

Khana aur sehat



AGE
Concern

Healthy ageing, healthy living
for older people in South Asian communities

Acknowledgements

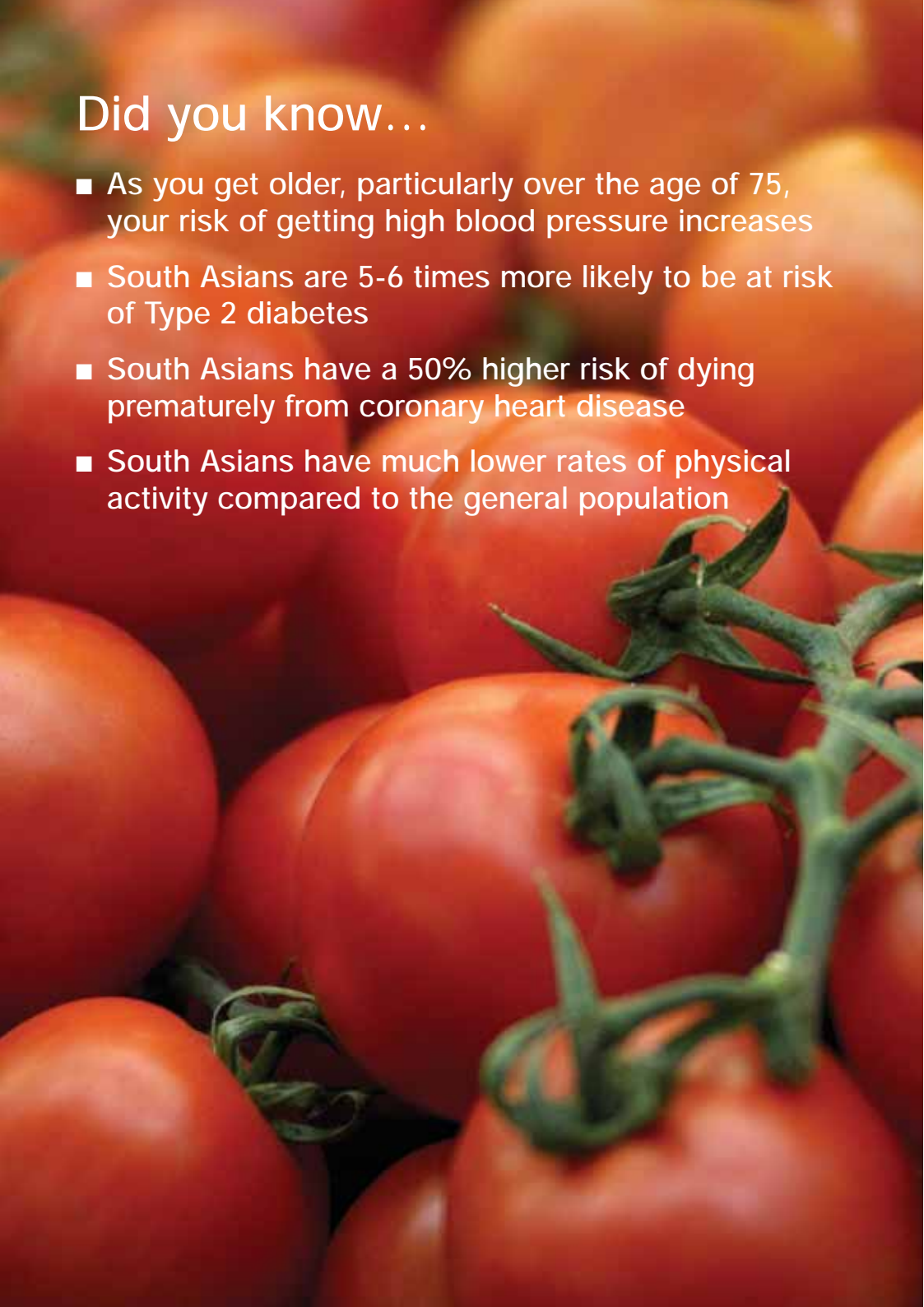
This booklet has been written by Manveet Patel, Project Coordinator, to complement the work of the three-year Healthy Ageing, Healthy Living Project which is working with 'hard-to-reach' groups of older people.

I would like to thank the older people and Project Coordinators from the Ageing Well Projects in Bolton, Burnley, Harrow, Newham and Warrington for their support.

October 2007

Did you know...

- As you get older, particularly over the age of 75, your risk of getting high blood pressure increases
- South Asians are 5-6 times more likely to be at risk of Type 2 diabetes
- South Asians have a 50% higher risk of dying prematurely from coronary heart disease
- South Asians have much lower rates of physical activity compared to the general population



Maintaining health in later life

Eating the right foods and being physically active is just as important in later life. A diet rich in fruit and vegetables and low in saturated fat, sugar and salt can improve your overall health. This guide aims to provide you with important information to help you make positive changes to your lifestyle and to protect you against particular diseases such as high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, stroke, obesity and diabetes. These diseases are more common amongst the South Asian community.

Leading a healthy lifestyle doesn't have to be difficult or boring. You can still eat most of the foods you enjoy in moderation by making small changes in the way you cook them (e.g. grilling as opposed to frying) and by reducing the number of times and quantities you eat them in a week.

The right balance

By planning your meals you can ensure you are including food from the five main food groups in the right proportions. These are:

- Fruit and vegetables
- Rice, bread, cereals, pasta and potatoes
- Milk and dairy
- Meat, fish and alternatives, e.g. soya and tofu
- Fat and sugar



Breakfast

This is the most important meal of the day. Oat-based cereals such as porridge and wholegrain cereals with low fat milk can provide you with a steady release of energy by making you feel fuller for longer throughout the morning. If you do not like cereals you can have bread, toast, or bread muffins as an alternative. Try to include fruit or fruit juice as part of your breakfast.

Lunch and Dinner

Spreading your meals throughout the day will help you to manage your weight and also conditions such as diabetes. Good choices include dhal, sabji, eggs, fish or lean meat served with lots of salad and accompanied by basmati rice, chapattis or bread.

Fluids

To protect your body against short term and long term problems, drinking plenty of water throughout the day can help to keep you alert, hydrated and your kidneys and bladder functioning properly. Try to limit how often you drink sugary / fizzy drinks, and also tea and coffee.

Fruit and vegetables

In order to help you balance your overall diet, you should aim to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. This is not as difficult as it sounds especially when you can include fresh, canned, dried, frozen and 100 per cent juices. These will provide the fibre and vitamins that your body needs. No matter how much you drink, fruit juice only counts as one portion. Water is a better alternative for quenching your thirst as people find that juice can affect glucose levels too quickly – this is particularly important if you are diabetic.



Calcium and vitamin D

We need Vitamin D to control the calcium levels in the body, most of which is in our bones. You can obtain Vitamin D from exposure to the sun. Many older Asians do not expose their skin to the sun or spend long enough in the sunshine for it to have an effect. You should aim to expose your arms and face to the sun in small amounts for at least 20-30 minutes a day during the summer months – just enough to see a small darkening of the skin, but no sign of reddening or sunburn, as too much sun exposure can damage your skin.



If you are unable to get Vitamin D from the sun then you can obtain it from animal foods e.g. liver, oily fish and egg yolk. For vegetarian Asians this is more difficult, in which case it is recommended that you take a Vitamin D supplement. This is also important if you are an older person who is housebound. You can stop taking the supplement when you are in a sunny country.

Fats and sugar

The two main types of fat are saturated and unsaturated. You need to have less saturated fat, as this is linked to heart disease and can clog up your arteries. Saturated fats include animal fats which can be found in ghee, butter, fatty meats such as kebabs and full fat dairy foods. As an alternative choose unsaturated fat or oil, especially monosaturated fats such as olive oil and rapeseed oil which are much better for your heart. Limit fried foods such as samosas, pakoras, gatya and kachoris.

You should also aim to limit the amount of sugary and fatty foods that you eat because not only are they high in calories, but they can also lead to weight gain. Try to cut down on food such as ladoos, jalebi, gulab jamuns, kheer, halwa and rassomalais.

Namak (salt)

Processed foods such as salty nuts, crisps and chevra should be eaten in moderation as they contain high levels of salt.

The recommended amount of salt per day is 6g – approximately a teaspoon. Eating more than this can raise your blood pressure which can lead to heart disease and stroke.

- ✓ Did you know that over 16 million people in the UK suffer from high blood pressure? The only way to check your blood pressure is to get it measured by a health professional as it rarely has any symptoms
- ✓ Next time you are making dhal and sabji, measure how much salt you are adding rather than guessing!



Festivals and eating out

During festivals such as Baisakhi, Diwali, Eid, at weddings and when eating out, it can be hard to resist all the tempting mithais, jalebis and savoury snacks. The most important thing to remember is that balanced eating is not about restricting or excluding food choices, but by being careful if you have a tendency to eat sugary and fatty foods. Indian sweets are quite often high in sugar and calories so should be eaten in moderation.

Avoid eating dishes that are cooked in coconut milk, rich in cream and fried foods, particularly if you eat out often, as these are high in fat. These include kormas, Thai green and red curries. As an alternative try to choose dry dishes. Instead of fried rice try ordering boiled rice and complement your meal with plenty of vegetables and salad. Instead of ordering sugary drinks, choose water or no added sugar squashes.



Fasting



If you fast, make sure that you do it as safely as possible, particularly if you are taking medication. Always check with your doctor or a healthcare professional before starting a fast. If you feel unwell while you are fasting you should stop. You can always make up fasts at a later date. Bear in mind that the different religions are sympathetic towards individuals with medical conditions.

Milk and dairy

Yoghurt, paneer and cheese are all sources of calcium which is needed for healthy teeth and bones. Choose lower fat options such as semi-skimmed and skimmed milk, as too much fat can lead to weight gain.

- ✓ Did you know that over 70% of women and 75% of men between 65-74 are obese?
- ✓ Eating a balanced diet can help to reduce your risk of certain cancers?
- ✓ As you get older your risk of having a stroke increases, particularly if you are of Asian origin?

How can you reduce the fat, salt and sugar in your diet?

It can sometimes be difficult to know where to start, so here are a few suggestions:

- ✓ Trim off excess fat before cooking meat
- ✓ Reduce the amount of fried food that you eat
e.g. samosas, bhajias, puris, bhaturas, gatyas and kachoris
- ✓ Avoid adding salt to food at the table
- ✓ Sweet foods such as Indian sweets, cakes and biscuits should be eaten in moderation
- ✓ Flavour your food with herbs and spices as opposed to adding too much salt
- ✓ Use alternatives to ghee (clarified butter) and makhan (butter), such as olive oil and rapeseed oil to prepare dhal and sabjis, as these are better for your heart
- ✓ If a meal is coated with oil it is better to skim off the top layer before serving it
- ✓ Avoid adding lots of makhan at the table e.g. on rotis, nans, dhals, sabjis and khicheris



Get active – It's never too late!

Physical activity is important for all age groups and it is never too late to get active. Walking is a great way to get friends and family involved. It can help you to stay mobile, independent, flexible, improve your coordination in order to reduce your risk of falls and developing particular diseases. It can also help you manage high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes which are more common amongst the South Asian community.

It is recommended that you do at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day, which you can spread throughout the day. If you have never done any exercise before, it is better to start slowly and build from this. Choose an activity that you feel comfortable with, because then you are more likely to continue with it. Going to the gym is not for everyone and there are many other ways that you can exercise. These include:

- ✓ walking
- ✓ gardening
- ✓ housework
- ✓ yoga
- ✓ armchair exercises
- ✓ taking grandchildren to the park
- ✓ cycling

If you have an illness or are taking particular medication you should talk to your GP about what you can and cannot do.

Useful contacts

If you would like further information on Ageing Well and how to become involved, please contact your local Age Concern.

The following organisations can also provide you with information in other languages.

Blood Pressure Association: 0208 772 4994

British Heart Foundation Information Line: 0845 070 8070

Diabetes UK Careline: 0845 120 2960

NHS Direct: 0845 4647 (24 hour helpline)

For up to 5 free factsheets, or to find your local Age Concern, ring the Age Concern Information Line: 0800 00 99 66 (freephone) 7 days a week from 7am-7pm



Age Concern is the UK's largest organisation working for and with older people. In England, we are a federation of over 400 charities working together to promote the well-being of all older people.

Age Concern's work ranges from providing vital local services to influencing public opinion and Government. Every day we are in touch with thousands of older people from all kinds of backgrounds – enabling them to make more of life.



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Age Concern England, Registered Charity No. 261794

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