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The effect is strongest in women, who can live an extra 15 years compared to the least healthy people, while healthy men can enjoy eight years more.

Researchers from Maastricht University in the Netherlands said keeping to the four healthy lifestyle factors can “substantially reduce” the risk of an early death.

Writing in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, researchers looked at 120,000 men and women who were aged 55 to 69 in 1986.

They calculated a “healthy lifestyle score” based on smoking, exercise, weight and diet and followed the group until 1996.

A Mediterranean diet is high in vegetables, olive oil, fruit, nuts, fish and whole grains, and low in meat and alcohol.

Researchers found that combining the diet with exercise, keeping to a healthy weight and not smoking dramatically cut the risk of dying young.

Piet van den Brandt, professor of epidemiology at Maastricht University, who worked on the study, said: “Very few research studies worldwide have analysed the relationship between a combination of lifestyle factors and mortality in this way. This study shows that a healthy lifestyle can lead to significant health benefits.

“Furthermore, the effects of a Mediterranean diet were more evident in women than in men. Within this diet, nuts, vegetables and alcohol intake had the biggest impact on lower mortality rates.”

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ABU DHABI: Dental decay is a problem that 16,505 of the 25,778 (64 per cent) capital students suffer from, a recent survey has revealed.

The Ambulatory Healthcare Services (AHS) - SEHA, in cooperation with the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), carried out a campaign in public schools in Abu Dhabi, testing students from grade 1, grade 5, and grade nine.

The comprehensive preventive examination for students included clinical tests for BMI, CBC, vision, hearing, scoliosis and dental/oral health.

Discussing key oral hygiene aspects, Dr N Serah George pointed out, “You would be surprised to know that in some families the toothbrush is shared among the family members. This should be a complete no-no.”

“Once in every three months people should also change their toothbrush. However, in case the person has suffered from a fever, it should be changed right after they get better and have completed the medication course.”

According to her, adults should change their toothbrush every three to four months while children may need to get new toothbrushes more frequently.

“The toothbrush should be replaced when the bristles show signs of wear. It is important to change it often because it holds within its bristles food particles which were once in your teeth,” she added.

Dr George noted that children should be taught at a young age the importance of brushing their teeth after meals. “Oral hygiene remains a significant health challenge, which needs to be taken seriously by both care providers and patients.”

“Brushing twice per day remains a challenge. Inadequate time spent on brushing and lack of knowledge on the appropriate brushing and flossing process further results in failure to reach remote areas around the posterior teeth.”

After the health exams have been carried out, plans are being developed to include students from all levels in both public and private schools in the campaign, based on the criteria determined by the Health Authority - Abu Dhabi.

A study has also been carried out to introduce the electronic health files in public school clinics, tying the school clinics to the Seha network. This step will provide the school nurse with access to the latest updates regarding the student’s medical issues, tests, and results.
Abu Dhabi, UAE: With weekly TV programmes in the Middle East showing dentists giving people the pearly-whites of their dreams, and newspapers touting the latest procedure to give you a ‘new smile in an hour’, the attraction of a quick-fix cosmetic smile makeover such as dental veneers, rather than prolonged improvement through natural alignment, can seem a very attractive option for many busy professionals. But, as Dr Raj Kumar, founder of Forma and speaker at Dentistry Middle East 2011 explains, the worrying trend for unnecessary cosmetic dental veneers, carried out on healthy teeth for the sake of a smile makeover, can do more harm than good.

“Traditionally veneers have represented one of the best cosmetic dentistry options for people wanting whiter teeth or who want to camouflage spaces between ‘gappy’ or overcrowded teeth,” says Dr Kumar. “However, having veneers on your teeth is a permanent solution and the veneers will need to be replaced after a period of time.

“Some dentists routinely remove at least 1.5 mm of the outer enamel to create space for veneers. This can lead to a number of complications such as pulpitis, tooth fracture, veneer failure due to the loss of the enamel surface, gingivitis or gingival recession. Once you trim down a tooth you reduce its life expectancy. As we only have one set of adult teeth, why should we rush into irreversible treatment?”

Instead, Dr Kumar recommends the patient does their homework before opting for veneers and considers the less-invasive options available in today’s market. Treatment such as Invisalign, for example, straighten teeth without the need for metal braces or tooth extraction using instead a series of clear, plastic ‘aligners’ which slowly move teeth over time using individual virtual 3D treatment.

“While the total treatment time with this less invasive method of achieving a ‘Hollywood smile’ can take from nine to 15 months, ultimately this treatment is more comfortable and the patient will avoid causing irreparable damage to their teeth,” explains Dr Kumar. “To recreate that ‘Hollywood smile’, at the end of the treatment the teeth can be safely whitened if the patient so desires.”

Dr Kumar also advises to watch out for unqualified dentists. “It is very difficult to know how good your dentist really is as anyone can print a certificate. Sometimes a good measure is to see if the dentist can spot the patients’ cosmetic problem without being shown it.”

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