to advise you about



Some stressed persons find solace in food and end up consuming more calories than they burn. NET PHOTO

your diet while you carry out physical exercises. A brisk walk for an hour at least 4 times a week can help out.

Dear Doctor: Previously, you have said the smell of sexual fluids is due to infection. I have been tested and found with no STDs and yet my fluids smell after sex. What could be the cause? My partner says I do not smell yet I feel it after sex.

Allen

Dear Allen: The vagina naturally has a mild musky odour and an offensive odour in that area, whether accompanied by symptoms or not, can bring lots of shame and stress.

Unfortunately, many people with bad odours may themselves not be aware of them since after a while, one is unable to detect the same smell (olfactory fatigue, or olfactory adaptation). Also, many people may not warn one of a smell fearing to cause an embarrassment. Because a foul body odour is a big embarrassment, even when the smell

is long gone, it may require a lot of counselling to accept that it is gone.

Infections especially sexually transmitted ones, cancer of the cervix, retained foreign bodies such as condoms, or herbs, one having eaten certain foods that contain garlic, onions or asparagus can all lead to a strong or foul vaginal odour. Singling out such foods and have the doctor examine a woman for STDS, cervical cancer or foreign bodies can be helpful in alleviating the odour.

If everything is found to be normal, it could be the sexual partner's semen that may be smelly. In normal cases, semen may smell like chlorine in a swimming pool because it contains ammonia-laden polyamine compounds especially spermine which is mostly responsible for the odour, putrescine and cadaverine.

Putrescine and cadaverine are foul-smelling substances produced by the breakdown of amino acids in living and dead organisms creating an odour of putrefying flesh (they also contribute to the odour of bad breath and bacterial vaginosis). When a man

is abstaining, the said substances may get more concentrated making semen smell more. A diet with lots of meat may also lead to a strong smell while pineapple may give semen a sweet smell.

Reducing the amount of meat and adding more pineapple to the diet may improve the semen smell. Prostate gland infections as well as those inside the foreskin can also lead to post sex odours, requiring treatment and circumcision to stem.

To get rid of smelly semen, the cause should be addressed and if this does not help, use of scented condoms may help out.

Dear Doctor: I am newlywed but these days I wake up and find I have scratch marks with bleeding. Is it true that these scratches are due to night dancers?

Lameck

Dear Lameck: Scratching is one thing we do in response to an itch. Many times how much or how seriously we scratch depends on the extent of

itching so the more the itching, the more seriously we scratch.

When a baby is born with scratch marks, this is locally blamed on charms yet this medically points to having overstayed in the womb (post mature). Scratching at night is also wrongly blamed on night dancers and being newlywed, this should not be blamed on your wife.

People with itching of the skin may scratch even during the day but this they do carefully to avoid injuring the skin. When we sleep, we still scratch by reflex but because we are sleeping, we do not control how much we scratch, ending up with skin injuries and bleeding scratch marks.

That said, although itching can occur both day and night, it seems for unknown reasons, itching may worsen at night. It is also true that people may have night time scratching due to associated night time allergies and a runny or stuffy nose or even a cough may accompany the scratching.

People may have physical allergies which are provoked by physical things including coldness of nighttime, heat, vibration and prolonged pressure on the body as one lies in bed.

Sometimes, one's skin may itch due to what gets in contact with it. It may be due to the type of bedsheets or blanket one uses, requiring changing to cotton bedsheets and avoiding woolen blankets.

When we sleep at night, the body is not active and this leads to cooling down through our usual body cooling system of sweating. One's skin may develop itching weals due to sweat (cholinergic urticaria). Also, cholinergic urticaria may follow other night time triggers including hot baths/showers, fever (night fevers of Tuberculosis), eating spicy foods, emotional stress.

Sometimes, one may not itch at office during day but itch at night because the trigger of an allergy is at home. This may include bedbugs, your wife's perfumes or hair applications as well as carpets, blankets, mattresses and curtains infested with the so-called dust mite. Also, presence of pets such as dogs and cats and sharing accommodation with animals or rearing chicken at home may bring on nighttime skin itches which may occur alone or together with other allergy symptoms including cough or asthma.

Since the causes of nightly itching are many, it is important to see a doctor for examination, treatment or further advice. Since the body has a biological clock, this may affect generalised diseases such as psoriasis so that their associated itching may come on at night. These require checking out as well.