

## Part 6 Information section

### Diet and disease

Certain diseases, such as coronary heart disease, breast cancer and bowel cancer are more common in some countries than in others. It is thought that some of these diseases may be linked to diet. Below is some information about them.

### Obesity

People who weigh 20% more than the ideal are overweight. They have a shorter life expectancy and are more likely to suffer from diseases that include heart disease, diabetes, gallstone, high blood pressure, arthritis and varicose veins.

Some people put on weight easily. The reasons are not understood. They do not necessarily eat more than other people, but they eat more than they need and lay down the excess as fat.

### Tooth decay

Tooth decay (dental caries) has been linked to diets high in sugars. Your mouth contains bacteria that break down sugars to make acids. Acids attack tooth enamel, making it more porous. Tooth decay begins as the enamel wears away.

### Heart disease

Death rates from coronary heart disease are often higher in countries where people eat diets high in 'saturated' fats such as butter, red meat, milk and cheese (see figure 2). A high fat diet can raise the level of cholesterol, a fat-like substance in the blood. Your body needs cholesterol, but when it collects on the inside of blood vessels you have a greater risk of heart attacks.

### High blood pressure

High blood pressure is a condition that may lead to ill health. Doctors may advise patients to eat food without added salt, and avoid processed foods and ready meals which tend to be high in salt.

Figure 2 Deaths from heart and circulation diseases per 100 000 population (1988)

### Cancer

People in different countries tend to suffer from different types of cancer. Scientists think that diet could be a major factor. It is difficult to be sure, because countries collect their statistics in different ways, so that the figures given here may not represent exactly the same thing. New studies should give more reliable statistics by the mid - 1990s.

Breast cancer is increasing in many countries. Its cause is not known, but in figure 3 cancer rates are compared with how much fat people eat in different countries.

Some scientists suspect that many people could avoid getting stomach cancer if they ate fruit and vegetables every day. Cancer of the bowel may also be linked to a diet high in fat. Eating enough dietary fibre may help to reduce the risk of bowel cancer.

Alcoholic drinks may be linked to cancers of the mouth and gullet (oesophagus) as well as to cirrhosis of the liver and high blood pressure.

Figure 4 shows the death rates for cancer of the oesophagus in different parts of Europe.

Country	Number of deaths per 100,000 population
H	621
CZ	596
PL	580
YU	553
M	490
IRL	456
SF	433
D	421
A	413
L	411
UK	389
P	387
GR	376
S	372
DK	365
N	351
B	342*
I	324
IS	324
E	323*
NL	302
CH	296
F	224



\* 1984