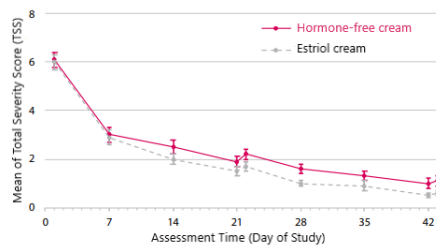


## Vaginal dryness and menopause

VAGINAL dryness is a common condition that can occur at any age, but the likelihood increases particularly with menopause. According to the Malaysian Menopause Society (MMS), more than 55% of Asian women aged between 45-75 years suffer from vaginal dryness.<sup>(1)</sup>

With the onset of menopause, oestrogen levels start to decrease. Oestrogen deficiency can lead to tissues in the vagina and bladder thinning and shrinking. This leads to less vaginal fluid being produced and the skin becomes thinner and more prone to injury. These are perfectly normal changes but they may be associated with considerable discomfort as an increase in vaginal and urinary infections can be the consequence.

Due to the intimate nature of these symptoms, women can be reluctant to seek advice about menopausal symptoms. According to a Pan Asian Revive Study, a questionnaire-based study which also involved Malaysian women, half of the women suffering from menopausal symptoms felt that these problems were part of



**Subjective vaginal symptoms**  
Mean ± SEM (min. 0; max. 16), assessed by dryness, burning, itching and pain on a scale from 0-4

0 = none  
1 = mild  
2 = moderate  
3 = severe  
4 = very severe

Specific moisturising creams are known to counter the symptoms of vaginal dryness.

ageing and seeking advice was not necessary.<sup>(1)</sup>

With menopause being associated with changing hormone levels, Oestrogen-based hormone replacement therapy, whether oral or topical, is often a first-line treatment option. However, some women may not want or be allowed to use hormone replacement therapy.

Those women may choose a hormone-free vaginal cream to ease their symptoms. Studies focusing specifically on that revealed that the cream was found

to be non-inferior as compared to an estriol-containing vaginal cream with regards to the improvement of subjective symptoms of vaginal dryness. A study looking at efficacy and tolerability found that the non-hormonal vaginal moisturising cream was statistically not inferior to estriol 0.1% cream for symptoms such as feelings of dryness, itching, burning sensation and pain. Both showed a significant improvement in impairment of daily life after six weeks of use.<sup>(2)</sup>

For those women that may not want to use estriol-containing



More than half of Asian women aged 45-75 suffer from vaginal dryness.

creams to counter their symptoms of vaginal dryness, a hormone-free moisturising cream may instead be an effective and safe solution.

■ For more information, visit [www.vagisan.my](http://www.vagisan.my)

<sup>(1)</sup> Clinical Practice Guidelines,

*Management of menopause in Malaysia 2022, p13*

<sup>(2)</sup> Garcia de Arriba et al. 'Vaginal hormone-free moisturising cream is not inferior to an estriol cream for treating symptoms of vulvovaginal atrophy: Prospective, randomised study.' PLoS One. 2022. 17 (5):e0266633.



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CORONARY artery disease implies the presence of narrowing or blockages within the arteries that supply oxygen and nutrients to the heart muscles. At present, a coronary angiogram remains the gold standard for the assessment of coronary artery disease. While it may be an invasive procedure, the overall risk of major complications associated with a coronary angiogram remains very low.

A fractional flow reserve (FFR) is an assessment performed as an extension to a coronary angiogram to determine the significance of a particular blockage. The significance of a blockage would depend on the location of the blockage within an artery. If the blockage is at the beginning of the artery, it would lead to more problems as opposed to it being at the end of the artery.

Think of the artery as a water hose with numerous connections to other water sprinklers in the middle of the hose. If there is a blockage at the beginning of the hose, then the effect would be more detrimental as compared to the presence of a blockage at the end of the hose.

Blockages of a similar degree may also confer different consequences if they are present in different arteries as some arteries are larger and are more important compared to the rest.

The FFR assessment is performed using a wire known as a pressure wire. On the wire, there is a pressure sensor located close to its tip to measure the pressure within the artery itself. Pressure will first be measured at the beginning of the artery and once this is done, the pressure wire will then be passed across the blockage to remeasure the pressure after the administration of a medication to ensure that blood flow through the artery is maximal. The FFR is a ratio whereby the pressure after the blockage is divided by the pressure at the beginning of the artery.

Theoretically, blood flow is proportional to pressure. Hence, if there is presence of a severe blockage leading to a reduction of blood flow, the pressure after the blockage will also be reduced. This would yield an

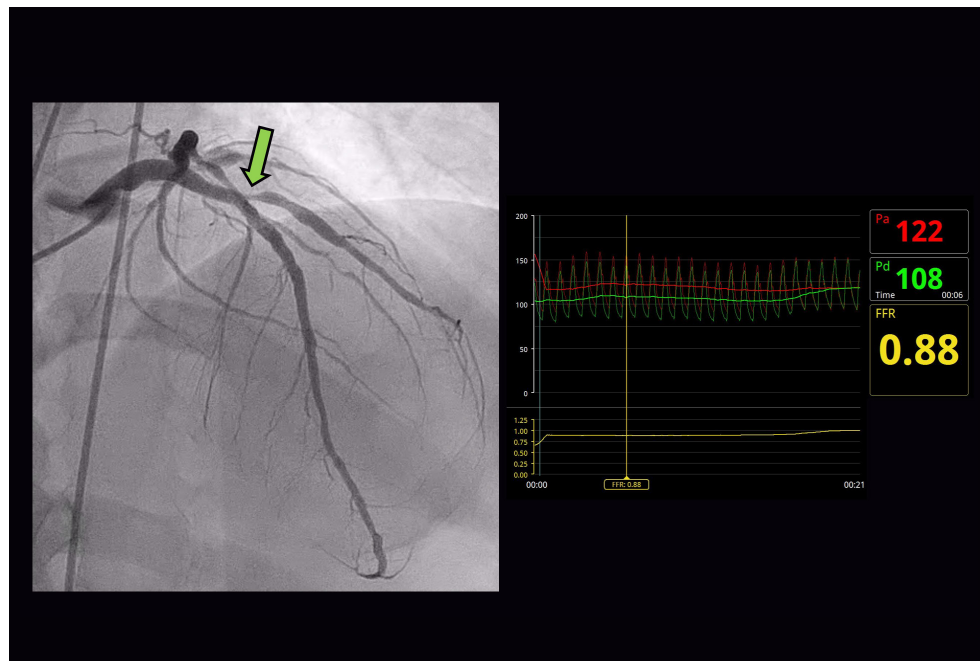
# Assessing coronary artery disease using FFR



Dr Lee Zhen-Vin.

abnormal FFR reading. An FFR value of less than or equal to 0.80 is considered abnormal and a coronary angioplasty is required. In contemporary practice, the ultimate step of a coronary angioplasty would involve the implantation of a stent. A blockage with an FFR value of more than 0.80 can be left alone without the need for coronary angioplasty and treatment with appropriate medications would suffice.

The FFR is particularly helpful when dealing with scenarios whereby blockages are present within multiple arteries or when multiple blockages are present at different segments within the same artery. An FFR can be used to accurately determine which blockages require angioplasty and which do not. This leads to an overall



Although there appeared to be a significant blockage in the first diagonal artery on the coronary angiogram (green arrow), the FFR value was 0.88 (not significant) and angioplasty was not performed.

reduction in the number of implanted stents as well as the length of the stent(s), both of which are factors known to impact the overall rate of stent failure.

Studies have also shown that the FFR is a very cost-effective modality and its use has been shown to reduce the combined rate of death, non-fatal heart attack and the need

for a repeat coronary angioplasty. In summary, the FFR is pivotal in the facilitation of decision-making and its use allows judicious coronary angioplasty to be performed.

— **Dr Lee Zhen-Vin, consultant interventional cardiologist at KPJ Damansara Specialist Hospital 2**

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## Road to healthy living

LEADING a healthy lifestyle is easier said than done. In this day and age, parents are often busy with work during weekdays while children too, spend many hours in school or attending co-curricular activities or additional tuition.

When the weekend comes, family members may also be involved with various social commitments. As such, making healthy life choices might not be the top of everyone's priorities.

Families must start making tweaks to their lifestyles for better physical, mental and emotional health. Doing so can reduce the chances of developing diseases such as various forms of cancer and diabetes, that has often been linked to unhealthy lifestyles.

Within families, parents play an important role in guiding their children. It is important to create and develop healthy habits early on so that children will continue to practise these habits throughout their lives.

### Eat good, feel good

A healthy life starts with living a healthy diet. As the saying goes, we are what we eat. Incorporating vegetables and fruits into your diet can make you feel more energised to conquer the day.

Contrary to what some may believe, there is more to healthy eating than skipping certain foods and eating more greens. Health and medical professionals swear by having a balanced diet of macronutrients such as carbohydrates, proteins and fat. An unbalanced meal can cause unnecessary weight gain and loss of energy and concentration.

Having home-cooked meals is the best way to start eating right as a family as you would always be in control of the portions for each ingredient and food choices. Practising a balanced diet can be a challenge, particularly with the food options available in Malaysia. However,

being mindful of these fundamentals will help make smarter food choices.

### Get active

Many families make it a point to come together for game nights or movie nights, but often forget that it is equally important to exercise together. Among the common excuses people give is that families find it hard to find the time to do so, or that nighttime is the best opportunity to unwind and relax.

Family exercise does not have to take multiple hours, nor leave you feeling exhausted, dizzy or tired for it to be effective. It can be as simple as dancing to a few of your favourite tunes. For families that struggle to find common time together, even a short workout session of 20 minutes can help family members feel better physically. It is also a timeframe that is much easier to set aside as compared to an afternoon in the park.

> TURN TO PAGE 4

Short exercises can help families bond and also feel healthier.





# Keep your bones strong and healthy

BONES are a very important organ in our body and have many functions. Its role includes providing structure, protecting internal organs, anchoring muscles and storing calcium.

They also facilitate movement and are important for blood cell formation. Therefore, maintaining bone health is very important for everyone.

Normal bone metabolism is the complex sequence of bone turnover (osteoclast activity) and bone formation (osteoblast activity). The bones are continuously changing, where the old bones are broken down and replaced by new bones. This process is regulated by hormones such as parathyroid hormones, calcitonin, oestrogen, androgens, growth hormone, thyroid hormones, Vitamin D and steroids such as glucocorticosteroids.

Consultant orthopaedic surgeon at MSU Medical Centre Dr Ruzaimi Md Yusoff says, "Most people reach their peak bone mass around the age of 30. After that, bone remodelling continues, but you lose slightly more bone mass than you gain because of a decrease in osteoblast activity.

"The higher the peak of bone mass, the less likely for us to develop osteoporosis at a younger age."



Dr Ruzaimi Md Yusoff.

Calcium supplements may also be prescribed by a doctor if needed.

Adequate vitamin D intake is important for calcium absorption. For adults aged 19 to 70 years, the RDA of vitamin D is 600 international units (IUs) a day. The recommendation increases to 800IUs a day for adults aged 71 years and older.

Good sources of vitamin D include oily fish such as salmon, trout, whitefish and tuna. Sunlight also contributes to the body's production of vitamin D. Supplements may also be prescribed if indicated.

Physical activity especially weight-bearing exercises such as walking, jogging and climbing stairs can build strong bones and slow the process of bone loss. Last but not least, avoid smoking and limit alcohol intake to help delay osteoporosis.

## Signs of bone health problems

There are some signs of osteoporosis that we should look out for:

- **Receding gums.** A dentist might be the first person to spot signs of osteoporosis. Research suggests that if there is significant bone loss in the jaw, it could be a sign of bone loss in other areas of your body.

- **Chipped or brittle nails.** Chipping a nail frequently could be a sign that other bones may also be brittle. Those who have low levels of collagen or calcium in their nails also do not have enough calcium in their bones.

- **Weakened grip.** Have you started to notice that you cannot turn the doorknob easily? The strength of the handgrip and the density of the bones in the arms, hips and spine are directly related.

- **Fractured bones.** The hips, spine and wrists are the most common body parts to fracture. Fractures occur from trivial trauma such as slight knocks, bending over or lifting items.

## When to see a doctor

It's important to seek medical attention for any type of bone pain, especially if the pain is severe, persistent, worsening over time or associated with swelling, redness, warmth, a fever, unintentional weight loss or a palpable mass or lump.

Since osteoporosis does not have any symptoms until a bone breaks, it is important to talk to your doctor about your bone health.

If your doctor feels that you are at risk for osteoporosis, a bone density test may be performed to measure the density of your bones, and assess for osteoporosis and risks of breaking a bone.

Doctors may prescribe medicine if your bones are weak and have a higher risk of osteoporotic fracture in the future. These include bisphosphonates, oestrogen agonists/antagonists, calcitonin, parathyroid hormone, oestrogen therapy and hormone therapy.

## What affects bone health

The following are the risk factors which can affect bone health.

Modifiable risk factors are:

- **Diet.** A low calcium intake will cause low bone density and will lead to early bone loss causing a higher risk of fractures. Not getting enough vitamin D can also increase the risk of osteoporosis.

- **Physical activity.** Not exercising and not being active for long periods can increase the chances of getting osteoporosis.

- **Body weight.** Maintaining an ideal body weight is important for bone health. This is because an extremely thin individual will have lesser bone mass.

- **Smoking.** Research suggests that tobacco will increase the risk of osteoporosis. Women who smoke also go through menopause earlier than those who don't smoke.

- **Alcohol.** People who consume a lot of alcohol are more likely to get osteoporosis.

- **Medicines.** Certain medications can affect bone health. Prolonged usage of corticosteroid medications such as cortisone, prednisolone and dexamethasone can be damaging to the bone.

Non-modifiable risk factors are:

- **Age.** Advanced age causes thinning and weakening of the bone.

- **Gender.** Women have a greater risk of osteoporosis as they have less bone tissue than men. Women also lose bone faster than men because of hormonal changes that occur after menopause.

- **Ethnicity.** Caucasian and Asian women are more prone to osteoporosis.

- **Family history.** A strong family history of osteoporosis predisposes an individual to develop osteoporosis at an earlier age.

## Maintaining healthy bones

Maintaining bone health is important to prevent or slow down the process of bone loss.

Dietary calcium intake is extremely important. The recommended dietary allowance (RDA) of calcium for female adults aged 19 to 50 years and males aged 51 to 70 years is 1,000mg per day. The recommendation increases to 1,200mg a day for women aged 51 years and older and for men aged 71 years and older.

Good sources of calcium include dairy products, almonds, broccoli, kale, canned salmon with bones, sardines and soy products such as tofu.

# Vaginal Dryness

A common intimate health problem that many women may get at some stage of their lives. In most cases Vaginal Dryness is attributed by a deficiency in the estrogen level or from hormonal fluctuations, which may occur:

- During menopause and thereafter
- During breastfeeding and after childbirth
- During and after breast cancer treatment

With Dr. Wolff's Vagisan Moisturising Cream and Moisturising Cremolum women suffering from Vaginal Dryness are getting a chance to manage this intimate problem.



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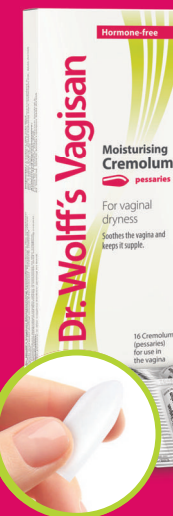
Cream for use in the external intimate area



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# Glow from within

KEEPING your skin healthy and glowing can be a constant battle, especially in a tropical country that gets strong sunlight all year. A little sunshine is good, but too much exposure to the sun's UV rays can harm your skin which results in pigmentation and signs of skin ageing.

## The sun and your skin

UV rays are one of your skin's worst enemies. Too much of it activates the enzyme tyrosinase which leads to the overproduction of melanin, a pigment that gives skin its colour. There are two major forms of melanin – eumelanin (dark pigment) and pheomelanin (light pigment). Excessive melanin production results in its uneven distribution in the epidermis, showing up as skin darkening, uneven skin tone and appearance of unsightly dark spots.

When your skin is exposed to UV rays, it will produce large amounts of reactive oxygen species (ROS) which can cause oxidative damage to your skin. This induces photo-ageing, characterised by the formation of wrinkles, fine lines and skin dryness.

## Unveil your skin's natural glow with L-glutathione

A healthy, glowing complexion does not work solely on external protection alone but should start with nourishment from within. L-glutathione, your body's master antioxidant, has been in the spotlight for its efficacy in skin lightening. It helps block dark pigment production, reverse the synthesis of dark pigment and protect your skin from UV-induced damage to ward off wrinkles and fine lines.

Your body produces glutathione. However, the levels naturally decline with age. Poor diet, environmental toxins and stress can quickly drain your glutathione stores,

making supplementation a necessity.

Setria L-glutathione is a patented ingredient from Japan that has been clinically proven to raise glutathione levels in the body. It works synergistically with other skin-nourishing nutrients like L-cysteine, astaxanthin, alpha lipoic acid (ALA), vitamin C, zinc and grape seed extract to inhibit dark pigment production for the clear, flawless skin you desire.

This informational article is brought to you by VitaHealth.

■ For more information, call 1800 183 288 or visit <https://linktr.ee/vitahealthmy>.

L-glutathione protects your skin from dark pigment and UV damage.



Parents are crucial role models in leading a healthy lifestyle.

# Taking the right steps

## > FROM PAGE 2

Another activity families can do together is to take a 30-minute walk each night after dinner. After a long day of work or studies, why not take in the sights and let your mind wander and relax?

Besides exercise, it is always advised to avoid smoking and excessive consumption of alcohol as these actions are linked to cancers of the lung and liver respectively.

## Eight hours a night

Along with nutrition and exercise, sleep is one of the three pillars of a healthy lifestyle. A good night of rest makes us feel more energetic and alert and allows us to concentrate better in the morning.

Missing out on rest increases the likelihood of sleep deprivation symptoms. It is also important to note that catching up on a missed night of sleep isn't quite the same as getting the sleep you need in the first place.

As the sleep debt mounts, health consequences increase, putting us at growing risk for weight gain, diabetes, heart disease, stroke and memory loss. Sleep deprivation can also cause fuzzy-headedness, irritability, and fatigue.

Most adults need eight hours of sleep a night for optimal health and productivity. To ensure better sleep, adults should avoid common disruptors such as alcohol, tobacco and caffeine towards the end of the day.

The more irregular the sleep patterns, the higher the risk of obesity, hypertension, and elevated blood sugar and the higher the projected risk of developing heart disease over the next decade.

When your body develops a natural rhythm and starts to settle into a regular sleep-wake cycle, you can fall asleep and wake up easily.

## Let's talk about it

Being healthy is more than just being physically fit, you have to worry about the emotional and mental side of it as well.

Changes in our mental health can lead to changes in our physical health too. Individuals struggling with mental health may feel unmotivated to lead a healthy lifestyle and this can in turn lead to other serious health complications including obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and a weakened immune system.

It is crucial for family members to always look out for one another and to be quick in spotting behavioural changes among family members. Sharing comforting words assures the family member that you have their back. On the other hand, family members must always be encouraged to share any thoughts and emotions that are weighing them down.

Family members must have an interpersonal relationship and dependence on each other and the key to living healthily together is continuous love and support from each other.



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