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BAVINA SOOKDEO

We have recently emerged from the restrictions and lockdowns which came with the covid19 pandemic and there is no doubt that some may be struggling to return to this heightened period of activity that is Carnival.

How exactly do you prepare and pace yourself?

Dr Elaine Monica Davis, a qualified medical doctor since 1979, with a keen and passionate focus on the maintenance of wellness and the promotion of healthy lifestyles insists that in order to enjoy yourself properly during Carnival you need to be healthy.

“Stick to the ABCs” she said.

Always stay hydrated – drink lots of water in between alcoholic drinks at fetes and on the road.

“Allow your body to recover – in between family/work duties or increased fete activity. Rest, sleep, eat and try to maintain as many family activities as possible...remember the children and the elderly.

“Be moderate with alcohol intake – this will reduce tiredness during the season, and allow you to enjoy the entire season. Be aware of your surroundings and the people around you – exercise caution and self-control.

“Choose to follow the Ministry of Health’s public health guidelines. Choose to get more sleep, wear sunblock, eat nutritious foods, continue medication if prescribed, pace yourself, drink responsibly.”

So does Dr Davis plan to partake in the Carnival festivities and what precautions will she take?

“I may go to one or two fetes, still undecided,” she laughed.

“I will certainly continue to wear a mask, continue regular hand washing or sanitising, will eat before going out and choose healthy options at events. I will alternate water and alcoholic drinks and limit alcohol a few hours



While Trinis boast about going from fete to fete with little to no sleep, a good night’s rest is actually very important to your overall health and to give you stamina for the season.

Pace yourself:

tips to get fit for Carnival

before leaving if I am driving. Getting enough sleep is also a must.”

How does the doctor think others can prepare themselves for this period, mentally, physically and emotionally?

Mentally: “Plan ahead,” she said.

“Life has to go on during the Carnival season and after. Consider putting in place all financial and other obligations so that there are no surprises after the Carnival is over. Consider Carnival like a mini staycation – pace yourself so that you remain mentally healthy for when it is all over.”

She further pointed out that Carnival is not going to cure whatever problems you may have – it might help you cope better after, but only if you make a mental note that after Carnival you still need to solve the problem(s), so think positive thoughts and truly be kind to yourself.

Emotionally: “Limit alcohol intake,” she advised, “as it can blur judgement and make some people argumentative. This can lead to unnecessary misunderstandings, break-ups and violence... all of which can cause emotional distress at varying levels. Reconnect or keep connected to your belief system – this will keep you emotionally



Dr Elaine Monica Davis

grounded. Keep a positive outlook.”

Physically: Make healthy lifestyle choices. “Exercise regularly, eat balanced and regular meals, rest, relax and sleep,” she said..

“Try not to ‘get fit’ too quickly, or to lose a lot of weight in too short a time. Use of uppers and downers to ‘feel right’ is definitely not recommended and can have fatal consequences. Engage in positive behaviours.

“Wearing sunscreen is also important for everyone who spends a prolonged period in the sun as ultraviolet rays can be quite harmful. Sunscreen with a higher SPF is recommended, especially for the Carnival days on the road, as it offers longer protection, and can be re-applied as needed.”

Does Dr Davis recommend taking vitamins?

“Vitamins, particularly C, helps to prevent infection and boost the immune system,” she said, “and vitamin D helps with bone



Guests having a good time at UWI Fete. As you get pumping this Carnival, remember to take care of yourself. PHOTO BY SUREASH CHOLAI

and immune support. Remember eating fresh fruits and vegetables is a great way to get vitamins.”

Your health and fitness journey should not end when Carnival ends. Dr Davis recommends that you continue with positive thoughts, feelings and actions and if you still feel burdened or stressed, seek appropriate assistance.

Dietitian Dana Chong also reiterated some of the doctor’s sentiments advising persons to “remember to stay hydrated with low-calorie, low-sugar beverages and keep your body fuelled. Ensure to pack healthy snacks or even easy-to-eat foods such as a sandwich if you won’t be buying any street foods.”

There are a few fad diets or trending diets out there that people frequently follow in order to lose weight fast. Some of them include the ketogenic diet, the carnivore diet, and intermittent fasting.

The ketogenic diet involves having a low-carbohydrate, high-fat diet. Chong pointed out that some research has shown the ketogenic diet and low carbohydrate diets are helpful in managing blood sugars, however it is important to consult and work closely with your doctor to adjust your medication dosage if necessary and your dietitian to follow a healthy ketogenic diet. “What is important

in following a ketogenic diet is choosing healthy fat options rather than choosing not so healthy fats which in the long-term can affect your heart health and lead to cardiovascular diseases,” she said.

The carnivore diet on the other hand focuses on a meat-only diet with zero carbs. Foods in this diet include red meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and certain dairy products. This diet however eliminates essential nutrients and fibre in the diet that you get from whole grains, legumes and nuts, fruits and vegetables. Animal foods are also high in saturated fats which in the long-term can raise your “bad cholesterol” levels in the body which can lead to cardiovascular diseases.

“This diet is not recommended for persons with diabetes as having diabetes increases your chances of developing heart diseases especially when following an unhealthy diet,” said Chong.

According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, intermittent fasting is an eating pattern that involves switching between periods of fasting and eating on a regular schedule. An example of eating patterns include having meals and snacks within an eight-hour period for the day and fasting for the remaining 16 hours of the day.

● **PACE YOURSELF** continues on page 4

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Skin care for playing mas

BAVINA SOOKDEO

“The skin is our largest organ,” said skin specialist Anisha Singh, “and it not only protects our bodies by covering everything that is inside the body but it also helps us to have a sense of touch and keeps our bodies at the right temperature.”

A dermatologist, Dr Singh has been practising for about 10 years. She has worked at the skin clinic at the Port of Spain (PoS) General Hospital for one year before pursuing a master’s in dermatology at King’s College in the UK. She then returned to TT where she worked at the Eastern Regional Health Authority before opening her private practice.

Her own interest and issues with her skin is what drove Singh to delve further into the field of dermatology. She struggled with acne since she was a teenager and was actually a patient at the skin clinic in the hospital while she was a medical student. There she finally got some relief.



Skin specialist Dr Anisha Singh

“When I worked at PoS at the skin clinic, I saw that people’s skin not only affected their appearance but also their whole lives, their relationships, their jobs and of course their general health,” she said.

We asked Singh to give us some tips on how those venturing out for Carnival can take care of their skin.



In this file photo, masqueraders have fun in the sun on Carnival Tuesday. Make sure to wear sunscreen when venturing out this Carnival.

FILE PHOTO/JEFF K MAYERS

She began by describing the makeup of the skin.

The skin is made up of three layers – the epidermis, the dermis and the subcutaneous layer.

The epidermis is the layer on the outside – the part which we see and apply cream to. The epidermis

is made up of scale-like cells called squamous cells. Below those cells are round, basal cells. The deepest part of the epidermis also contains cells which give the skin its colour. These are called melanocytes and they produce melanin. Under the epidermis is the dermis

which contains nerve endings, blood vessels, oil glands, sweat glands, collagen and elastin.

Nerve endings in the dermis are what help us to feel something when we touch it. The brain and nervous system send and receive messages about the object being touched. This therefore helps us to avoid injury. If we touch something extremely hot, the nerve will instantly send a message to the brain which will immediately instruct the muscles to jerk the hand away from the object.

The blood vessels in the dermis bring oxygen and nutrients to the skin cells and they take away waste.

The oil glands produce sebum to keep the skin lubricated and protected.

Sweat glands produce sweat which is sent to the top of the via sweat pores.

The third layer of skin is the subcutaneous layer which is mostly fat. This layer helps to keep the body warm and absorbs shock. It also holds the skin to tissues below it.

The start of hair is found in this layer. Attached to the hair follicle is a hair erector muscle which when contracted will cause the hair to stand and when relaxed will cause the hair to lie flat.

● **SKIN CARE**
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● **PACE YOURSELF**
from page 3

“Some research has shown that intermittent fasting can help in lowering fasting blood sugars and reducing the body’s

Get plenty rest and drink lots of water

resistance to insulin in persons with type 2 diabetes,” Chong noted, “however, this eating pattern is not



Zumba instructor Nadia Lorick.

movement across various genres of music, including but not limited to, salsa, merengue, reggaeton, cumbia, Bollywood, Afrobeats, bachata and of course, our local favourite, soca.

As Lorick explained, “In a nutshell it is a programme that offers the perfect combo of fun and fitness. You just cannot help but feel your spirit elevate and be unapologetically happy after each Zumba class.”

The energetic instructor pointed out that Zumba provides increased awareness of better living.

“Clients tend to adopt positive external changes to their lifestyle (better eating habits, partake in other activities such as hiking, yoga, meditation, spend more quality time with their loved ones) all because of the transformations they experience at Zumba class.”

Asked how she thinks individuals can pace themselves for this heightened period of activity, Lorick, who has been in the field for 10 years said, “Be sure to get sufficient rest – nothing beats seven to eight hours of quality sleep, eat a balanced diet so you will get all the required nutrients to keep your energy levels up and drink lots of water (add a sprinkle of Himalayan salt in it to get those extra minerals the body requires).”

recommended for persons with type 1 diabetes as they must take a set amount of insulin in the morning and evening, therefore fasting during these periods can lead to dangerously low blood sugar levels.”

As with the ketogenic diet, following an intermittent fasting eating pattern should

involve your doctor for approval and your dietitian for nutrition advice and guidance.

Zumba instructor Nadia Lorick usually sees an increase in the number of students registering for Carnival.

Zumba fitness is a Latin-inspired dance fitness programme that incorporates

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● SKIN CARE
from page 4

Wear sunscreen to protect your skin

The skin is very effective in maintaining homeostasis, the balanced internal environment of the body. Homeostasis is necessary since our cells and body will be healthy at a specific temperature and that is 98.6°F (37°C). Messages are sent from the hypothalamus of the brain and so the skin responds accordingly.

Sitting at her office at Rodney Branch Road in Endeavour, Chaguanas, Singh explained that it is extremely important to take care of the skin.

“When your skin is in good health, it decreases your chances of getting infections that could enter the body and make you ill. These could be bacterial, fungal, viral and they can infect the skin.”

She said cuts and scrapes allow entry points for such things to get into the body and affect the rest of the internal body too.

“So when the skin is in good health, there are decreased chances of such things happening and your confidence is increased. People are able to, in the literal sense of the word, put their best face forward and even in the theoretical sense” she said.

So down to preparing the skin for the greatest show on earth. How can one do this?

As Singh pointed out, prepping your skin for Carnival should start long before that – it definitely does not happen overnight.

“The skin will regenerate itself in roughly six weeks so you want to start prepping it in advance. We have a little less than a month before Carnival hits us so from now, there are small things you can do to have better appearance of the skin by Carnival time,” she said.

Her approach to skin care is to be gentle and very consistent.

“People feel that you have to be a little harsher on the skin to get faster, better results and that is not so. You can actually be counteractive and do the opposite.”

Singh advised using a gentle cleanser twice a day to wash the face and the body. You must also moisturise even if you have oily



When visiting the beach, apply sunscreen every time you take a swim. First, pat the water dry and then reapply sunscreen. PHOTO BY AYANNA KISNALE

skin.

There are different types of moisturisers and when you find one that is right for your skin, moisturise twice a day after washing.

She also stressed the importance of using sunscreen.

“Every single day, not only the days you’re leaving the house or going to the beach, you need to find a broad spectrum sunscreen (preferably mineral sunscreen with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide),” she explained.

“If you have a type of job where you sweat a lot too, you are to reapply sunscreen every couple hours.”

For those venturing to the beaches and rivers she advised applying sunscreen every time you take a swim. First, pat the water dry and then reapply sunscreen.

“Some people also overwash the skin,” Singh pointed out, “as some people bathe multiple times for the day and even wash their face

multiple times for the day. This is not very good for the skin. You should not overwash or over scrub the skin – keep it very gentle.”

Many people shy away from truly taking care of the skin because products can be very expensive. However Singh insists that skin care does have to be expensive to be effective.

“There are cost-friendly products out there that you can use, so go with your budget because consistency is also important – you do not want to spend a lot of money on skincare one month and then the next month it is not affordable and you fall off of doing your proper routine,” she cautioned.

“So use skincare within your budget and continue to be consistent.”

A good diet also contributes to the health of skin.

“When someone’s diet is good and they have a healthy lifestyle, including exercise, it shows on the skin,” said Singh

Now, there is still time to do things like chemical peels and laser treatments but the doctor warns against having such procedures done closer to Carnival.

“Do not do chemical peels or laser treatments the day before or even the week before Carnival and then go into the sun (for Carnival) and expose your skin to UV rays. That is very harmful to the skin” she said.

When it is closer to Carnival, Singh advised that you should not apply perfumes to the skin.

“You can put yourself at risk of getting photodermatitis of some sort, and the makeup you use should be hypoallergenic.

On the day of Carnival,” she reiterated, “wear sunscreen. Make sure you apply it at least half an hour before you go out into the sun, pack it in your bag so you can reapply it every two hours and remember to pat off all the sweat and then reapply.”

This, she noted, can be done quite easily since sunscreens now come in convenient forms – sprays, sticks, powders and creams.

“If you use serums with acids or retinol serums, you should not use them in the daytime and go out in the sun to play mas. That would be very harmful to the skin,” she said.

To protect your skin while you play mas, Singh recommended that you seek shade as best as possible (especially between the hours of 11 am to 3 pm) and wear a hat, protective clothing and cover all exposed areas with sunscreen. Hydration is also of extreme importance.

“Alcohol will make you dehydrated so in between every alcoholic beverage that you take, drink a glass or a bottle of water,” she advised.

For children, the key is gentle skin care. Singh insists that you do not apply any scented products on children’s skin.

“You do not want to put them at risk of developing allergic

dermatitis, contact dermatitis to perfumes, things that have a number of preservatives, etc. You want to see the words hypoallergenic and unscented on products.”

She asked that parents not over bathe the children as they are stripping important, natural oils that the skin makes.

“Two baths per day is quite enough,” she said.

“After baths, ensure you moisturise the children’s skin. Children tend to play outside in the sun so you should apply a gentle, hypoallergenic sunscreen on your child every day, especially when they are playing outside. If they’re at the beach, don’t forget to reapply sunscreen on them, let them wear a hat, rashguard/protective clothing and seek shade at peak hours.”

When Carnival is over, you will have a lot of dirt, sweat and sunscreen on your skin so it is very important to clean your skin after you party hard.

Singh told us how to do this. “Some people will prefer to use a micellar water or cleansing balm or oil,” she said. “You can use these to remove the dirt before washing the face. If you happen to get sunburn, you can use aloe vera gels which will help with healing depending on the severity of the burn. You can use a burn cream but remember to keep the skin hydrated and drink a lot of water. Do not peel at the peeling skin if you do get a sunburn.”

Aesthetician Ziena Ramnanan of Rejuvium Skin Care in Cocoyea, San Fernando disclosed that many people are already going to her for skin lightening treatments, firming facials, intimate lightening peels, waxing a lot more. She admits that the number of people coming in for such procedures increases close to Carnival. “After Carnival,” she said, “the most popular treatments that people seek out are hydrating facials, bio-cellulose masks and body scrubs.”






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BAVINA SOOKDEO

Many of us take our eyesight for granted.

The reality is that living with poor vision or in total darkness can have a devastating impact on the quality of life for many individuals, their families and by extension society.

Taking care of your eyes is extremely important and taking care of them at Carnival time is no different.

CEO and eye surgeon at Caribbean Vitreous and Retina Surgery Ltd and Trinidad Eye Hospital, Dr Ronnie Bhola offered some advice on how we can take care of our eyes this Carnival.

“Whether you are on the beach or the road for Carnival weekend,” he said, “sunlight and bright glare can decrease the amount of fun you’re having. Fortunately, this issue can be resolved with the use of polarised sunglasses or lenses.”

Bhola explained that polarised sunglasses are made with a special chemical to filter sunlight from passing through.

“You may think of this lens similar to window shades/blinds that only allow a certain amount of light to pass through. They block horizontal light rays which are usually emitted from smooth surfaces including cars and water surfaces” he noted.

This means that only light rays that approach your eyes vertically can fit through those openings. The resulting image with polarised lenses is a bit darker than usual, but objects look crisper and clearer, and details are easier to see.

So what advantages do polarised lenses offer? Improved visual comfort, improved contrast and visual clarity as well as reduced glare and eye strains.

Many who wear glasses will be participating in Carnival festivities. Dr Bhola advises people may consider using contact lenses.

“Contact lenses are convenient, hassle free and you eliminate the risk of your glasses falling, breaking or getting lost” he said.

Contact lens modalities usually vary between monthly, bi-weekly and daily wear, however, daily disposables would be recommended for Carnival. Daily disposables are one-time use lenses which are then thrown away – no cleaning or storage is necessary.

Similar to your glasses, contact lenses are also now available with transitions, UV and blue light protection.

“Even without the protection offered by sunglasses, your eyes naturally defend themselves from harm. Your eyelashes and tears work together to prevent small particles and debris from getting stuck in the eyes,” said Bhola, “and lashes usually prevent debris and other small particles from entering the eye while tears rinse out and drain the particles that do get in the eye.”

Occasionally, a solid object or projectile can adhere to the eye or embed itself below the surface of the eye. If this happens to you during the Carnival season you can wash your eyes with saline or purchase an eye wash at the pharmacy. You can also consider using artificial tears for dry or irritable eyes.

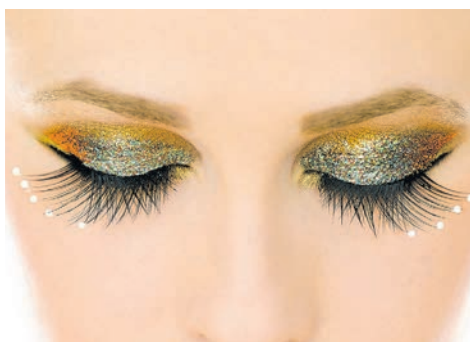
He noted that eye care safety is very important and persons should follow three most important rules of wearing sunglasses, removing contact lenses and all eye makeup before going to bed.

Many of you may opt to wear false eyelashes when heading out to fetes and



Wearing proper sunglasses, such as those with polarised lenses, can help protect your eyes as you enjoy your Carnival activities. FILE PHOTO/JEFF K MAYERS

Sunglasses, false lashes: what's best for your eyes



False eyelashes and lash extensions are often used during Carnival.



If not properly applied and taken care of, lash extensions can damage your eyes.

while playing mas. While they look quite elegant, Ibraheem Mohammed, optometrist at CVRS and Trinidad Eye Hospital says, “False lashes are usually applied with temporary adhesives to the lids and while they can be an exciting accessory, the glue and lashes used can present a risk to one’s ocular health.”

He further explained that most commonly, allergic reactions may occur, especially with adhesives containing formaldehyde.

Persons may experience itching, burning,

lid swelling and periorbital rashes may develop.

“Even more gravely,” he added, “infections may occur (blepharitis,) when there is a build-up of bacteria on the lash bases, which can then track into the eyes causing conjunctivitis.”

This can result in the cornea becoming irritated with scratches and erosions.

“Damage to eyelash follicles themselves, can also occur if not removed carefully”

Mohammed pointed out.

“This can result in reduced and abnormal direction of lash regrowth”

Mohammed’s advice to people who wear false eyelashes is:

- Limit wear time.
- Limit the amount of adhesive used.
- Avoid glues which contain formaldehyde.
- Be gentle when removing your lashes and try for no remnants to enter the eye.
- Practise good ocular hygiene by frequently cleaning your natural lashes with an oil-free cleanser and avoid sharing with others.

“If at any time you experience pain, redness, blurred vision or increased light sensitivity while wearing your lashes, immediately remove them,” he warned, “and if the problem persists, visit your eye care practitioner immediately.”

Dr Ronnie Bhola, CEO and eye surgeon at Caribbean Vitreous and Retina Surgery Limited and Trinidad Eye Hospital.



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BAVINA SOOKDEO

“You have diabetes.” We are certain this diagnosis got you a little depressed but it is by no means a death sentence.

When properly managed, you can lead a normal and healthy life and that means even enjoying the many fetes, parties and mas during Carnival.

Dr Elaine Monica Davis explained that “diabetes mellitus (the more common type, which people often call ‘sugar’) can be described as a chronic, non-communicable disease (NCD) which disturbs the normal metabolism of blood sugar in the body.

“Abnormal metabolism can result in high levels of glucose in the blood (hyperglycaemia) or low levels of glucose in the blood (hypoglycaemia). Both of these extremes can be deadly, so it is important for people with diabetes mellitus to monitor their blood glucose levels closely, and take their medication as prescribed.”

She insisted that “management of diabetes mellitus must be consistent in order for optimal blood glucose control. Whether on medication or not, affected persons should try to prevent any spikes or drops in their blood sugar levels.”

So how do you manage your diabetes at Carnival time?

Newsday consulted registered dietitian Dana Chong to get some advice.

Chong is a graduate of the University of the West Indies, St Augustine and is registered with the Board of Nutritionists and Dietitians in TT.

Indeed Carnival, deemed “the greatest show on earth,” is a festive time when people indulge in all our tasty local foods and alcohol. According to the Chong, “everything should be enjoyed in moderation. It’s not that we can’t enjoy our local foods or have a taste of a beer or wine, but it is about how much we consume as well as how regularly we consume those foods and beverages.”

For those with diabetes who wish to partake in the festivities of Carnival, Chong offered a few tips:

- When buying food outside, keep in mind how the food was prepared. When choosing street foods, remember to look for food options that are low in salt, low in fat and low in sugar. Look for foods prepared with healthier cooking methods such as baking, grilling, roasting, steaming or boiling.

- Pack a snack for if you get hungry in between meals. Snacking is not a bad thing, it is actually beneficial to persons with diabetes in maintaining a steady blood sugar level throughout the day, especially if actively participating in Carnival. A



Before heading to your Carnival activities, check your blood sugar level.

Managing your diabetes during the festivities



Dietician Dana Chong.



Avoid drinking excessive amounts of alcohol which can cause blood sugar levels to fluctuate.

healthy snack option for the road can be nuts, dried fruit, popcorn, whole wheat crackers, loose granola, or unsweetened peanut punch.

- Look out for signs of high or low blood sugar levels. Signs of

high blood sugar include feeling extremely thirsty, urinating more than often, feeling weak or tired and having blurry vision. Signs of low blood sugar on the other hand include shaking, cold sweating, rapid heartbeat,

dizziness, hunger and confusion. You can always bring along your blood glucose monitor to test your blood sugar if you suspect that your blood sugars may be high or low when out on the road.

- Avoid drinking excessive

amounts of alcohol which can cause blood sugar levels to fluctuate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the US recommends that adults of legal drinking age limit their alcohol intake to two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women. It may seem impossible for some people to stick within these recommendations, however it is good advice as alcohol has a lot of empty calories and may be counteractive for persons trying to lose weight and keep their blood sugars under control.

- According to Dr Davis, hydration is necessary.

“A good state of hydration is important for everyone, and in people with diabetes mellitus, it could be even more important.”

Chong said people should limit the number of sugar-sweetened beverages that they consume. One 500 ml soft drink may have about twice the amount of sugar that is recommended for the day. According to the American Heart Association, women should consume no more than 25 grammes or six teaspoons of added sugars per day and men should consume no more than 36 grammes or nine teaspoons of added sugars per day. Beverages with added sugars can spike your blood sugars very quickly and can also contribute to inflammation in the body. Only if blood sugars are very low, you can take some sips of a soft drink to help bring it back up to normal levels.

- Avoid consuming energy drinks to give you “energy” as they tend to be very high in sugar and have minimal nutritional value. Instead, choose low-calorie, low-sugar beverages such as water, fruit infused water, one hundred per cent fruit juice, and even soda water with a splash of fruit juice if feeling for a refreshing, fizzy beverage with much less sugar.

Asked why she chose her field of study, Chong said she has always been passionate about food and nutrition.

“I was always fascinated by the nutrition aspect of the subject particularly when my then teacher would educate us about how we can plan meals for someone who may need more of a certain nutrient in their diet. At this point it heightened my interest in learning more about the foods that we eat.”

So what does the food lover and dietitian suggest as meal options for diabetics?

She first explained that when planning a meal, an easy method to use is the “healthy plate” method which shows you how you can arrange your plate to ensure that you get a variety of nutrients in appropriate portions.

“Imagine your typical nine-inch dinner plate and divide it into quarters,” she said. “One quarter of the plate should be your carbohydrate foods or starchy vegetables such as rice, pasta, cassava, green fig, breadfruit or couscous for example. The next quarter of the plate should be your protein foods such as peas, beans and/or lean meat, fish, poultry or egg. The last half of your plate should be vegetables (whether they are cooked or raw) such as chunky vegetables, chow mein, bhaji, bodi, or simply a fresh salad or some sliced cucumbers.”

Her meal suggestions are:

Healthy breakfast

- Whole wheat sada roti
- Tuna cooked with cabbage and carrots

Healthy mid-morning snack

- Pineapple chow

Healthy lunch

- Vegetable rice
- Lentil peas
- Baked chicken
- Sliced cucumbers

Healthy mid-afternoon snack

- Peanut and raisin mix

Healthy dinner

- Whole wheat wrap
- Stripped chicken breast
- Shredded lettuce, cabbage, tomatoes and/or carrots

Chong said healthy eating does not have to be foods that are difficult to prepare.

“Our local foods can be healthy,” she said, “what is important is how we prepare it and how much we eat at one time.”



A whole wheat chicken wrap is a healthy dinner option.

Dr Davis added that the use of sunscreen is also important for everyone who spends a prolonged period in the sun, including diabetics. Ultraviolet rays can be quite harmful to the skin on over-exposure. Sunscreen with a higher SPF is recommended, especially for the Carnival days on the road, as it offers longer protection, and can be re-applied as needed.

As for diabetics with disorders of the eyes, Dr Davis explained, “Blurred vision could be a symptom of high or low blood sugar. However, when one refers to eye disorders in diabetics, one is normally speaking about diabetic retinopathy, which is a disorder at the back of the eye, and can be detected by a dilated eye examination. All persons with diabetes mellitus (irrespective of Carnival) should have an annual screening examination.”



Staying hydrated is important and especially so if you're diabetic.



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BAVINA SOOKDEO

Moving to the sounds of pan and chipping down the street next to the music truck for Carnival, it may be quite easy to not notice exactly how loud those sweet sounds are and just how harmful they are to your ears and to your hearing.

Whether you are a fete-goer, pannist, drummer or a worker in a loud environment, noise-induced hearing loss is possible.

What exactly is noise-induced hearing loss?

According to Dr Sidheshwar Pandey, a clinical audiologist for more than 15 years, noise-induced hearing loss is a type of sensorineural hearing loss caused by loud sounds that damage the delicate inner ear structure.

It can result from exposure to loud noises over an extended period of time, such as the noise produced at industrial workplaces, or it can happen after being exposed to a single intense impulse sound, such as an explosion.

"Playing in a band, attending loud concerts/fete, and listening to music loudly through earbuds or headphones are all recreational activities that put you at risk for noise-induced hearing loss," he pointed out.

Pandey explained that hearing depends on a series of events that convert sound waves into electrical signals. In the inner ear, our healthy cochlear hair cells can send these electrical signals to our brain. Numerous tiny hair cells that move in response to sound are found inside the fluid-filled cochlea. Hair cells are vulnerable to large movements. Loud sounds cause the fluid in the inner ear to move more, which can damage the hair cells and eventually cause cell death.

Aside from hearing loss, exposure to loud noise can cause tinnitus (a ringing, buzzing, or roaring in the ears or head).

"Tinnitus," said Dr Pandey, "may subside over time. Although, for some people, it is temporary, while for others, it may last their entire lives."

You might need to visit an audiologist if the tinnitus is bothersome enough or begins to affect your quality of life.

You may be familiar with the word decibel which is a unit used to measure the intensity of sound. Asked how many decibels would be considered too loud for humans, Pandey said, "The human's inner ear can be harmed by sounds that are louder than 85 decibels (dB) based on the scientific evidence and widely acknowledged international standards. The usual sound level in nightclubs, concerts, and other musical events is between 100 and 120 dB."

A sound level metre is used to measure noise or sound levels. How do you detect if something is too loud without having the necessary testing equipment?

Pandey pointed out that a typical person may tell whether the noises are too loud if they can't hear or understand someone who is three feet away from them or if they have to raise their voice in order to be heard.

"Modern technology" he noted, "allows smartphone users to measure the approximate sound level using a variety of noise measurement apps."

So the ultimate question is how can you protect your ears and hearing during Carnival and even at work?

Pandey prescribes avoiding loud noises wherever possible.



When feteing for Carnival, try to party as far away from the speakers as possible. FILE PHOTO/DAVID REID

How loud is too loud?



Clinical audiologist Dr Sidheshwar Pandey

"When attending a carnival event, one should stay as far away from loudspeakers as possible and wear ear plugs, earmuffs, or custom hearing protection to protect one's ears."

There is no doubt the children will be out and about too, and it is of extreme importance to protect their ears as well. Pandey advised parents to always carry earplugs that fit their child's ears.

"Parents should make sure their children are wearing earplugs or earmuffs when they attend Carnival events and they should also move themselves and their children away from amplifiers that blast music," he warned.

He also advised that exposure time for children (to loud music) should be limited during Carnival.



Members of Uptown Fascinators perform during Panorama small conventional bands semi-finals. Musicians exposed to loud music, should wear earplugs. PHOTO BY JIMMEL DANIEL/PAN TRINBAGO

"The more time spent in loud sound, the more damage it can cause. Educate your children on the importance of protecting their own hearing and how noise exposure causes hearing loss" Dr Pandey said. It is important to do whatever you can to protect your hearing and that of your children as there is no cure for hearing loss. He warned, "Noise-induced hearing loss is permanent and cannot be repaired with medication or surgery. However, it is completely preventable if adequate hearing protection is worn."

If a child complains of ear discomfort and the parents notice more hardened earwax in the ear, the ear should never be prodded using a cotton swab, a finger, or any other object. This can further pack the wax in or damage the vulnerable eardrum.

You can soften and loosen earwax using olive oil. Use a glass dropper to put two drops of room temperature olive oil in the ear twice a day for up to a week. It is recommended that earwax removal be performed typically in a doctor's office.

Reaching out to an audiologist and getting your hearing evaluated is always a wise decision, whether you just want a baseline hearing assessment or you have hearing difficulties. You can get your hearing tested as well as custom-made earplugs at the TT Association for the Hearing Impaired, Dretchi Unit or a few other private clinics.

Dretchi can be contacted at 623-0612/3 (extension 2300). The cost of hearing tests there varies and is dependent on whether you are a child, adult or pensioner.



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Well-fitting sneakers with socks are a good option for Carnival when thinking about foot-health. FILE PHOTO/SUREASH CHOLAI

BAVINA SOOKDEO

“The feet are the masterpiece of engineering. They are required to withstand forces equivalent to hundreds of tonnes everyday. They carry us an incredible distance of 70,000 miles in our lifetime. It is ironic though that we give so much time to face and body but our feet do not get the attention they deserve.”

So says foot specialist Ann Lima, a podiatrist who has been in the medical field for 50 years. Lima also spoke about the importance of diabetics taking proper care of their feet.

“It is a well known fact that nine out of 10 persons suffer from foot problems sometime in their life,” Lima noted, “unfortunately, if not treated, feet can deteriorate. Many common foot problems may be prevented by regular visits to a podiatrist. Suffering will be eliminated in the early stages and healthy feet will be maintained.”

Our feet contain 26 bones. They are bound together by ligaments, supported by muscles and supplied by blood vessels and nerves.

So how exactly should one take care of them?

Lima explained: wash them daily with warm water and soap, and dry them thoroughly especially between the toes and the nails. If the skin is dry, a good body lotion should be applied to feet and legs but not between the toes. If you have diabetes or even if you are non-diabetic and cannot

Caring for your feet to hit ‘d road’

see well to cut your nails, safely use an emery board to file the nails. Always cut nails and/or file straight across. Do not cut too short as you may cut your skin.

Lima said people with diabetes should inspect their feet every day for the rest of their life.

“You’re looking for red spots, black spots, cuts, blisters, bruising, swelling, corns, calluses, warts – basically anything that is abnormal so that you can report it to your medical professionals,” she said.

“Do not pick at corns or peeling skin” she said “and never use corn plasters or hot water bottles. Wear socks if your feet are cold. Always wear clean socks and never go barefoot. Shoes should be fitted properly and comfortably at all times.”

Lima pointed out that new shoes should gradually be broken in for all persons.

“At Carnival, because of the wear and tear of footwear and being on your feet, you should have properly fitted footwear. Some patients may need custom-made foot orthotics which can

reduce the impact on the heels, longitudinal arches, metatarsal pressure to ease pain and suffering (especially those who do not have inserts).”

Such custom-made orthotics can be done by Lima and her son Ryan Lima, a foot health professional. People with varicosities (twisted, enlarged veins) should wear compression stockings as it will help them a lot with standing and walking.

If you plan to visit the beach or river Lima insists that you have proper beach footwear and that you apply sunscreen on your feet to prevent sunburn.

She reiterated that you do not go barefoot as the sand can be very hot and you can get your feet blistered. This will result in a lot of complications particularly for diabetics.

At the river, pebbles and cracks can cause injury.

Use non-skid sneakers and wear socks.

“If there is a bruise or tear in the integrity of the skin,” explained Lima, “the HPV (human

papillomavirus) can enter and cause problems as it can be very painful. This is what a lot of Trinidadians refer to as a ‘fish eye’ and it simply happens because you can be walking on the beach, a shell can prick your foot, and in goes the virus.

“For those with a low immune system, it can stay there and cause a lot of complications so be sure to wear proper footwear.”

Choosing the right type of footwear is necessary as your feet are so important. Your podiatrist will guide you regarding your footwear.

So what exactly is proper footwear? Such footwear suits your foot shape and size.

“A well-fitting shoe should be half an inch longer than your foot and should have plenty of room so that you can move your toes,” Lima explained. “Wearing designer footwear can result in early heel strike. High heel footwear can cause lower back pain and you can be subjected to considerable strain and injury including hip, ankle and foot pain,

so it is extremely important to be educated by your professionals.”

After Carnival, Lima usually sees patients with many injuries as a result of wearing inappropriate footwear. Such injuries include blisters, discoloured nails, fungal nails, lifting off of nails, injuries to toes as a result of persons stepping on each other, sprained or fractured ankles, callosities (corns and calluses), ingrown toenails, fallen arches, swollen feet, corns, heel pain and more. Diabetic foot ulcers are also common after Carnival when diabetics wear shoes that were not meant for them.

Asked whether or not she thinks diabetics should be out and about at Carnival time Lima explained, “Putting the diabetics into groups – low risk, high risk and high risk with an ulcerated foot – I do not recommend that the high risk with the ulcerated foot go out at Carnival time.

“For the low risk and those who are high-risk and do not have ulcers, I want them to be extremely cautious when venturing out.” She advised that they test their blood sugar before leaving home to ensure it is at the normal level.

“Their footwear should be socks and well cushioned and comfortable sneakers,” she pointed out.

Hydration is also important for diabetics so be sure to pack your water.

“Water is essential not only for our feet but for our entire body. Water enables the entire body to have a better blood flow especially feet as they are far from the heart. It also helps to flush out uric acid from those who suffer from gout (yet another foot problem). Water helps tired feet and cramps can also be caused by under hydration,” said Lima.

She advises anyone who isn’t feeling well to seek medical aid and know what your blood sugar level is like.

“Keep glucose sweets with you just in case your blood sugar runs low. Take your medications and always remember if you are non-compliant, persons with diabetes will suffer great complications.”

Early detection of diabetes is important, Lima noted and diabetics should be educated on their condition and how to manage it.

“Bear in mind, you must be compliant and must continue with your care. You may probably have to make some lifestyle changes.”

She advised, “Remember your professionals are there – there is a multidisciplinary team. If you do not understand something, please seek education from your podiatrist, foot health professional or your diabetic nurse educator. If you consider all these things and comply, you will have good feet for the rest of your life.”