

From VOA Learning English, welcome to As It Is.

I'm Steve Ember.

Today, we tell about how the United Nations World Food Program is trying to help feed millions of Syrians, both inside and outside the country.

And we pass along surprising results of a worldwide study among people who have suffered a heart attack. Are they following doctors' advice to eat a more healthful diet and exercise more? You'll be surprised by the study results.

Finally, we tell about America's first swimming school, established July 23, 1827. Some of its visitors were famous historic characters. But they may or may not have tried the water.

But first, we learn about U.N. efforts to prevent hunger caused by the war in Syria.

***United Nations tries to feed millions in strife-torn Syria...***

The United Nations launched a record appeal for more than five point one billion dollars last month. UN officials say the money is necessary to deal with the humanitarian crisis resulting from the civil war in Syria. They say the World Food Program, called the WFP for short, is among the agencies in greatest need.

In less than two months, the World Food Program will have used all its money for an operation that is feeding 2.5 million people inside Syria. The WFP operation also provides food for more than a million people who have fled to neighboring countries for safety.

WFP director Ertharin Cousin spoke to VOA in Lebanon after attending meetings in Damascus with Syrian government officials. Ms. Cousin is the highest-level UN official to visit the Syrian capital for several months. She says the biggest need right now is finding money to feed millions of Syrians.

“We have enough right now to support our activities until the end of August, the first of September. And as it comes in it goes out. And we will continue to keep our pipelines robust for as long as the donors continued to invest in our work.”

She predicts that four million people inside Syria and three million people outside the country will need emergency food by the end of the year. That probably will cost the WFP 168 million dollars a month.

But money is not her only concern. She recently went to Damascus to ask Syrian officials for their help so that her agency and other groups can operate more freely in the country. The WFP has more than 20 non-governmental partners that help provide food to those in need.

In recent weeks, government security positions and the jihadist group al-Nusra Front have interfered with food distribution efforts. Ms. Cousin said her message to the government was a very direct one.

“We must have access, and we need the government to ensure that they do nothing to impede our access nor should anyone in the opposition do anything to impede our access.”

Ms. Cousin said the WFP would talk with others involved in the conflict to make sure that humanitarian access is available to prevent hunger. She also said she made clear to Syrian officials that she did not want to get involved in discussions about the political situation in the country.

The WFP employees are still working in Damascus, although shelling continues.

You are listening to As It Is from VOA Learning English. I’m Steve Ember.

## ***Are heart patients following their doctors' advice?***

### ***Some surprising results...***

[Heart beating]

After someone has a heart attack or stroke, doctors usually suggest changes in the patient's way of life -- like exercising or losing weight. A new study looked at people around the world to see if they follow their doctors' advice. Avi Arditti tells us about what researchers discovered.

We often hear the message about how to live a healthy life. But just in case you missed it or have forgotten, listen to Patrice Desvine-Nickens of the National Institutes of Health in the United States. She says cardiovascular disease can be prevented.

"Don't smoke, maintain a healthy weight, exercise."

Ignoring even part of that advice increases the threat of cardiovascular disease, which includes heart attack and stroke.

Canadian researcher Koon Teo wanted to see if people made changes in their way of life after one of these events. He studied patients in high-, middle- and low-income countries.

The Canadian researcher noted some surprising results:

“People who had heart disease or stroke, about a fifth of them, still continued to smoke and only a third of people had regular physical activities. Just about two-fifths of them ate what we determine as a healthy diet.”

The places where the patients lived did not seem to make a big difference. Professor Teo said low-income countries had the worst diet. But he added that people from wealthier countries did not do much better. Only about four percent of the patients studied followed their doctors’ advice.

Koon Teo said people in all countries need to study the findings to try to improve healthy living – especially those who have already suffered a heart attack or stroke.

National and international efforts to get people to watch their blood pressure and reduce the amount of salt in their diet are getting more common. Both reduce the threat of heart attack or stroke.

Janet Wright is with the Million Hearts campaign in the United States. She advises people to make one small change in their lifestyle and follow the change every day. She said it could be adding a fruit or a vegetable. Or, the change could be building up to 150 minutes of exercise each week.

Michael Roizen of the Cleveland Clinic says the most important point is to get started. He suggests buying a pedometer, a device that measures the number of steps taken. Then, he says, record that total daily and try to walk 10,000 steps each day.

And, say the experts, if you take blood-pressure medicine, take it as your doctor ordered. I'm Avi Arditti.

Finally, July 23, 1827 is the anniversary of the opening of America's first swimming school.

Today, swimming is a major recreational activity and sport in the United States and many other places around the world. But in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Americans were too busy building the young nation, or too far from coastal areas to even think about swimming. But Boston is right on the Atlantic Ocean. It seemed like a good place to start teaching people to stay afloat.

We do not know if the classes took place in a swimming pool, a river, or the Atlantic. But we have heard that two famous men visited the school. One was John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States. Another was John James Audubon, who documented America's birds. Some reports say the two men were among the students. But we cannot guarantee that they got into the water.

And for all we know, Audubon may have thought swimming was for the birds.

I'm Steve Ember, and that's AS IT IS for today. And if you'll excuse me, it is so hot in Washington today, I think I'm going to splash around for a while in the pool. Thanks for joining us. We'll talk to you next time.