

What is Hepatitis A (HAV)?

Hepatitis A (HAV) is a highly contagious virus that attacks the liver. There are several types of hepatitis. Hepatitis A is the most prevalent. Hepatitis A and hepatitis E are mainly transmitted through the fecal-oral route, while hepatitis B, C, and D are spread through blood or other body fluids.

Common Symptoms of Hepatitis A

- fatigue
- nausea
- vomiting
- fever/chills
- jaundice
- pain in the liver area
- dark urine
- light-colored stools
- abdominal pain

There is currently no treatment for hepatitis A, although rest and proper nutrition can relieve some symptoms. The most important factor affecting the severity of the disease is age. Children less than a year old rarely show clinical signs of the illness. This means that parents and child-care workers handling soiled diapers can catch or transmit the disease without knowing they have been exposed.

Clinical manifestations of hepatitis A often pass unrecognized in children younger than two years of age. Overt hepatitis develops in the majority of infected older children and adults. In adults, approximately 22 percent will be hospitalised.

The incubation period for hepatitis A virus ranges from 20 to 50 days, which means that infectious patients, such as food handlers or children, can spread the disease well before they are even aware they have it. Incubation is shorter with increasing age.

Most patients begin recovery within three weeks, although some have prolonged or relapsing symptoms for up to six months.

How Is Hepatitis A Spread?

The hepatitis A virus is transmitted by the fecal-oral route, through close person-to-person contact, or by ingesting contaminated food or water. Infection has been shown to be spread by:

- close personal contact with someone infected with hepatitis A.
- eating foods contaminated by infected food handlers.
- contact with infected children (who do not usually show symptoms), who can then infect non-immune children or adults at home
- ingesting raw or undercooked shellfish (e.g. oysters, clams, mussels) from waters contaminated with the hepatitis A virus.
- ingesting contaminated food or water during travel to underdeveloped areas.
- transmission through blood transfusions or sharing needles with infected people using injectable drugs.

The highest incidence of hepatitis A is in children. Nearly 30 percent of the reported cases occur in children younger than 15. Many very young children do not show symptoms, so the unreported number is likely to be much higher.

Many health experts suggest that children are a silent source in spreading the disease. Approximately 45 per cent of persons with HAV cannot identify a recognised risk factor associated with their disease, but about half of them have children under five years of age living in their households.

How Can Hepatitis A Be Prevented?

Historically, the most common preventative has been immune globulin administration, which is effective for about three to six months. Now, however, there are two vaccines that provide longer-term protection and eliminate the need for repeated shots. These vaccines typically are administered as one-inital shot followed by a booster shot in about six to 18 months.

Prior infection with hepatitis A confers lifetime protection against a second attack. If in doubt, a blood test can determine if an individual has had hepatitis A in the past or needs protection.

Source: Internet

'keep away from drugs, know about AIDS'

LIFE celebrating its 15th anniversary

NAIMUL HAQ

On its fifteenth anniversary this month LIFE, a non profit organisation has successfully achieved its target of reaching more than 50,000 young people, mostly school children in providing information on prevention of HIV/AIDS and substance (drug) abuse.

Celebrating the occasion LIFE actively involved in advocacy for a change of social and public policy on HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh is organising special programmes to mark the event.

"LIFE started fifteen years ago with a vision of involving young people aware about HIV/AIDS and drug abuse. It was not so easy working with the young people since they hardly wanted to give time to understand the social issues," said Kamrul Islam Sony, founder chairman of the organisation.

"We believe that if we can persuade our young generation into good practices we can prevent certain hazards like HIV transmission from now on and that is the reason why I started the journey on my own without any donation in 1988 to form LIFE having spread its wings to over 30 districts now."

Kamrul also said, "The sexual behavior of young people is influenced by alcohol and drug use, which contribute to HIV risk by impacting sexual behaviour and decision-making. And young people who inject drugs are at high risk of HIV infection through contaminated needles. In addition, HIV is often spread from



Kamrul Islam Sony

injection drug users to non-injection drug users through sexual transmission. Certain groups of young people are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection, including young women, men who have sex with men, and minority youth," Kamrul explained.

Kamrul said, "Our activities involve organising special session with youths to discuss and learn about HIV/AIDS and substance abuse. We have covered almost all the major schools and colleges in the capital and also a few private and public universities."

He said, "As is true in much of the world, young women are increasingly at risk of HIV infection even in Bangladesh largely due to lack of knowledge. Many young women do not have the power either to avoid sex with partners who may be HIV-infected or to ensure the use of condoms,

and it is believed that many HIV-positive young women are infected by men older than themselves. So if we can educate young not only men but also women we can certainly empower them with information and so they themselves can stay away from hazards of HIV infection."

"Drug abuse or substance abuse is a big problem in major cities and we have targeted this group in educating them about the abuse and the link with HIV," said Kamrul.

The only way to be safe around drugs is not to take them. This is our slogan 'keep away from drugs, know about AIDS'. If you are on drugs you may take risks you normally wouldn't take, and you may have unsafe sex when you would normally be more careful. If you take drugs, you might find it more difficult to use a condom, or you might forget altogether. One of the most common drugs this can happen with is alcohol - if you're drunk, you might not always know what you're

doing, or you might not care. If you inject drugs, you should always use a clean needle, syringe each time you inject, and never share any of these with anyone else. Altogether LIFE has been engaged in social awareness on the prevention of drug abuse and tobacco since its inception in 1988 creating environment for marginalised high-risk community for prevention, intervention, care and support programme on improved public health situation with the following objectives;

1. Social awareness and prevention of drug abuse;

2. Intervention, care and support for HIV-AIDS;

3. Reduction in morbidity and mortality attributable to diseases of public health importance;

4. Development of the urban and rural community;

5. Promotion for a clean earth;

6. Peace building and conflict management;

Professor Muhammad Yunus, Founder of Grameen Bank in recognition of outstanding contributions to the social commitment said, "LIFE has already set an example in anti-drug movement. Drug addiction is a terrible problem. To counter drug addiction various voluntary organisations like LIFE should come forward to work with the government."

LIFE was also honored being awarded 'Adhunik' award in 2001 for its outstanding contribution in the field of anti-drug and substance abuse. Kamrul received the award from the then president Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed. In recognition of its works with the young people various United Nations bodies have contracted out LIFE to take further advocacy activities with HIV/AIDS and substance abuse. LIFE adviser and chairman of United News of Bangladesh Amanullah Khan in his message said, "As prevention is better than cure we should seek to address the basic issues that serve as the breeding ground for this deadly habit. LIFE has a positive role to play and can make itself a force to reckon with."



Kamrul Islam Sony receiving award from former president Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

What is chronic diarrhea?

Diarrhea that lasts for more than two weeks is considered persistent or chronic. In an otherwise healthy person, chronic diarrhea may be a nuisance problem, or, for someone who has a weak immune system, a life-threatening illness.

What causes chronic diarrhea?

There are many causes of chronic diarrhea; these may be different for children and adults. Causes of chronic diarrhea can be grouped into two categories: diarrhea caused by an infection and diarrhea not caused by an infection. Sometimes, the cause of chronic diarrhea remains unknown.

Diarrhea caused by an infection may result from:

- ! Parasites, such as: *Cryptosporidium parvum*, *Cyclospora cayentensis*, *Entamoeba histolytica*, *Giardia lamblia*, microsporidia
- ! Bacteria, such as: *Campylobacter*, *Clostridium difficile*, *Escherichia coli*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Salmonella enteritidis*, *Shigella*
- ! Viral infections, such as: HIV, rotavirus, Norwalk agent
- ! **Diarrhea not caused by an infection may result from:**
- ! Antibiotics
- ! High blood pressure medications
- ! Cancer drugs
- ! Crohn's disease
- ! Colitis
- ! Diabetes, thyroid and other endocrine diseases
- ! Food additives (sorbitol, fructose, and others)
- ! Food allergies
- ! Previous surgery or radiation of the abdomen or gastrointestinal tract
- ! Tumors
- ! Reduced blood flow to the intestine

! Heredity--certain diseases occur more often in related family members.

! Travel

How is chronic diarrhea diagnosed?

Diagnosis may be difficult and requires that your health care provider takes a careful history and perform a physical examination. The types of tests that your health care provider orders will be based on your symptoms and history. Tests may include blood or stool tests; stool cultures may be used to test for bacteria. To detect parasites, it is often recommended that three or more stool samples be examined. Special stains may be required to look for some parasites. If these initial tests do not reveal the cause of your diarrhea, additional tests may include radiographs (x-rays) and endoscopy. Endoscopy is a procedure in which a tube is inserted into the mouth or rectum so that the doctor, usually a gastroenterologist, can look at the intestine from the inside.

Who is at risk for chronic diarrhea?

Persons with severely weakened immune systems, such as those with HIV/AIDS, those taking certain types of chemotherapy, or persons who have recently received an organ transplant are at risk. So are travelers to developing countries where the water and food supply may be contaminated.

How is chronic diarrhea treated?

The key to treating chronic diarrhea is to determine its cause. ! Diarrhea caused by an infection can often be treated with antibiotics. However, the correct diagnosis must be made so the

proper medication can be prescribed.

! Diarrhea not caused by an infection is more difficult to diagnose and treat. Long-term medication or surgery may be required. Specific treatment for chronic diarrhea not caused by an infection should be discussed with your health care provider.

For diarrhea whose cause has not been determined, follow these important treatment guidelines to relieve symptoms:

! Prevent dehydration. Serious health problems can occur if you don't maintain your body's proper fluid balance. Diarrhea may become worse and hospitalisation may be required if severe dehydration occurs. Do not drink beverages containing caffeine, such as tea, coffee, and soft drinks.

! Do not drink alcohol; it causes dehydration.

! Do not rely on sports drinks and broths alone to maintain adequate fluid balance. They should not be used to prevent SEVERE dehydration.

! Maintain well-balanced nutrition. Doing so may help you recover more quickly.

How is chronic diarrhea spread?

Chronic diarrhea caused by an infection can be spread by drinking water or eating food contaminated with stool. Close contact with a person who has diarrhea may also spread infection. This occurs when a person accidentally puts something that is contaminated with stool in or around his or her mouth. In general, chronic diarrhea not caused by an infection is not spread to other people.

Source: Internet

How smoking affects metabolism?

Nicotine, one of the components of cigarette smoke, increases energy expenditure by stimulating the central nervous system. Once this drug is removed from a person's system, energy expenditure returns to normal. This difference is not very significant and the person should adjust to it in a short period of time. Smoking also appears to ease feelings of hunger. Smokers can usually overcome hunger signals by lighting up.

Consequently, weight gain is often experienced soon after a person quits smoking. The average weight gain for people who quit smoking is less than 10 pounds. Being aware of the problem will help in avoiding or minimising the weight gain. It is often necessary to adjust eating habits and physical activity to maintain weight during and after quitting.

Smoking cessation, however, lengthens life expectancy by an average of 2-4 years and is well worth the effort. Here are some guidelines to help you avoid the weight gain:

- 1. Eat three balanced meals every day.
- 2. Choose plenty of fruits, vegetables and

whole grains, avoiding high-fat and high sugar items.

- 3. Avoid skipping meals. It leads to hunger and a tendency to snack on high-calorie foods.
- 4. Keep fresh fruit and cut-up raw vegetables handy and choose them when the need for snacking arises.
- 5. Keep busy to keep your thoughts away from food. Choose an activity that you enjoy (except eating) and do it more often, especially if you feel the urge to smoke or eat.
- 6. Increase your physical activity: join a gym, walk more, use the stairs.
- 7. Initially, stay away from other smokers and situations that led you to smoke (or eat).
- 8. Join a support group.

Never let the fear of weight gain keep you from accomplishing your goal. With a little effort and determination you will succeed in achieving both goals: quit smoking and avoid putting on weight. Your health depends on it.

Source: Internet

What is kernicterus?

Kernicterus is a type of brain damage that causes athetoid cerebral palsy and hearing loss. It also causes problems with vision and teeth and sometimes can cause mental retardation. In some newborn babies, the liver makes too much yellow pigment called bilirubin. When too much bilirubin builds up in a new baby's body, the skin and whites of the eyes turn yellow. This yellow coloring is called jaundice. Jaundice is very common in newborn babies and usually goes away by itself. A little jaundice is not a problem, but a few babies have too much jaundice. If not treated, high levels of bilirubin can damage the brain.

Who can develop kernicterus?

Any baby with untreated jaundice is at risk for kernicterus. This does not mean that every baby with yellow skin will have brain damage. Most babies with jaundice get better by themselves. If their skin is very yellow, they might need phototherapy treatment. If phototherapy

does not lower the baby's bilirubin levels, the baby may need an exchange transfusion.

Does jaundice always cause a problem?

Many babies have some jaundice. When they are a few days old, their skin slowly begins to turn yellow. The yellow color comes from the color of bilirubin. When red blood cells die, they break down and bilirubin is left. It is normal for some of the red blood cells to die every day. The red blood cells break down and make bilirubin. In newborns, the liver may not be developed enough to get rid of so much bilirubin at once. So, if too many red blood cells die at the same time, the baby can become very yellow or may even look orange. The yellow color does not hurt the baby's skin, but the bilirubin goes to the brain as well as to the skin. That can lead to brain damage.

Source: Internet

Signs and symptoms of arthritis

Arthritis is one of the most common of all disabling diseases. It is estimated that ten percent of the population suffers from one of the many forms of arthritis. Arthritis and rheumatism are terms that are used interchangeably by people to describe any abnormal condition of the joints. Many arthritic diseases have been given popular names such as "housemaids knees," "Baseball finger," or "weavers bottom".

Physicians will usually prefer to apply the term arthritis to disorders of the joints that are accompanied by inflammation.

There have been more than 75 different diseases of the joints that have been identified. They are classified according to their specific signs, symptoms, and causes. Some of the diseases include: bursitis, gout, and tendonitis. Some of the more major disorders are rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis.

Rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis are examples of two kinds of arthritic ailments that are really quite different. Rheumatoid arthritis will usually develop from unknown causes. It will most often make its presence known before the age of 45.

It is marked by a nonspecific inflammation of the joints of the extremities. The inflammation will be accompanied by changes in substances found in the blood. A person with rheumatoid arthritis may develop limb deformities within a very short period of time.

Osteoarthritis is not likely to show any symptoms until after the age of 45. The cause of this type of arthritis is simply wear and tear on the cartilage cushions of the joints. It will occur mostly in the weight-bearing ones such as the hips and the knees.

The most common form of arthritis is osteoarthritis, which

can also be known as hypertrophic arthritis or degenerative joint disease. It can be said that if you live long enough, you will suffer from osteoarthritis. The first signs of osteoarthritis may appear on an x-ray. Studies have shown that nearly everybody has at least the beginning signs or symptoms of osteoarthritis after they reach their 50's. It affects both men and women, although women may not experience symptoms until after they reach the age of menopause.

A simple explanation of the cause of osteoarthritis is that the joints between the bone of a young person are cushioned and lubricated by cartilage pads and smooth lining membranes. Normal wear and tear on the joints during a lifetime of activity gradually erodes the protective layers between the bones. The bones may develop small growths at the joints. This will exacerbate the situation. There is some evidence that heredity plays a role in the development of these bone growths. These growth are ten times more likely to happen in women than men.

While it is true that the hips and knees are among the most likely targets of osteoarthritis, it can also affect the hands, the shoulders, and the back. The weight-bearing joints are commonly involved when a person is over weight and spends a good deal of time standing or walking.

Most cases of osteoarthritis are not seriously disabling, but arthritis of the hip is a big cause of disability in older people. It will produce pain in the hips, the inner thigh, the groin, and often times in the knees. Walking, climbing steps, sitting, and bending will become very painful.

Source: Internet