

TB drugs best taken without food, study discovers

Theresa Taylor

JOHANNESBURG: When tuberculosis (TB) patients eat could affect how well their treatment works, particularly if that meal is high in carbohydrates.

Study findings presented at the European Respiratory Society International Congress in Munich yesterday suggest that eating food just before taking a TB drug could reduce the effectiveness of the medicine, particularly in the early phases of treatment.

Researchers conducted a small study, looking at 20 patients who were about to begin treatment for TB for the first time. They were given the usual course of TB drugs, including isoniazid, rifampicin, pyrazinamide and ethambutol.

The drugs were administered by injection on day one and given orally on day two and three, while fasting or with a high-carbohydrate meal.

Blood samples were taken from each participant and analysed.

Samples were taken from the same person and in the same environment while changing the food intake. The results showed that when the drugs were given with a high-carbohydrate meal, there was a lower concentration of three of the four drugs in the blood compared with that when given in a fasting state.

This suggests that eating a high-carbohydrate meal before taking the drugs can make the drugs less effective.

Dr Antonia Morita Iswari, lead author from the Universitas Gadjah Mada in Indonesia, said: "As the research was conducted on the same people and in the same environment, the only variable was the meals and we, therefore, know food can have an impact on the concentration of the drugs in the blood."



SPRUCED UP: The city has completed work to improve Dorothy Court in Manenberg, one of many council-owned blocks that are being upgraded, but some residents are unhappy with what they say are poor fittings and the loss of ventilation. Picture: JEFFREY ABRAHAMS

COUNCIL TENANTS SLAM POOR WORKMANSHIP

Doors fall off after facelift

Jason Felix

POOR workmanship on refurbished council-owned flats on the Cape Flats has been highlighted by residents who say their homes – built during apartheid – are worse than before.

Despite the complaints, the City of Cape Town says the project in Manenberg is progressing well, with work completed on 432 of the 624 rental units earmarked for interior upgrades.

The tenants, however, have criticised the workmanship by contractors. They say doors keep falling off, windows leak, mould has built up on walls, ventilation vents have been closed and there are problems with electrical wiring.

Yusraa Mohamed, 47, said the mould on her walls had increased and the door and handles had fallen off four times last week. She and her family were forcibly moved from Steenberg to Manenberg in 1967.

"This is poor work by the contractors. We complained many times that the doors are of poor quality, and the windows serve no purpose because when it rains, it rains inside too."

"All our plugs and the wiring are now fitted in plastic pipes which are visible on the wall. In the old days the wires were inside the wall, where they were safe."

The refurbishment programme is continuing in Bontheuwel, Heideveld, Elsies

River, Kraaifontein and other parts of the city. More than 5 000 of the 7 775 units identified in 2008 for work have been upgraded.

Some residents say the apartheid government did a better job when it built the blocks of flats.

"These buildings are strong and there was quality workmanship, because look at it... it's still standing," said resident Rugaya Emaum.

"All the materials in the house were quality and were built to suit the needs of communities. Now the vents have been cemented over, and the light fittings are cheap. Also, you cannot put an electric meter box so low on a wall."

Commenting, the mayoral committee member for human

settlements, Siyabulela Mankeli, said the city's interactions with the residents suggested they were happy with the work.

The refurbished homes had been inspected and approved by the city.

"The project management team are satisfied that all products installed meet the required high standards demanded on this project."

"Each rental unit has to pass several stringent quality checks before various levels of contractual completion are certified. Even after the families take occupation, the community liaison officer visits each house to record any complaints residents may have."

On the question of vents being sealed, Mankeli said:

"Most of the city's rental units were built without airbricks. These are, however, not a requirement of the construction regulations since they are not an effective means of ventilation. They also compromise the insulation properties of buildings, which are an important factor in the city's newly compiled green building guide."

Mankeli said the project had been affected temporarily when the financial problems of one of the contractors, Filcon, led to the city's ending the contract, affecting the subcontractors doing the work.

Complaints may be lodged with the area's housing office or the city's call centre at 0860 103 089.

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briefs

Fisherman's body found on beach

The body of a fisherman whose boat capsized was found washed up on the beach at Lambert's Bay yesterday.

The name of the man has yet to be released. He was 84. After the boat capsized two nautical miles from shore on Friday, the fisherman's companions, Roelf Valentine, 71, and Hubert le Roux, in his early 70s, were found clinging to the hull. They were treated for mild hypothermia.

The police's sea border unit, police divers and members of the NSRI spent most of Friday and Saturday searching for the man, who had not been wearing a life jacket.

Prof gets tough in pothole claim

A professor is taking steps to attach assets of the North West government because it has failed to pay him the compensation promised for his missing his mother's funeral after his car hit a pothole and two tyres burst, Beeld has reported.

The premier's office agreed to pay Professor Wannie Carstens R115 000 on June 30 for emotional suffering. Bonolo Maohlakoana, acting spokesman for the premier's office, said payment had been approved and was expected to be made this week. Carstens said he did not pursue the matter for the money, but to hold government to account.

King wants Reed Dance to be a global cultural event



KING GOODWILL ZWELITHINI

King Goodwill Zwelithini has called on the international community to invest in developing the Zulu Reed Dance and promoting it as a global cultural event.

Speaking at the uMkhosi woMhlanga (Reed Dance) at his Enyokeni Royal Palace in Nongoma at the weekend, he said the ceremony could be part of the government's rural development plan, if correctly designed and executed. Tourists from Asia, Europe and America attended the three-day ceremony. Zwelithini asked that they "reflect and share" what they had witnessed.

Law curbs photo competition

Wiki Loves Monuments South Africa, a photography competition running this month to coincide with Heritage month, has hit a snag in terms of South African copyright law.

"It is with a heavy heart that I am going to have to ask that people submitting pictures of recently built monuments not do so," said Douglas Scott, director of Wikimedia South Africa.

Scott said they consulted a copyright expert and found that the competition's call for photographs of proposed monuments could no longer include recently-built monuments. He questioned whether the act was constitutional.

'Get children back at school'

Public protector Thuli Madonsela addressing women lawyers at a breakfast talk called on patriotic South Africans to do all they could to get the children of Kuruman back to school.

"While government's alleged failure to keep a promise may be wrong... and possibly constitute maladministration, holding children at ransom and denying them an education is worse than wrong."