PART A

NUTRITION WATCH

1. Alcohol
2. Caffeine
3. Calcium
4. Carbohydrates. *Sugars and starches*
5. Fats. *Dietary fats, lipids*
6. Fibre
7. Iron
8. Magnesium
9. Milk and milk products
10. Potassium
11. Preservatives. *Food additives*
12. Protein
13. Salt
14. Snacking
15. Sugar
16. Vegetarian Diets
17. Vitamin B Complex
    Niacin, Thiamine, Riboflavin, Folacin, Biotin, B_6 and B_{12}
18. Vitamin C. *Ascorbic acid*

19. Vitamins, Fat Soluble-A *Retinols, carotenoids*
20. Vitamins, Fat Soluble-E *Tocopherols*
21. Vitamins, Fat Soluble-K *Naphthoquinone compounds*
22. Zinc

ALCOHOL

What is alcohol?

Technically, alcohol is a food, but it is also an addictive drug, probably the oldest known to humanity. It is formed by a chemical process called fermentation, in which sugars and starches are broken down by yeast.

Why is alcohol important to nutrition?

Alcohol is high in calories, and thus supplies energy, but its nutritional value is marginal. In addition, alcohol interferes with the body's ability to use, store, and absorb other nutrients, even if they are consumed in adequate amounts.

While consuming a small amount of alcohol may stimulate the appetite, larger amounts suppress hunger. As a result, heavy drinkers tend to suffer deficiencies of many essential vitamins and minerals.

How much alcohol should a person need?

Since alcohol is, by and large, detrimental to good nutrition, people don't really need to drink any. There are no hard and fast rules regarding how much alcohol is safe, although for a healthy adult, one drink a day is probably harmless. Anyone who must count calories, however, should think twice before splurging on an alcoholic beverage, since alcohol contains more calories per gram than carbohydrates or protein, with a bare fraction of the nutritional value. Since a safe level of alcohol during pregnancy has not been established, pregnant women should abstain from drinking.

What happens if a person gets insufficient alcohol?

If a heavy drinker stops drinking alcohol, they may experience serious withdrawal symptoms. Anyone who has a drinking problem should seek medical assistance when they wish to stop. Recovering alcoholics also need a special diet to regain their nutritional status.

What happens if a person gets too much alcohol?

Rapid consumption of excessive alcohol results in poor co-ordination, slurred speech, impaired judgement, and other signs of intoxication. Extreme alcohol intoxication can be fatal.

Following intoxication, a hangover is likely. Symptoms include headache, upset stomach, thirst, trembling hands, and overall feelings of fatigue and jitteriness. These effects usually disappear within 24 hours.

Alcoholics suffer more serious consequences over time. Since the liver is the only organ in the body that can detoxify and metabolize alcohol, it is the most severely affected by heavy drinking. The brain and the heart also suffer damage.

Alcohol has been implicated as a cause of cancers of the mouth and throat, the larynx, the esophagus and the rectum. It damages the lining of the stomach and the small intestines, interfering with proper digestion. Alcohol has devastating effects on the unborn babies of women who drink heavily while they are pregnant. Many such babies are born with **fetal alcohol syndrome**, which is characterized by slow growth and mental retardation.

Despite the popular belief that alcohol helps you relax and fall asleep more easily, more than a small amount actually interferes with the quality of sleep. It may also cause impotence.

A heavy dose of alcohol can bring on an attack of gout (a form of arthritis) in susceptible people. It can also reduce the body's resistance to infections.

The combination of heavy drinking and driving is especially deadly. Drunk driving is responsible for about half of all traffic fatalities.

Advice about alcohol

* Eat before you drink. Food in the stomach slows the absorption of alcohol, reducing damage to the digestive organs.

* Avoid salty snacks while drinking. Breads, vegetable dips, and seafood hors d'oeuvres are better alcohol accompaniments than chips, nuts and. pretzels.

* Add ice and water or juice to dilute the amount of alcohol in your drink. Do not mix liquor with carbohydrated beverages, since they speed up the absorption of alcohol.

* Sip slowly; the liver takes about an hour to break down the alcohol from one drink.

* Do not mix alcohol with medications or street drugs, since alcohol increases the effects of some drugs and inactivates others, sometimes with fatal results.

* A recovering alcoholic should be alert to hidden sources of alcohol. For example, mouthwashes, cough medicine, and other nonprescription liquid drugs may contain alcohol.

Sources of alcohol

* **Distilled spirits**, in which the alcoholic content is measured by "proof". One degree of proof is equivalent to 0.5 percent alcohol. Therefore, an 80 proof beverage is 40 percent alcohol, and, a 100 proof liquor, is 50 percent alcohol.

* **Wines**, in which the alcoholic content varies from 8 percent in some white wine to 21 percent in sherry.

* **Beers**, which range from 3.2 percent to 7 percent alcohol. "Light" beers are about 3 percent alcohol.