

Futa

YOUR HEALTH E-NEWSLETTER FROM MEDGAMBIA.COM

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ROUTINE MEDICAL CHECK-UP

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A routine medical check-up should be a regular feature of one's life in this day and age. Once too often, people have ended up with a medical condition in the latter years of their lives which could have been picked up and managed successfully early on.

Younger people usually consider themselves to be "too healthy" at times, but most of the changes that lead to chronic health problems actually start to show themselves from around the age of thirty if not earlier. Visiting your doctor once or twice a year is not a bad idea at all for apparently healthy individuals.

History Taking

Your personal physician would probably start by asking if there are any symptoms that you have been experiencing lately. He/She might follow up by asking you specific questions to try and exclude certain conditions.

This is the right time to bring out all the health problems that you have been experiencing since your previous visit. It is important not to withhold any information as this may hamper the diagnostic process. All information provided is strictly confidential.



reflect kidney function. The kidneys excrete these two substances amongst others. If the kidneys are not functioning well then the Urea and Creatinine levels become raised.

Random Blood Sugar (RBS) and Fasting Blood Sugar (FBS)

Blood sugar levels are the mainstay of diagnosis with respect to diabetes. An extremely high RBS can be diagnostic, but the FBS is a more accurate diagnostic test. The FBS sample is usually taken after an overnight fast.

Blood Lipid (Fat) Profile

High blood lipid levels of certain fats such as Low Density Lipoproteins (LDL) and Very Low Density Lipoproteins (VLDL) are risk factors for cardiovascular diseases.

Chest X-Ray

Chest x-rays can pick up abnormalities in the lung fields and some heart-related abnormalities.

Electrocardiogram (ECG)

An ECG is recommended for people above the age of 40 years. It detects stress patterns in the heart muscles and can give a general view of the state of one's heart.

Your doctor will decide which of the above investigations you require, and may order additional tests as he sees fit.

Physical Examination

The doctor may proceed to do a physical exam. He/She may concentrate on certain areas depending on the history gathered above.

The physical usually starts with a general examination, followed by an examination of the individual systems (Central Nervous System, Cardiovascular and Respiratory systems, Gastrointestinal, Genitourinary and Musculoskeletal systems).

Investigations

Based on the history taken and the physical findings, the doctor can now order some investigations. This usually includes the following:

A Full Blood Count and Sickling Test

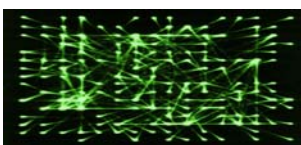
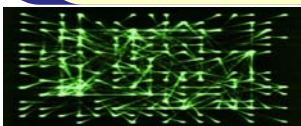
This will detect abnormal haemoglobin(Hb) levels and abnormal blood cell numbers.

Hb levels are low in anaemic states. White blood cell numbers are increased in infections and extremely raised in some blood borne cancers such as leukemia. A sickling test is necessary to establish one's status as Sick cell disease and it's carrier status are not uncommon in The Gambia.

Kidney Function Tests

Blood Urea and Creatinine levels

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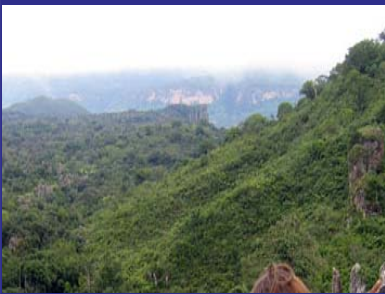


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For more information about common symptoms, values for normal Lab tests and specific diseases visit

www.medgambia.com or contact us via e-mail on mcham@medgambia.com

This e-newsletter is named after the Futa Jalon highlands in Guinea. The "Water Tower" of West Africa". The head waters of the Gambia, Senegal and Niger rivers all have their sources there.



The grass is rich and green and the rainfall is plenty.

This is a healthy region by all standards, and we hope to inspire an equally healthy Gambian population by naming this e-newsletter after the origin of one of our most prized possessions: The River Gambia.

Have a pleasant read...

From,
The medgambia team

BIRD FLU: THE SAGA CONTINUES

The Bird Flu saga refuses to come to an end. In the first week of May 2007, Ghana recorded its first case of the disease at a poultry farm in the Southern port city of Tema. While praying that the disease never reaches Gambian soil, we do have to prepare just in case it does reach Gambian soil at some point. The Health authorities in the Gambia have indicated their readiness to combat any such event. But the cooperation of the general public will be needed.

Culling of Birds

Detection of the disease at a poultry farm will be followed by unpleasant activities:

- The area will have to be restricted
 - All poultry within a certain radius will be culled
- Movement of poultry products in and out of the restricted area will be forbidden.

These control measures constitute huge financial losses, but they are necessary losses.

There will be a huge temptation on the part of poultry farmers and traders within the restricted area to quickly sell off their poultry or even hide them before the health authorities get to them. This will not be in the best interest of the



public. Any suspicious activity on the part of poultry traders at such a time has to be reported. People also have to be wary of cheaper than usual poultry products at such a time as this might be due to desperate farmers or traders trying to get rid of birds from the restricted area.

There are different types of avian influenza (bird flu) viruses. But the H5 N1 strain has the ability to cause severe disease in humans and this is why the disease has become so important.

Symptoms in humans include:

- a high fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting
- abdominal pain
- chest pain
- Muscle pains

We remain hopeful that The Gambia will not come into contact with the disease. But if she does, it will require a team effort with health authorities on the one hand, and the general public on the other.

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CONTROLLING ALLERGIC RHINITIS

Allergic Rhinitis refers to reactions mediated by an antibody called Immunoglobulin E (Ig E) which is produced by the body's immune system. Some people are naturally predisposed to producing larger than normal amounts of Ig E. This condition is called **Atopy**, and it runs in families. Atopy makes people more sensitive to substances (Allergens) in the environment like pollen, dust and environmental pollutants.

Symptoms

- Itching of the following areas:
 - Mouth
 - Nose
 - Throat
 - Eyes
- Runny nose, stuffy nose, and reduced sensitivity of sense of smell.
- Cough and sneezing
- Headaches

Hay Fever



Hay fever is the form of allergic rhinitis caused by pollen. The reaction can be caused by pollen released by a variety of plants. People react differently to the different types of pollen released by various plants. Some people start experiencing symptoms of hay fever after moving to a different country or environment. This is because they have now come into contact with the type of pollen they react to in the new environment. It could also be due to the different environmental



pollutants in this new environment.

Most of the allergic reactions in hay fever are produced by grass pollen. For most people therefore, the best way to prevent hay fever is to try and avoid exposure to grass pollen.

Preventive Measures

- Stay indoors as much as possible at the time of year when the grass pollen count is high.
- Stay away from large fields and lawns in the same period.
- Avoid drying clothes outdoors
- Wash hands and face regularly.

Other Allergens

Other causes of allergic rhinitis include the following:

- Dust
 - Moulds
- Environmental Pollutants such as Nitric Oxide (NO)

Again, the best way to prevent such reactions is to avoid expo-

sure to these substances.

Preventive measures include:

- Staying indoors in dusty, windy periods like the Harmattan season.
 - Avoid using anything which can gather dust like carpets, too many curtains etc.
- Wash curtains, bed sheets etc regularly and dry them indoors if possible.

Drugs

For most people, some or most of the above measures might prove impractical and they may have to resort to drug treatment with antihistamines. Non-sedating antihistamines include:

- Acrivastine (*Benadryl Allergy Relief*)
- Cetirizine (*Benadryl One a Day*)

These do not cause drowsiness in most cases.

Sedating antihistamines include:

- Chlorphenamine Maleate (*Piriton*), which causes drowsiness.

Drug of choice and dosage should be chosen by your physician.

"Atopy makes people more sensitive to substances (allergens) in the environment such as pollen."



"Stay indoors as much as possible at the time of year when the grass pollen count is high."



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This website is dedicated to the health and well-being of Gambians and people living in The Gambia.

Our goal is to create a more health-conscious Gambian population that will stay healthy, live longer and thus contribute more effectively to national and international development. [medGambia](http://medGambia.com) will provide information about common health problems in the simplest of terms.



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