GOOD OR BAD?  TEACHER’S NOTES

A. WARMER
Get the students to discuss the questions, either in groups or directly with the teacher.

B. PRE-READING ACTIVITY
Scientists have been studying whether the listed items are good or bad for us. Get the students to discuss what they think the scientific conclusions might have been with regard to the items:

C. PRE-TEACH VOCAB
Get the students to match the word on the left with the definition on the right:
Answers: 1c, 2e, 3b, 4h, 5i, 6a, 7d, 8f, 9g

Get the students to match the collocations:
Answers: prolong life, ward off, retail therapy, sedentary jobs, taste buds, dust mites

D. READING
Information share:
Divide the students into pairs and distribute the readings, giving one student in each pair the text describing things that are good, and the other student the list of things that are bad for us (page 2 and 3 of the students’ handout). The students can choose whether they want to do read about the good or bad items. The students need to both read one item from their text (simultaneously) and then explain to each other what they have read. They need to continue until they get to the end of the list.

FOLLOW ON ACTIVITY
Have a discussion with the students about the following:
1. Was there any information that particularly surprised you?
2. Are there any changes to your lifestyle you would like to make in light of what you have just found out?
3. Will you ever look at your pillow in the same way again?

E. EXTRA ACTIVITIES

IDIOMS
Students need to choose the correct word to complete the idiom:

big cheese/apple
to butter up/with

eggs on/up

couch potato/tomato

eat humble pie/desert

half-baked/cooked

in a nutshell/bean

to take something with a grain of salt/rice

to be worth one’s salt/pepper

PRACTICE MAKING SUGGESTIONS
The students can practice making polite suggestions by giving each other advice based on the reading, using the following phrases:

Have you considered....? 

Why don’t you try.....? 

What about adjusting......? 

How about......? 

You might want to think of.... 

There might be some benefit in..... 

Perhaps you should...... 

Maybe you could......

VOCABULARY REVISION
Write the vocabulary, collocations and idioms on small pieces of paper. Place them face down on the table, and get the students to take turns in choosing a word and drawing them on the board so that the other students can guess what the word, phrase or idioms are.
GOOD OR BAD? STUDENTS' NOTES

A. DISCUSSION
1. Are there any things that you add to your diet, or avoid eating in order to stay healthy?
2. Are there any activities that you include in your week to maintain a healthy lifestyle?

B. GOOD OR BAD FOR YOU?
Do you think the following are good or bad for you?

Placebos
Milk
An apple a day
Sleeplessness
Coffee
Red and processed meat
Desk jobs
Tangerines
Shopping

Vitamin pills
Washing dishes
Sugary drinks
Olive oil
Swearing
Your pillow
Salt
Green tea
Alcohol

C. VOCABULARY
Match the word on the left with the definition on the right:

1. latter  a. causing or capable of causing death
2. stroke  b. to hinder, to obstruct
3. impede  c. the last item on a given list
4. lab     d. to hit heavily and repeatedly
5. plunge  e. death of brain cells due to lack of oxygen
6. fatal   f. to choose
7. battering g. alcohol
8. opt for  h. laboratory
9. booze   i. to thrust or throw forcefully into a substance
Match the collocations:

- prolong: jobs
- ward: buds
- retail: life
- sedentary: mites
- taste: therapy
- dust: off

D. **READING**

1. Was there any information that particularly surprised you?
2. Are there any changes to your lifestyle you would like to make in light of what you have just found out?
3. Will you ever look at your pillow in the same way again?

E. **IDIOMS**

Choose the correct word to make the idiom:

- big cheese/apple
- to butter up/with
- couch potato/tomato
- eat humble pie/desert
- egg on/up
- full of beans/ants
- half-baked/cooked
- in a nutshell/bean
- to take something with a grain of salt/rice
- to be worth one’s salt/pepper
Some of the things they said were good for us...

- **Placebos** can make us feel better, even when we know we’re only getting sugar, a study revealed in January. Researchers at Harvard gave 40 volunteers with irritable bowel syndrome a box of pills clearly marked “placebo,” and told them that the tablets contained no active medical ingredient whatsoever. A second group was given nothing. Three weeks later, 35% of the latter group reported some improvement in their symptoms, compared with 59% in the placebo group.

- **Milk** – drink it as a child, and it will protect you against bowel cancer in adulthood, researchers claimed in February. The team, at the University of Otago in New Zealand, began investigating milk’s protective effect after noting that bowel cancer rates in the country halved after the introduction of free school milk in the 1930s (it was withdrawn in 1967). Their research, based on more than 500 bowel cancer sufferers and a like number of healthy people, indicated that drinking a daily glass of milk for six years in childhood can cut the risk of the disease by 40%.

- **An apple a day** may prolong your life, according to research on fruit flies published in March (fruit flies are often used in research because their genome is remarkably similar to our own). Flies that were fed apple extract by the researchers lived 55 days on average – five more than the flies fed a normal diet. Moreover, they stayed in better shape as they aged (with reduced levels of biochemicals linked to age-related deterioration).

- **Coffee** need no longer be considered a guilty pleasure, thanks to growing evidence of its beneficial effects. In April, Swedish scientists said regular coffee-drinking might protect against stroke. In their study of 35,000 women, those who drank between one and five cups of coffee a day were 22% to 25% less likely to have suffered a stroke over a ten-year period than those who drank less than a cup. Later in the year, research indicated that drinking large amounts of coffee helped ward off prostate cancer – but also, on the downside, that it might impede a woman’s chances of conceiving. Caffeine is also linked to miscarriage and low birth weight.

- **Tangerines** were hailed in April as the latest “superfood”, with high concentrations of a compound (nobiletin) that seems to prevent obesity in lab mice, and also protects against Type 2 diabetes.

- **Shopping** is often described as “retail therapy”, and perhaps with good reason: a report in April suggested that it could extend lives, at least in the over-65s. The research – based on 1,830 older people in Taiwan who still lived in their own homes – revealed that those who shopped daily lived significantly longer than those who shopped once a week or less.

- **Olive oil** should be used in cooking, or on salads, to help ward off strokes in older people, researchers concluded in June. Their analysis of 7,625 over-65s in three French cities showed that those who used a lot of the oil in cooking, or as a dressing or dip, had a 41% lower risk of suffering a stroke during the five years of the study than those who relied mainly on other forms of fat, even after accounting for factors such as weight and exercise routines.

- **Swearing** is a powerful painkiller – provided you are by nature polite. When researchers at Keele University asked 71 young adults to plunge their hands into freezing water, they found that their test subjects could hold their hands under the water for longer if they swore when doing so. However, the impact was far greater for those who didn’t swear much in the course of everyday life: swearing helped them endure the cold for 45 seconds longer, for regular swearers the difference was just ten seconds.

- **Green tea**, which is routinely drunk in Japan, contains a compound (EGCG) that appears to help prevent weight gain. In tests on mice, rodents on a high-fat diet that were given EGCG gained weight significantly more slowly than rodents in a control group. The Penn State University team said human data indicated that just one cup of green tea a day could make a difference.

Ref: THE WEEK, pg 18, 24 December 2011, Issue 849
...and some things we were advised to avoid

- **Sleeplessness** doesn't just make people irritable – it can be fatal, according to research published in February. For the study, 475,000 people were tracked in eight countries for up to 25 years. Those who routinely slept less than six hours a night, or whose sleep was often disturbed, were found to have a 48% greater risk of developing heart disease, and a 15% higher risk of suffering a stroke, than the people who slept eight hours.

- **Red and processed meat** has been so strongly linked to bowel cancer that we should eat no more than 70g a day; the Government warned in March. That's equivalent to three slices of ham, two sausages or a single lamb chop.

- **Desk jobs** were also given a serious health warning this year following a (preliminary) study which indicated that sitting for prolonged periods of the working day is another risk factor for bowel cancer, even if people take exercise outside working hours. The researchers, in Australia, found that people who spent more than ten years in sedentary jobs were almost twice as likely to develop a tumour in an area of the lower bowel called the distal colon, and had a 44% increased risk of rectal cancer.

- **Vitamin pills** have taken quite a battering in recent years, and 2011 was no exception. In May, researchers in Taiwan concluded that people who routinely popped the supplements became complacent about their health as a result – and so made less healthy choices in daily life (e.g. opting for chips instead of a salad). They embarked on the project after noting that although half of Taiwan's population takes some kind of supplement, general health levels seem to be static. In October, a separate US study found that women who had regularly taken supplements had a slightly higher risk of death than those who had never taken them.

- **Washing dishes** just isn't a suitable task for a man, or so it seems. Researchers in Florida found evidence that asking males to do “women’s work” makes them more aggressive, probably because it threatens their masculinity. The study involved dividing men into two groups: one was asked to braid some hair, the other to braid a rope. Afterwards, all the volunteers were invited to punch a punchbag, or do a puzzle. Most of the hair braiders opted to punch the bag. And when all the men were invited to punch the bag, the hair braiders punched harder.

- **Sugary drinks** dull the taste buds' sensitivity to sweet flavours, leading to an increased preference for high-calorie foods, claimed researchers from Bristol University in June. Dr Hans-Peter Kubis, who led the team, warned of a “vicious circle”, in which those who drink sugary drinks seek ever more calorie-laden food. Children, he said, should be encouraged to drink mainly milk and water, as even fruit juices are high in sugar.

- **Your pillow** may be harbouring all sorts of nasties. According to a report in July, if a pillow is more than two years old, up to a third of its weight could be made up of dust mites, dust mite excretion, dead skin, bacteria and saliva. “People put a clean pillow case on and it looks and smells nice and fresh,” said Dr Arthur Tucker, who based his research on pillows in hospitals, “but you are wrapping up something really nasty underneath.”

- **Salt** is known to be bad for the heart; now there are fears that it may be bad for the brain, too. Research in Canada revealed in August that mental decline in older people who eat salt-rich diets and take little exercise is significantly faster than in sedentary types whose intake is more modest. A high sodium intake was defined as 7.7g of salt a day. However, some of those involved in the study were consuming three times that amount.

- **Alcohol**, rarely recommended by doctors, was linked to an increased rate of various kinds of cancer in April – and in October, the Royal College of Physicians advised adults to have at least three booz-free days a week, to reduce the risk of liver disease and alcohol dependency.

Ref: THE WEEK, pg 19, 24 December 2011, Issue 849