

From the Editors

The focus of our attention in this issue of the Health Cyberletter is Health, Nutrition and Diet. Indeed diet is an important environmental factor affecting health and disease. The importance of diet is embedded in our local culture and tradition, yet many of our doctors and health professionals tend to overlook this crucial aspect. As the susceptibility genes for diseases like diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular diseases are discovered, we must adopt a healthy life style, eat a balanced diet and do regular physical exercise to prevent these diseases. This is particularly true for those who are at risk. Undoubtedly "prevention is better than cure". Our doctors and health practioners would like to be aware of the local dietary patterns. They can then effectively advocate healthy life styles and diets and prevent the future epidemics of these non-communicable diseases. The nationally gathered data in this Cyberletter makes a modest contribution towards understanding precisely this, the local dietary habits in Pakistan.

We also address in this issue, the subject of smoking, which is a global health problem. It is not only detrimental to the health of the smoker but is equally harmful for others who breathe in the polluted air. Doctors who are generally trusted by the people can play an important role in creating awareness about the harmful effects of all forms of tobacco. Although, we are taught about these preventive facts in medical school, we fail to translate prevention as a top priority in our clinical practice. The data in this Cyberletter tells the story of how young people get addicted and generally fail in their attempts to quit smoking.

We end with a saying of a Sufi Saint Al Hujwiri, "Some believe knowledge is superior to action while others put action first. Both are wrong. *Unless action is combined with knowledge it is not deserving the recompense.*"

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Eating Habits

- Since the year 1999, paratha consumption has fallen by 20%.
- 61% of the Pakistanis consider oil to be better for health than ghee.
- Only 15% of Pakistanis walk or exercise on a daily basis.

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Food Market

- The levels of preference of chicken has climbed from 15% in 1986 to 49% in 2000. There has been slight decline since then.
- The average number of tea cups consumed by a person daily in October 2008 was about two and a half.

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Addiction Corner

- Nearly half of Pakistani men are tobacco users.
- 39% of cigarette smokers claim they smoke at least one pack of cigarettes a day.
- 52% smokers in Pakistan say they want to quit.

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For the Unfamiliar: Pakistani Food Diction

Roti is flat bread made with whole wheat flour, cooked on a stove on a flat pan.

Paratha is a flat bread made the same way as Roti but pan fried in Ghee or oil.

Ghee is a class of clarified butter that is an important ingredient in South Asian and Middle Eastern cuisine.

EATING HABITS Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

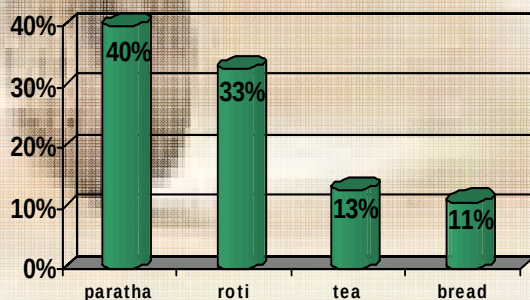
Breakfast

40% prefer paratha; significant decline in last decade

Breakfast is considered to be the most important meal of the day. Research results show that most Pakistanis believe in having a proper breakfast.

4 out of 10 respondents claimed they have paratha for breakfast. The level of paratha consumption has experienced a remarkable fall over time. Since 1999, the figure has fallen by a significant 20% (from 60%). This fall can probably be attributed to an increased level of health consciousness among Pakistanis.

As evident by the chart below, about a third of the sample has roti for breakfast while 13% have only tea. Bread is enjoyed by only about 11% of the sample.



Source: Gallup Pakistan Survey, October 2008

Oily Food

Pakistanis are switching away from Ghee to Oil; exclusive use of oil nearly doubled since 2000 from 15% to 28%

In Pakistan, cooking and food preparation makes extensive use of edible oils. Adequate use of cooking oils is considered good diet.

Majority (61%) of the Pakistani population considers oil to be better for health than *ghee*.

Cooking Medium Used:

Only Oil	28%
Only Ghee	36%
Both Ghee and Oil	36%

In the year 2000, the level of people using only oil as a cooking medium (at 15%) was 13% points less than what it is today.

Lunch & Dinner

Pakistanis are mainly wheat eating; three quarter use roti, one quarter use rice

In Pakistan, lunch and dinner, usually include roti or rice. The incidence of this in the sampled households were as follows:

	roti	rice
Lunch	77%	22%
Dinner	74%	24%

Source: Gallup Pakistan Survey, October 2008

An interesting statistic to note is that while in May 2006 34% of the people claimed to have a heavy lunch as well as dinner, most recent findings show a drop of 15% in this figure.

The incidence of having a light mid-day as well as night-time meal has increased from 24% to 44% since 2006.

The figures for percentages of heavy or light meals in October 2008 are as follows:

Heavy lunch	19%
Heavy dinner	19%
Heavy lunch and dinner	19%
Light lunch and dinner	44%

Source: Gallup Pakistan Survey, October 2008

Exercise

Only 15% Pakistanis exercise regularly

Doctors advocate regular exercise for a healthy life and as a treatment for different diseases. Despite the unanimous agreement on the importance of exercise or walk for health (83%), Gallup found that only 54% of Pakistanis say that they go for a walk or do some exercise. Moreover, 15% of the respondents do it daily and 39% do it sometimes.

Food Market

Meat

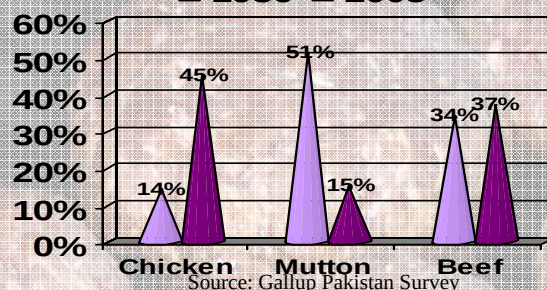
Chicken use climbed from 14% in year 1986 to 49% in 2000, then declined to 39% in 2007. In 2008 it increased slightly to 45%

In a survey in October 2008, respondents were also asked to list what they would like as the main component of their daily diet. Assuming that financial constraints were removed and price was kept constant the results revealed:

52% would prefer meat
37% would choose vegetables
10% would like to have pulses

Over the years, many changes have been observed in the pattern of meat consumption in the country. The graph shows how the levels of preference of chicken and mutton have interchanged between the years 1986 and 2008.

Meat Consumption Patterns in Pakistani Households, 1986 and 2007
1986 2008



In recent years chicken has maintained its position as the largest source of meat consumption in Pakistan. However, after experiencing dramatic rise for some 20 years, chicken lost part of its edge due to apprehensions caused by viruses such as bird flu. After reaching a very high figure of 49% in 2000, the share of chicken in meat consumption fell to 39% in 2007. Most of the loss in level of chicken preference translated into gain in mutton consumption (its level rising from 29% to 36%). However in the most recent survey we see that chicken is gaining back its lost share (45%).

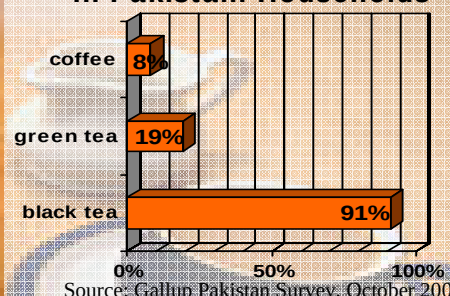
Tea

Pakistan is a tea drinking country, coffee use is small; 91% for tea; 8% for coffee; green tea is also popular at 19%

For most Pakistanis, tea-time is an occasion for social gatherings and a break from routine. It is a strong cultural symbol enjoyed several times a day by people throughout the country.

Tea, especially 'milky tea', broadly known as Doodh Patti (tea in milk) is used almost as a nutrient 'meal'.

Preference of Types of Tea in Pakistani Households



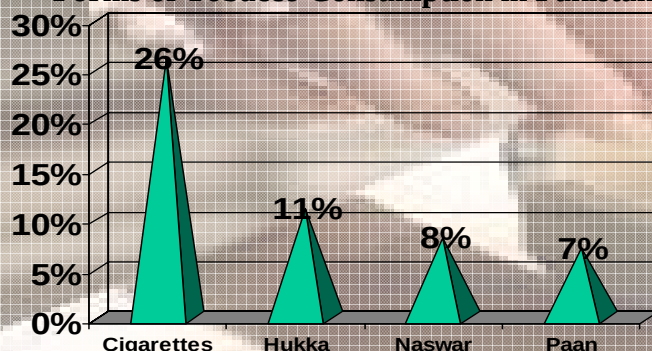
Researchers at Gallup Pakistan found that the average number of tea cups consumed by a person daily in October 2008 was about two and a half. However, it is important to keep in mind that this figure is representative of tea consumption in summers and is likely to be higher during winters.

Addiction Corner

How many and who smokes tobacco in what shape in Pakistan: the Road to Addiction and attitudes to quitting; Gallup Pakistan explores it all

Around 50% Pakistani men use tobacco in one or another form: cigarettes, Hukka (tobacco pipe), Naswar (a local sniff) or Paan (a special leaf with blended tobacco and other ingredients). Some of the respondents use more than one form of tobacco. However, the form reported here seems to be their main form of using tobacco so the figures reflect the broad picture. More accurate data are available elsewhere.

Forms of Tobacco Consumption in Pakistan



Source: Gallup Pakistan Survey, October 2008

Among the 4 provinces, the consumption of Paan is highest in Sindh (16%). Naswar is most prevalent in NWFP (25%) and Hukka is more popular in Punjab (16%).

Among smokers, amount of cigarettes consumed are:

- 52% smoke less than a pack a day
- 28% smoke a pack a day
- 11% smoke more than one pack a day

About 57% of the smokers are convinced that they are addicted to smoking.

At what age did you start smoking?

- After 18 years 58%
- Between 16 to 18 years 23%
- Before 16 years 10%

Awareness among people of health warnings about cigarettes:

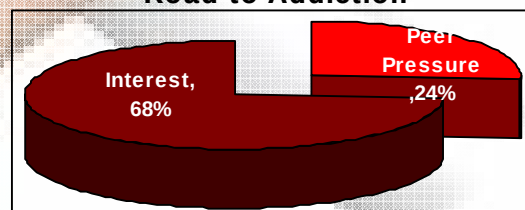
- "Smoking is injurious to health: Ministry of Health" 68%
- "Under age sale of cigarettes is prohibited" 49%
- "Smoking causes cancer and heart diseases" 35%

Among Pakistani cigarette smokers, many had begun smoking simply out of curiosity. In Gallup Pakistan survey sample, the majority at 68% claimed they started because they were interested to know what it was like. About 24% said they succumbed to peer pressure.

Quitting

About half the smokers (52%) said they wanted to quit smoking but only 70% of these had ever actually tried to quit. Majority of those who never attempted to quit, don't have any reason for it.

Road to Addiction



Source: Gallup Pakistan Survey, October 2008