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HEALTHY BY NUMBERS

BY MANU MOUDGIL

1 THIS number indicates the maximum inflammation your body can tolerate. Ever seen an apple slice turning brown 20 minutes after being cut? This is what inflammation does to your body. It causes the rusting of tissue. You can gauge your level of inflammation with a blood test that measures C-reactive protein, which is produced by the liver and is part of the body's army against infection. "A healthy level of C-reactive protein is under 1. The result within 1 to 5 is still affordable but anything above that is serious," says Dr M P Sharma, consultant internal medicine, Rockland Hospital. A number above 10 suggests you may have a condition such as an autoimmune disease that needs diagnosis. Consult your doctor on the causes, and adapt your diet to a Mediterranean-style diet with lots of fruit, vegetables, and whole grains, fat from olive oil and moderate amounts of wine.

1 This below zero number is the minimum your bone density scan should read. The standard dual energy X-ray absorptiometry scan provides a T score, which is your bone density. "Above -1 is normal; between -1 and -2.5 indicates osteopenia, which may lead to osteoporosis; below -2.5 means you have osteoporosis," says Dr Yash Gulati, consultant orthopaedician, Indraprastha Apollo Hospital. In women, about 35 per cent of compact bone and 50 per cent of spongy bone in the skeleton is lost during a lifetime, whereas men lose about two-thirds of this amount. Women lose more during their menopause so all post-menopausal women should get their bone density scan done annually.

For stronger bones, take 1,200 mg of calcium along with 1,000 IU of vitamin D and 400 milligrams of magnesium to prevent the constipation that calcium can cause. Also, do resistance training for at least 30 minutes a week.

2:1 THIS should be the ratio of good and bad cholesterol in your body. The total level of cholesterol isn't as predictive of heart disease as this ratio, and doctors love it when the ratio of LDL to HDL is 2 to 1. Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that occurs naturally in all parts of the body, needed by your body to function. But if you have too much of this substance in your blood, it can stick to the walls of your arteries and obstruct blood flow. There are usually no signs or symptoms that you

have high blood cholesterol, but it can be detected with a blood test. Cholesterol levels tend to vary with age and weight. The bad kind called LDL is responsible for the waxy, fat-like substance in your arteries while the good stuff called HDL removes these clogs. According to a 2006 study, around 40 per cent of males and 23 per cent of females in India have high cholesterol and LDL levels. "If you have some risk for heart disease, keep your LDL under 100. Ideally, your HDL should be more than 50. For an average person, 130 should be the maximum limit for LDL and HDL should be always above 40," says Dr Amar Singhal, head of cardiology, Action Balaji Heart Institute.

Keep a check on your cholesterol levels & make the lifestyle changes needed to lower these, based on doctors' recommendations of course. To improve your ratio, you can try including soluble fiber in your diet from sources such as oatmeal, kidney beans, and apples, aiming for 25 gms a day.

4 THIS number is indicative of the risk of prostate cancer. Most men over 65 can expect some type of prostate pathology or abnormality. To reduce the chances of a scary prognosis, men should get the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test done from the age of 30 onwards. A PSA test result below 4 is normal.

Though studies have linked high-fat diets and a sedentary lifestyle with prostate cancer, doctors say more research is needed. "While studies show that low fat diet and regular exercise can reduce your risk, those with a healthy lifestyle also end up with the disease. But regular checkups do help in early detection and full cure of prostate cancer," says Dr Amit Bhargava, consultant oncologist, Max Healthcare.

5 If your thyroid test result is a figure above 5, you may be suffering from hypothyroidism or an underactive thyroid. Frequently overlooked and misdiagnosed, thy-



80 It is the ideal figure for your resting heart rate, and indicates the number of times your heart beats in a minute while you are at rest. The heart rate is the first thing all doctors note during physical examinations. You can determine your own by putting two fingers on your wrist and counting the beats per minute. "Anything higher than 80 means you're at increased risk for a heart attack. But this higher rate can also be due to mental stress. So, consult your doctor if your resting heart rate is consistently above 80 especially if you have other signs or symptoms, such as fainting, dizziness or shortness of breath," says Dr Venod Nikhra, consultant physician, Hindu Rao Hospital.

The higher resting pulse rate means your body has to work harder to pump blood. Simple everyday tasks like eating breakfast or kick starting your bike would take more effort. The result is an injury, fatigue and cardiovascular strain. Ironically, the key to perfect heart rate is to make your heart beat faster for an hour per week. "Athletes have lower heart rate than an average person which indicates their heart functions more efficiently," says Dr Singhal.

roid disorders affect almost every aspect of a person's health, leading to weight gain or loss. Both under-activity and hyperactivity of the thyroid are more prevalent among women. The level of thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) in the blood is an indication of thyroid activity. "TSH levels below 0.5 indicate overactive thyroid whereas the level above 5.0 points towards underactive thyroid or hypothyroidism. The range may differ depending upon the test kit used by the laboratory," says Dr S Kumar, consultant endocrinologist, Sir Gangaram Hospital.

The number five is relevant for our health for another reason too. This represents the minimum servings of fruit and vegetables in our diet. This reduces your risk to several diseases, displacing the bad fat in your diet. "All of us need five or more servings of fruit or vegetables each day" says Honey Khanna, consultant dietitian, Max Healthcare. By making this number, you lower your cholesterol, level up your blood sugar, improve bowel regularity, and decrease cancer risk.

32 THIS IS the maximum waistline measurement for a woman. For men, the maximum figure is 38. Scientific research shows that people should aspire for these figures to ensure good health. The fact is that accumulating fat around the middle of the body is bad for you. Your waistline measurement may be the most important indicator of your overall

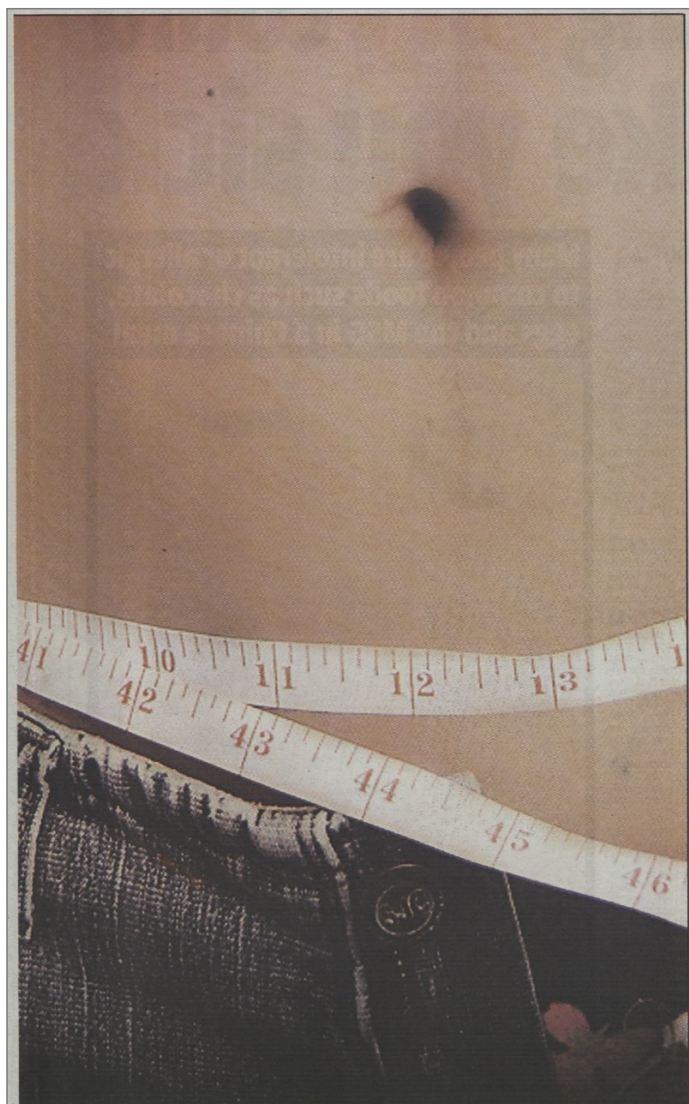
25 This is the Ideal Body Mass Index (BMI) which is indicative of your health as this is an estimate of the fat content of your body. Divide your weight in kilograms by your height squared (metre). A result between 18.5-24.9 means you are in the ideal range. Above 25 is a health risk and too high for optimal health.



health. A Canadian study says the risk of heart disease increases 21 to 40 per cent for every five inches added to the waist line. "Your ideal girth should be less than half your height. That means if you're 5'5", your waist should measure less than 32.5 inches. "Whatever your height, the waist should not exceed 38 inches for men and 32 inches for women," says Dr Singhal. Even by losing one-inch from your waistline you'll improve your heart's health.

40 THIS NUMBER is crucial for men, and a measure of the ideal level of that all-essential male hormone testosterone. Besides sexual vitality, testosterone is also necessary to maintain overall health and a youthful appearance. It also helps the body build lean muscle mass and increases the overall metabolic rate, burning more body fat. However, testosterone should be compared with DHEA, a multi-functional steroid. The ratio between DHEA and testosterone is essential to predicting health because it helps you establish the effec-

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tiveness with which your body converts DHEA to testosterone. Both can be determined from the same blood sample. DHEA readings should be on the low side of normal (2.5 to 9.5), and testosterone should be on the high side (12.4 to 40.0) for a male 20 to 49. High DHEA levels indicate a testosterone-conversion problem, and you should consult your doctor. Testosterone production is highly dependent on zinc and Vitamin B6, both found in abundance in chicken.

100 THIS NUMBER is an indication of the average level of intelligence. IQ stands for intelligence quotient and is the measurement of a person's intelligence, calculated on the basis of special tests. "The average IQ ranges between 90 and 110. Above 110, you are smarter than the average whereas in the range of 80-90, you are below average. Score can range below or above 100, but it should not go below 70, as this indicates mental retardation," says Dr Adarsh Kohli, child psy-

These two numbers are an indication of the pressure at which blood is being pushed around your body. 120/80 mm Hg is the ideal figure which represents the pressure when the heart is pushing blood and when it relaxes between beats. The higher the number, the more pressure, and the harder your heart has to work to get blood through your body, making you more susceptible to developing hypertension or having a heart attack.

120/80

chologist, PGI, Chandigarh. Exercise has been directly linked to increased brain power. Physical activity—just enough to get the blood pumping—can wake up your brain enough to help you think better. Walking seems to work best, but any aerobic activity can help increase your IQ.

140 THIS IS the maximum amount of sugar that should be present in your blood when it is tested after two hours

of the meal. A blood sugar or blood glucose test is a good indicator of how well your body processes sugar and whether you are at risk for diabetes. This level should be under 100 after an overnight or eight-hour fast and go up to a maximum of 140 after two hours of meal. Any measurement over 100 mg/dl but less than 126 mg/dl after a fast suggests that you have pre-diabetes, a condition in which your blood sugar level is higher than normal but not high enough to be classified as diabetes. Taking preventive steps can delay its progression. manu.moudgil@mailtoday.in