

Diabetes not a barrier to pregnancy

DR MASAMAD

For women with diabetes, pregnancy requires much more planning because diabetes poses major health risks for mother and baby. But with proper healthcare before, during and after pregnancy, these risks could be greatly reduced. Many women with diabetes experience normal pregnancies and deliver healthy babies.

Potential problems for mother and baby

Whether a diabetic woman has just discovered she is pregnant or is planning to have a child, it is important for her to be aware of these difficulties. She should discuss with a doctor preferably a diabetologist to prevent the risks.

Risks to mother: A pregnant woman with diabetes is much more likely to—

- Deliver early
- Need labour to be induced by other means
- Need to be delivered by Caesarean section

Risks to baby: Babies of women with diabetes are—

- Three times as likely to die in their first months of life
- Twice as likely to have a major abnormality at birth

How to manage

a) Improve blood sugar control: While the chance of problems in pregnancy and at birth are higher for diabetic women than that of women without diabetes, studies prove the risk could be reduced by tight blood sugar control—less than 5.6 mmol/l before meals rising no higher than 7.8 mmol/l two hours after eating.

By strictly control of blood sugar, the chance of a healthy pregnancy and birth are the same as that of a normal women.

Women who have tight control of blood sugar during the early weeks of pregnancy greatly reduce the risk of malformations of their babies. The chance of a healthy baby is increased by strict control before conception and during pregnancy.

Blood sugar should be checked properly if possible four times a day. Women should not get worried about the occasional high and low blood sugar level, as



perfect blood sugar control is nearly impossible for anyone with diabetes.

b) Avoid hypoglycaemia: Women with diabetes who try to

achieve strict control of blood sugar during pregnancy risk severe and frequent hypos (hypoglycaemia i.e. low blood sugar level).

Nighttime's hypos are more common in pregnancy. Symptoms usually occur suddenly and may include cold sweats, cool pale skin, tremor, anxious feeling, unusual tiredness or weakness, confusion, difficulty in concentration, excessive hunger, temporary vision changes, headache, nausea and palpitations.

Some women lose awareness of their early warning symptoms of low blood sugar during pregnancy and so family, friends and colleagues should know how to spot, manage and treat a hypo, which, if severe, can lead to loss of consciousness.

Hypos can be prevented by eating regular meals and snacks, testing blood sugar at least four times daily and adjusting food intake or insulin levels as advised by the doctor.

c) Avoid acidic blood: High blood sugar can lead to high levels of ketones, acidic compounds in the blood. If not treated with extra insulin, the blood becomes too acidic. This is called ketoacidosis and can kill a baby at any stage in pregnancy, sometimes even before the

mother feels seriously ill.

Modern insulin for the use in pregnancy

Insulin Aspart (which is available in the market as NovoRapid) is rapid-acting modern insulin, that gives flexibility and convenience, fitting in with the patient's lifestyle and can be taken just before or soon after eating. It can be easily used in pregnancy.

The shorter duration of action of this type of insulin reduces the risk of nocturnal hypoglycaemia. During a trial of 322 women with type-1 diabetes, there were fewer pre-term deliveries and reduced risks to the unborn baby compared to traditional human insulin.

Strict control of blood sugar is the main challenge of pregnant women with diabetes. With the early consultation with a diabetologist, every diabetic woman can pass a normal pregnancy and give birth healthy babies.

The writer is a Consultant Endocrinologist and Center Director of Nayapalitan Executive Center, National Healthcare Network.

Prevent the winter ailments

MD RAHIB HOSSAIN

Winter is considered as the season for flu and cold, for fever and skin diseases and other dangerous ailments that may lead us to rush into hospital. With the dropping of temperature our body needs special caution to be accustomed with climate change.

Preparing ourselves for the chill is not very troublesome. The easiest way to avoid feeling the winter blues is to stop hibernating and get outside. Even a short 10-minute walk or lounging on a bench in the sun can help your mood. While there is no foolproof way to keep the germs away,

preparing for battle. Germs are everywhere from home door to office room. Most germs are transmitted by shaking hands. Most of us do not wash their hands after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are less effective than ordinary soap. Liquid dishwashing soap may be best of all. In one study, dishwashing soap was up to 100 times more effective than the antibacterial variety.

Exercise

One of the worst effects of winter season is fatigue and the urge to curl up in a blanket and avoid leaving the house. Fight this! Keep going to the gym if you usually do,

table oil.

Drink at least four or five glasses of water every day. This should not change just because it is winter.

Caring skin and hair

For basic skin care during the winter, you should cleanse your face twice a day, and choose a cream-based cleanser if your skin is dry or sensitive. It should leave your face feeling soft, rather than tight or dry. At night, use a light moisturiser and during the day, a sunscreen or a moisturiser with an SPF of at least 30 as you are going to get significant amount of ultraviolet rays.

Handle your depression

While for many, the winter brings only a little lethargy and a craving for hot coffee, for others it brings depression, oversleeping and social withdrawal. Those who have seemingly more intense 'winter blues' may be experiencing a condition called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). SAD is also associated with a weakened immune system during the winter, anxiety and overeating. In the winter there is less light; light quantity affects melatonin, which affects serotonin; high serotonin causes happy feelings and low serotonin causes sad feelings. Since SAD depends on light quantity, the treatment includes various methods of increasing light exposure.

These tips can help reduce the incidence of having diseases and make the winter a pleasure.



following a few basic thumb rules can help minimise the sniffs and sniffles.

Keep your house happy

Instead of using artificial light during this time, try to use natural light. Open the blinds early in the morning and try to keep windows free of obstacles to let the best light into your house. Make sure there are no great contrasts from one room to another, because older people have difficulty adjusting to changes in light and high contrasts increase the risk of slip and falls.

Soap and water

It is cold season, and germs are

or start exercising a bit if you did not before. Exercise is constantly praised for its benefits in boosting body's immune system and keep it fit for work.

The researchers point out that regular exercise can fight off germs. Exercise has lots of benefits, but do not wait until the sniffs start to hit the treadmill.

Drinks, fruits and vegetables

Carrots, pumpkin, squash, spinach and broccoli are packed with immune-boosting carotenoids. Dried fruits such as raisins and blueberries may also be helpful. Avoid processed foods, sugary treats and polyunsaturated vegetables.

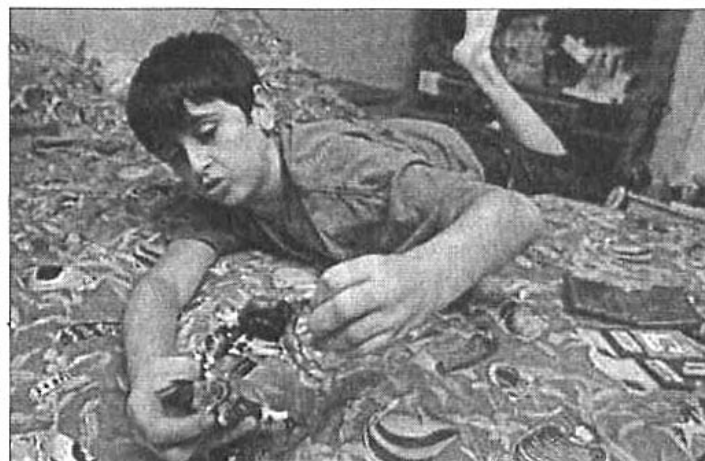
Common facts about autism

DR M KARIM KHAN

A two-year-old boy Shamim, had no notable problem since birth up to 12 months of his life. After his first birthday anniversary, his mother noticed that he was not perfectly responding to the stimuli and he liked to stay alone. Gradually he became quiet. He did not show any interest to the surrounding toys and objects. His language development seemed to be slow and did not show any reaction to the presence of neighbor child of his age.

When his mother told her observational findings to his father who is a very busy busi-

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nessman, he did not give much importance, as his son was apparently fine. However, they consulted a paediatrician lately at the age of 18 months who diagnosed the condition as Autism, a brain development disorder.

Autism impairs social interaction and communication, and causes restricted and repetitive behaviour. It develops before 36 months of age and is typically diagnosable at the age of 18 months.

The hallmark of autism is impaired social interaction. Parents are usually the first to notice symptoms of autism in their child. As early as infancy, a

baby with autism may be unresponsive to people or focus intently on one item to the exclusion of others for long periods of time. A child with autism may appear to develop normally and then withdraw and become indifferent to social engagement.

Children with autism may fail to respond to their name and often avoid eye contact with other people. They have difficulty interpreting what others are thinking or feeling because they cannot understand social cues, such as tone of voice or facial expressions, and do not watch other people's faces for clues about appropriate behavior.

The cause of Autism is multifactorial. Genetic factors play a significant role, but what is actually inherited is not clear. Language and cognitive abnormalities are more common in autistic children than in general population. Problems in chromosome number 15 play a vital role in causing Autism.

Brain injury during birth and following birth may also be a causative factor. Occasionally brain volume of Autistic children may be increased. Abnormal neurochemical findings have also been associated with Autism. Previously it was thought that MMR vaccine may be an associa-

tion but it proved false.

Symptoms are poor eye contact, poor social relationship, delay in use of words, language problem, reliance on non verbal communication, stereotyped body movements, less interest to surrounding objects, introverted, echolalia may present. Accurate measurement of intelligence is not possible because of non-cooperation and communication problem. Occasionally an Autistic child may have an isolated remarkable talent.

There is no specific diagnostic test for Autism. Physician diagnoses it clinically.

Management needs multidisciplinary approach. Parent-education, patience and compliance are very important to have better management. Considerable advances have been made in the treatment of Autism. Special education, intensive behavioral therapy beginning before three years, targeted towards speech and language development, is very much important.

Parent-education, training and support are mandatory for better outcome. Medicine does not improve the situation. But if there is seizure problem anticonvulsant drugs are needed.

Prognosis is variable depending upon the time of diagnosis, severity, parent's education and attitude. A better outcome is associated with higher intelligence, functional speech and less bizarre symptoms. Some may grow up to live a self-sufficient and others may remain dependent on family. Early diagnosis and intensive management starting earlier helps in better outcome. In our country we are also having many children suffering from Autism, we all should show very caring and sympathetic attitude for them. Our love and affection may help them a lot.

The writer is an Associate Professor of Department of Pediatrics, Community Based Medical College, Mymensingh.

Did You Know



Honey may ease nighttime cough

A spoonful of honey can quiet children's nighttime cough and help them—and their parents—sleep better, a new study shows.

When compared to the cough syrup ingredient dextromethorphan or no treatment, honey came out on top.

"The results were so strong that we were able to say clearly that honey was better than no treatment and dextromethorphan was not," Dr. Ian M. Paul of Pennsylvania State University in Hershey, one of the study's authors, informed.

There is currently no proven effective treatment for cough due to an upper respiratory infection like the common cold. While dextromethorphan is widely used, there is no evidence that it works, and it carries risks.

Honey is used around the world as a folk remedy for cough, and might provide a safe, effective alternative to cough medicine, Paul and his colleagues note in the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine.

To investigate, they compared buckwheat honey, a honey-flavored dextromethorphan preparation, and no treatment in 105 children who had sought treatment for nighttime coughs due to colds. Parents were surveyed on the day of the doctor's visit and on the next day, after those in the treatment groups had given

their kids honey or dextromethorphan at bedtime.

Among the three groups, children given honey had the greatest reduction in cough frequency and severity, and the most improved sleep, as did their parents.

There are several explanations for why honey might ease cough, Paul and his team note; its sweet, syrupy quality may be soothing to the throat, while its high antioxidant content could also be a factor. Honey also has antimicrobial effects.

Honey is not recommended for infants younger than one year old, because of the rare but serious risk it might cause a type of food poisoning known as botulism, Paul said. For older kids, however, it is generally safe.

He and his colleagues used a dosage identical to that recommended for cough syrups: half a teaspoon for two- to five-year-olds, a teaspoon for six- to eleven-year-olds, and two teaspoons for children twelve and older.

"The study offers an interesting alternative to traditional over-the-counter remedies for cough in children," Dr. Michael Warren of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee and colleagues conclude in a commentary accompanying the study.

Source: Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine

Exercise may boost brain's natural antidepressant

Exercise seems to increase the production of naturally occurring brain chemical with antidepressant effects in mice, researchers reported.

The findings, published in the journal Nature Medicine, point to potential new ways to treat depression in people.

Studies have found that exercise can help ease depression symptoms, but the reasons for the benefit have not been clear. For the new study, scientists used a tool called a microarray to examine how exercise changed gene activity in the brains of mice.

They focused on a brain region known as the hippocampus, which has been implicated in mood regulation and in the brain's response to antidepressant medication.

"The major finding is that we have identified a key factor that underlies the antidepressant effects of exercise—information that could be used for the development of novel therapeutic agents," said senior researcher Dr. Ronald S. Duman of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

Exercise "clearly has effects on the brain," he told, and they are both direct and indirect. It's possible, he explained, that the current findings reflect a direct effect of exercise on nerve cells in the hippocampus, or more general changes in the brain, like better blood flow or increased hormonal activity.

Source: Nature Medicine, online

MEDExPO 2007



Fifth International Medical Equipment and Healthcare Services Exhibition — MedExpo-2007 was held from December 6-8 at a city hotel. The new feature of the MedExpo this time was the increase in number of the participants from the country. Local healthcare providers are coming forward in showcasing their extended services.