

WHO Aims To Wipe Out Trans Fats Worldwide

NEW YORK: The World Health Organization has released a plan to help countries wipe out trans fats from the global food supply in the next five years.

The United Nations agency has in the past pushed to exterminate infectious diseases, but now it's aiming to erase a hazard linked to chronic illness.

In a statement Monday, the U.N. health agency said eliminating trans fats is critical to preventing deaths worldwide. WHO estimates that eating trans fats — commonly found in baked and processed foods — leads to the deaths of more than 500,000 people from heart disease every year.

"It's a crisis level, and it's a major front in our fight now," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a news conference in Geneva on Monday.

Officials think it can be done in five years because the work is well underway in many countries. Denmark did it 15 years ago, and since then the United States and more than 40 other higher-income countries have been working on getting the heart-clogging additives out of their food supplies.

The WHO is now pushing middle- and lower-income countries to pick up the fight, said Dr. Francesco Branca, director of the



WHO's Department of Nutrition for Health and Development.

Artificial trans fats are unhealthy substances that are created when hydrogen is added to vegetable oil to make it solid, like in the creation of margarine or shortening. Health experts say they can be replaced with canola oil or other products. There are also naturally occurring trans fats in some meats and dairy products.

The WHO recommends that no more than 1 per cent of a person's calories come from trans fats.

"Trans fats are a harmful compound that can be removed easily without major cost and without any impact on the quality of the foods," Branca said.

Countries will likely have to use regulation or legislation to get

food makers to make the switch, experts said.

At the WHO news conference Monday, a representative from a leading food industry trade group said companies are working to reduce trans fats in their products.

"We call on food producers in our sector to take prompt action and we stand ready to support effective measures to work toward the elimination of industrially produced trans fats and ensure a level playing field in this area," said Rocco Rinaldi, secretary-general of the International Food and Beverage Alliance.

Dr. Tom Frieden, a former director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention who worked with WHO officials on the call to action, called its move

unprecedented.

"The world is now setting its sights on today's leading killers — particularly heart disease, which kills more people than any other cause in almost every country," said Frieden, president of Resolve to Save Lives, a New-York-based project of an organization called Vital Strategies.

In the U.S., the first trans fatty food to hit the market was Crisco shortening, which went on sale in 1911. Trans fatty foods became increasingly popular beginning in the 1950s, partly because experts at the time thought they were healthier than cooking with butter or lard.

Food makers liked artificial trans fats because they prolonged product shelf life. They

used them in doughnuts, cookies and deep-fried foods. But studies gradually revealed that trans fats wreck cholesterol levels in the blood and drive up the risk of heart disease. Health advocates say trans fats are the most harmful fat in the food supply.

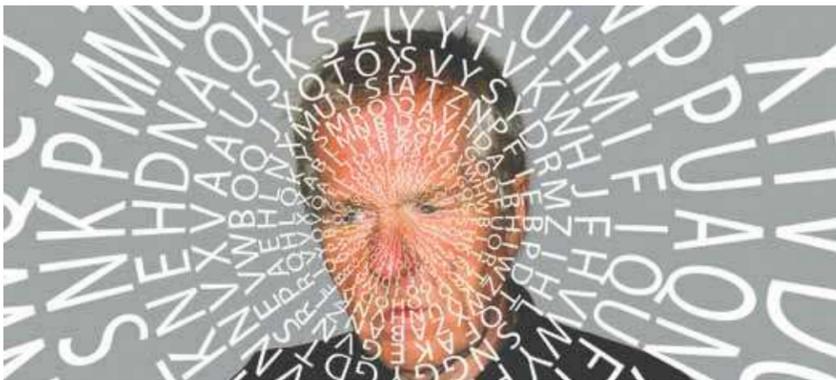
In the U.S., New York City in 2006 banned restaurants from serving food with trans fats. The same year the FDA required manufacturers to list trans fat content information on food labels.

Many manufacturers cut back, and studies showed trans fat levels in the blood of middle-aged U.S. adults fell by nearly 60 per cent by the end of the decade.

In 2015, the FDA took steps to finish the job of eliminating trans fats, calling for manufacturers to stop selling trans fatty foods by June 18, 2018 — a deadline that arrives next month. FDA officials have not said how much progress has been made or how they will enforce their rule against food makers that don't comply.

"The removal of trans fats from the food supply as an additive counts as one of the major public health victories of the last decade," said Laura MacCleery, policy director for the Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group, Center for Science in the Public Interest. — CP

'Exergaming' May Slow Down Risk Of Alzheimer's: Study



NEW YORK: Older adults with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) who indulge in exergames -- video games that are also a form of exercise -- may experience significant improvement in complex thinking and memory skills, according to a study.

Exergaming relies on technology that tracks body movement or reaction.

The study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience*, showed that exergames may slow the debilitating effects of those with MCI, that is often a precursor to Alzheimer's.

"Exergaming is one more thing that could be added to the arsenal of tools to fight back against this cruel disease," said lead author Cay Anderson-Hanley from Union College in New York, US.

"The results suggest that the best outcome for brain health may result when we do both: move it and use it," Hanley added.

The study included more than 100 seniors, with an average age of 78, who were divided into two groups.

One group was assigned to pedal along a scenic virtual reality bike path several times a week where another group had to pedal while playing a video game that included chasing dragons and collecting coins.

The data were then compared against data collected from a separate group who played video games on a laptop but did not pedal, and also a group from the previous research who only rode a traditional stationary bike with no gaming component.

The results showed that participants in both the group who pedaled along a virtual bike path and those that played dragon game experienced significantly better executive function, which controls, in part, multi-tasking and decision making.

Benefits for the exergaming groups were also observed for verbal memory and physical function. Previous studies have also showed that older adults who used interactive video game features, experienced greater cognitive health benefits than those who relied on traditional exercise alone.

Yogurt Can Cut Down Chronic Inflammation Risk

NEW YORK: Relishing yogurt as an "appetizer" may help reduce chronic inflammation -- a key factor associated with bowel disease, arthritis and asthma as well as cardiometabolic diseases, finds a study.

The findings showed that yogurt may help reduce inflammation by improving the integrity of the intestinal lining, thus preventing endotoxins -- pro-inflammatory molecules produced by gut microbes -- from crossing into the blood stream.

"Eating eight ounces of low-fat yogurt before a meal is a feasible strategy to improve post-meal metabolism and thus may help reduce the risk of cardiovascular and metabolic diseases," said Ruisong Pei, postdoctoral researcher at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the US.

For the new study, published in the *Journal of Nutrition*, the team enrolled 120 pre-menopausal women, half obese and half non-obese. Half of the participants were assigned to eat 12 ounces of low-fat yogurt every day for nine weeks; a control group ate non-dairy pudding for nine weeks.

The participants were also involved in a

high-calorie meal challenge at the beginning and end of their nine-week dietary intervention. The challenge, meant to stress an individual's metabolism, started with either a serving of yogurt or non-dairy pudding followed by a large high-fat, high-carb breakfast meal. For both challenges, blood work showed that the yogurt "appetizer" helped improve some key biomarkers of endotoxin exposure and inflammation as participants digested the meal over the ensuing hours.

It also helped improve glucose metabolism in obese participants by speeding up the reduction of post-meal blood glucose levels.

The findings help expand the overall body of scientific knowledge about how foods impact inflammation, but "the goal is to identify the components and then get human evidence to support their mechanism of action in the body," said Brad Bolling, Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"Ultimately, we would like to see these components optimized in foods, particularly for medical situations where it's important to inhibit inflammation through the diet. We think this is a promising approach."

Disrupted Body Clock May Cause Mood Disorders

LONDON: Experiencing depression, mood instability, loneliness? Blame the disruption in your body's internal clock, researchers say.

The study, published in *The Lancet Psychiatry*, revealed that disturbances to the body's internal clock or the circadian rhythms are also associated with lower happiness and health satisfaction, and worse cognitive function.

Our 24-hour biological body clock governs the fundamental physiological and behavioural functions including from body temperature to eating habits in almost all organisms.

Disruptions to it may arise from increased activity during rest periods and/or inactivity during the day.

"Our findings indicate an association between altered daily circadian rhythms and mood disorders and well-being," said study author Laura Lyall, from the University of Glasgow.

"The study reinforces the idea that mood disorders are associated with disturbed circadian rhythms, and we provide evidence that altered rest-activity rhythms are also linked to worse subjective well-being and cognitive

ability," Lyall added. The study included data from 91,105 participants aged between 37-73. The researchers objectively measured the rest and activity rhythm patterns which is known as relative amplitude.

The results showed that lower relative amplitude was linked with greater odds of reporting lifetime history of major depression or bipolar disorder.

It was also associated with greater mood instability, higher neuroticism scores, more subjective loneliness, lower happiness and health satisfaction, and slower reaction time.

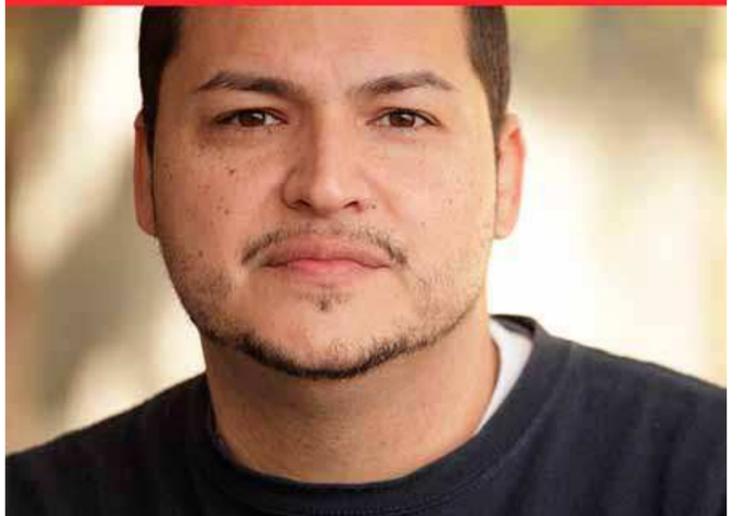
However, the researcher said that the findings showed observational associations rather than cause and effect, and "cannot tell us whether mood disorders and reduced well-being cause disturbed rest-activity patterns, or whether disturbed circadian rhythmicity makes people vulnerable to mood disorders and poorer well-being," Lyall said.

She also noted that rest-activity rhythms differ between younger and older adults which may cause difference in the daily clock and mental health link based on their age.

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