

Journey to a Healthy Life

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DETAILS OF THE BOOK

Title: Journey to a Healthy Life

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Publisher: Notion Press, Chennai, India

ISBN: 978-1-64587-102-6

Year of Publication: 2019

Pages: vi + 465

Price: INR 2,000

REVIEW

The book is nicely organised in a manner that is convenient for the readers to easily access the contents. It has been profusely illustrated with numerous black-and-white diagrams, charts and high-quality colour photographs that make it very useful and attractive. The book has been conveniently divided into the following seven sections: (i) Introduction, (ii) Healthy diet, (iii) Nutritional supplement, (iv) Exercise, (v) Digestive system, (vi) Respiratory system, and (vii) Cholesterol.

The **First Section on 'Introduction'** introduces the reader to the three major tenets of preventive medicine, namely, the 3-point approach, consisting of (i) consuming a healthy diet, (ii) taking nutritional supplements, and (iii) exercising regularly.

The **Second Section on 'Healthy Diet'** is the largest section in the book, consisting of 313 pages. In this section, the first portion is dedicated to child health. It discusses in great detail the sources, functions, daily requirements, and deficiency symptoms of key nutrients such as carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals. Newer aspects such as antioxidants, probiotics and prebiotics have also been addressed. The author also highlights the detrimental effects of excessive consumption of certain nutrients in children, citing sugar as an example.

The author also provides in-depth information about the health benefits of various types of foodstuffs such as cereals, whole grains, legumes, meat, poultry, fish, oils, nuts, vegetables, fruits, herbs and spices, among others. He even talks about the health benefits of dark chocolates and red wine. However, he cautions about the dangers of overconsumption of alcohol, which is in agreement with the current WHO recommendations. Besides alcohol, he also cautions about possible side-effects, drug interactions and other negative aspects of overconsumption of certain foodstuffs. The author also lays stress on the amount of food consumed and the time of food consumption. He indicates that this is especially crucial in case of breakfast and dinner.

He has also highlighted the role played by a combination of fruit and/or vegetable juices for various ailments or simply for keeping the body in pristine condition. Some of these benefits include detoxification of the body, preventing kidney stone formation, cleansing the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, and treating sore throat.

Importantly, he provides valuable insight on disease-specific action of foods. These are specific for preventing a wide-range

of diseases and conditions, ranging from mundane ones such as indigestion, headache, sore throat, cold/flu, diarrhoea, constipation, skin conditions (acne, eczema, pimples, and boils), allergies, and anaemia to more serious ones. These serious conditions include cardiovascular diseases (hypertension, atherosclerosis, coronary artery disease, arrhythmia, and stroke); hypercholesterolemia; neurological disorders (multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or ALS); mental disorders (depression, epilepsy, dementia, schizophrenia, autism, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or ADHD); obesity; diabetes (type-1 and type-2); gallbladder and kidney stone formation; bone and joint disorders (osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, and gout); thyroid disorders (hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism); ophthalmic diseases (cataracts, glaucoma, and macular degeneration); respiratory disorders (asthma and bronchitis); reproductive problems (leucorrhoea, menstrual cramps, gonorrhoea, and polycystic ovarian syndrome or PCOS); and cancer (breast, colon, oesophagus, stomach, pancreas, liver, lung, skin, cervix, prostate, and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma).

The author further indicates that some foods have a generalised effect on the body. These foods help to reduce body weight, control pain, reduce inflammation, heal fractures, lower stress levels, fight infections, and boost the immune system.

The **Third Section on 'Nutritional Supplement'** is comparatively very short, spanning only 12 pages. This section focuses on the need for nutritional supplementation. The bio-molecular aspects pertaining to the generation of free-radicals such as Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) and Reactive Nitrogen Species (RNS) and the molecular mechanisms involved in counteracting them with antioxidants by way of nutritional supplementation has been discussed succinctly. The sources, daily requirements, functions, and deficiency symptoms of various antioxidants, vitamins, minerals and micronutrients have been covered in this section. The last part of this section touches upon addictive behaviour, including cigarette smoking and alcoholism. It also discusses about neurotransmission with reference to various types of neurotransmitters. However, these topics appear to be disjointed and disconnected from the rest of the section, as a result of which the coherency is lost.

The **Fourth Section on 'Exercise'** spans 42 pages and deals with various aspects of exercise, including aerobic activity, strength training, flexibility training, and balancing exercises. It highlights the health benefits of exercising regularly, such as walking and freehand exercises. The descriptions of the various exercises are supplemented with useful, informative and easy-to-understand diagrams and charts. The author also discusses about what 'should' and 'should not' be done before, during and after exercising. Some of the activities that have been addressed include yoga, tai chi, pilates, karate, kick-boxing, team sports, as well as long-distance sporting activities, such as running, biking, and skiing. The plus-points of these activities on health have been discussed in detail. With reference to yoga, all the yogic postures have been clearly shown through actual coloured photographs, which are very useful for the reader. In the last portion, the author discusses about the

various types of foodstuffs that should be consumed for optimally powering the body during exercising so that muscle strength, endurance and stamina are developed.

The **Fifth Section on 'Digestive System'** spans 39 pages and dwells upon various aspects pertaining to digestion. Common disorders such as heartburn, hyperacidity, and Gastro-esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) and their prevention by antacids such as Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) have been highlighted. The beneficial effects of various types of foods on the digestive system have also been discussed. Some of the functions of these foods include maintaining healthy gums and teeth, managing halitosis (bad breath), preventing stomach ulcers, combating diarrhoea, and reducing flatulence and constipation. Moreover, fruits, vegetables and nuts that help to keep the liver healthy and prevent liver diseases have also been addressed. Notably, the author has not failed to highlight those food items that are harmful for various ailments of the GI tract, including jaundice.

The **Sixth Section on 'Respiratory System'** is 48 pages in length and addresses disorders of the respiratory system and how to combat them using various types of food. The author indicates that common respiratory problems such as the common cold or flu can be fought-off with various types of concoctions made from fruits, vegetables, herbs, spices, and seeds. He also discusses about the anatomy and physiology of the respiratory system, while talking about the pathogenesis of asthma and its prevention. Allergies in susceptible individuals arising from the environment, such as pollen, dust mites, pet dander, as well as certain foods have also been

discussed. Moreover, the beneficial effects of natural expectorants that clear mucus from the lungs and airways, such as licorice, cinnamon, and ginger have also addressed. However, the last portion of this section, which deals with hypercholesterolemia, heart disease and hypertension appear to be incongruous and incompatible with the topic of 'Respiratory System'.

The **Seventh Section on 'Cholesterol'** is the last section of the book, which has 10 pages. It discusses about the various types of cholesterol, in particular, High-Density Lipoprotein (HDL) or 'good cholesterol' and Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL) or 'bad cholesterol' and their effects on the body. The author goes on to discuss about the cholesterol-lowering ability of a variety of foods, such as pistachios, red onion, grape juice, lentils, avocados, ginger, dark chocolate, green tea, and apples, among others. The last portion, which discusses about headaches, seems a little out-of-place as this section deviates from the main focus. Nevertheless, the section as a whole is very informative and useful for the readers.

FINAL COMMENTS

It is said that "*Health is Wealth*". In this regard, the author has done a commendable job in crystallising the very essence of this proverb in this remarkable book entitled *Journey to a Healthy Life*. This book is an invaluable compendium of highly useful information on a variety of aspects pertaining to healthy living. It should adorn all public libraries and will definitely find pride-of-place in every health enthusiast's bookshelf. The book will be of immense interest for all those interested in leading a healthy and fruitful life.

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AUTHOR DECLARATION:

- Financial or Other Competing Interests: No
- Was informed consent obtained from the subjects involved in the study? NA
- For any images presented appropriate consent has been obtained from the subjects. NA

PLAGIARISM CHECKING METHODS: [Jain H et al.]

- Plagiarism X-checker: Sep 26, 2019
- Manual Googling: Oct 12, 2019
- iThenticate Software: Oct 18, 2019 (7%)

ETYMOLOGY: Book Review

Date of Submission: **Sep 25, 2019**
Date of Peer Review: **Oct 10, 2019**
Date of Acceptance: **Oct 14, 2019**
Date of Publishing: **Nov 01, 2019**