



The great green tea

Time has come to say, few cups a day — keep the doctor away. I am talking about green tea.

It is produced from the leaves of *Camellia Sinensis* by some special processes. High in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and a whole range of anti-aging and cancer fighting compounds, green tea is great. It is widely being used as a significant part of a healthy diet.

Antioxidants are an important factor in achieving finest health. An antioxidant known as Epigallocatechin Gallate (EGCG) is at least 100 times more effective than vitamin C and 25 times more effective than vitamin E at protecting cells from harmful influence.

Ancient Chinese people have always used it for medical purposes and it is a part of Chinese history. In Japanese tradition, learned scholars wrote whole volumes on the importance of green tea.

Recent studies show that green tea restrains the spread of disease. It has a variety of antibacterial and antiviral properties. It is good to fight against cold to food poisoning. It is good for oral hygiene as it destroys bacteria that cause plaque and bad breath. It closes main receptors that produce allergic reactions.

Studies show that drinking green tea is related to reductions in body fat. According to one study, green tea can burn 35-43 per cent more fat

during the day when one drinks 3-5 cups.

The University of Chicago's Tang Center for Herbal Medical study shows that it reduces the fat deposits under the skin and in our belly area. Researchers found that Green tea prevents one from gaining weight by stopping the movement of sugar into body's fat cells and also burns fat by increasing body metabolism.

The International Journal of Obesity states that green tea contains polyphenols which causes body to produce heat that burn body fat. Several polyphenols also keep cancer cells from gaining a foothold in the body. Study after study has found that drinking regular green tea can decrease the risk of breast, stomach, esophagus, colon, and/or prostate cancer. Some green tea studies prove that it lowers blood sugar.

Green tea is involved in reducing thrombosis cases — one of the main causes of strokes and heart attacks. It reduces the level of cholesterol in blood and improves the ratio of good cholesterol to bad cholesterol. It also reduces high blood pressure by repressing angiotensin-II. Polyphenols keep blood vessels from contracting and raising blood pressure. It is said to be useful to treat impaired immune function and rheumatoid arthritis. Green tea also destroys free radicals that cause aging.

Get protected from cervical cancer

ABU SIDDIQUI

Cervical cancer is cancer of the cervix — the lower part of the uterus, which opens into the vagina. Cervical cancer is the second-most-common type of cancer that strikes women worldwide after breast cancer.

It is estimated that nearly 250,000 deaths are associated with cervical cancer globally every year. According to the World Health Organisation, there were 500,000 new cases of cervical cancer in 2005.

The tragedy of cervical cancer is that it often strikes when a woman is still young. It tends to happen in women between the age of 35 and 55 years. She may be trying to raise her family or may be she has not had children yet. A population-based survey reported that the coverage of cervical cancer screening in Bangladesh is less than 1%. Older and poor women are at the highest risk of developing cervical cancer in Bangladesh.

Cause of cervical cancer
99% of cervical cancers are caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV), which spreads through sexual contact. There are over 100 different types of HPV. The majorities of

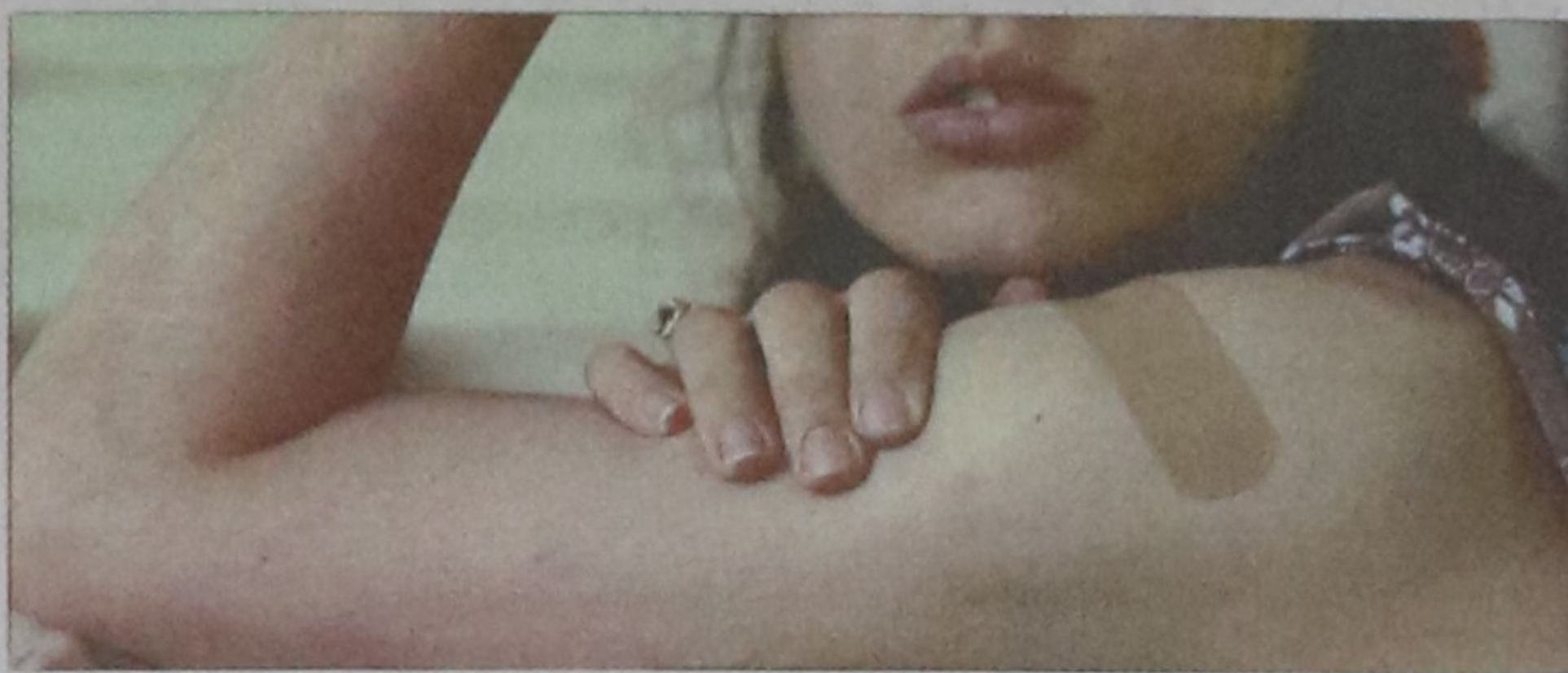
viruses are considered Low Risk and do not cause cervical cancer. However, HPV-16 and HPV-18 often referred to as High Risk HPV types are associated with more than 70% of cervical cancer cases.

The body's immune system usually fights off the infection as a result, most women never suffer from HPV infection. However, in some women the infection does not go away. When the virus remains active in the body for a long period of time, cervical cells begin to change and the risk of cervical cancer increases.

There are other factors can increase the risk that an HPV infection develops into cervical cancer:

- Sexual intercourse at an early age
- Multiple sexual partners
- Multiple full-term pregnancies
- Chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, or herpes simplex virus type 2 infection
- Cigarette smoking
- Use of oral contraceptives for a long period of time
- Weakened immune system or HIV infection
- Mother or sister with a history of cervical cancer
- Low levels of folic acid (a type of Vitamin B)

Symptoms
Cervical cancer is usually a



slow-growing cancer, typically takes 10-15 years before invasive cancer develops. Once cervical cells begin to change, it first becomes "pre-cancerous" a condition also known as "dysplasia" or Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia (CIN).

In the early stages cervical cancer often causes no symptoms. However, when symptoms do occur, they may include:

- Bleeding between regular menstrual periods
- Bleeding after sexual intercourse
- Bleeding after douching
- Bleeding after a pelvic exam
- Pelvic pain not related to your menstrual cycle
- Heavy or unusual discharge that may be watery,

thick, and possibly have a foul odor

- Increased urinary frequency
- Pain during urination

These symptoms can be caused by cervical cancer, or by a number of serious conditions, and should be evaluated promptly by a medical professional.

Diagnosis

Cervical cancer is diagnosed through a series of examinations. A Pap test is most commonly used to screen and detect the possibility of a cervical cancer or dysplasia.

An HPV DNA test is used to determine the high-risk strains of HPV infection, which is most likely to lead to cervical cancer. If an abnormality is found during a Pap and HPV DNA tests, a

Colposcopy is performed.

Finally, a Cone biopsy is performed by removing a cone-shaped piece of tissue from the cervix for microscopic examination. A pathologist examines the sample for confirmation of precancer or cancer cells.

Treatment

Options for treating cervical cancer depend predominantly on the stage of disease — the size of the tumor, the depth of invasion, and whether the cancer has spread to other parts of the body.

Other factors that are considered are the patient's age and if she wishes to have children. The primary forms of treatment are surgery or combined radiation therapy and chemotherapy.

- Surgery to remove the

The resolution countdown is on!

Unrealistic resolutions are easily discarded. So do not resolve to change your whole life. Instead, set small, specific goals. Get up 15 minutes earlier for a quick morning walk. Sip water rather than coffee. Eat a piece of fruit after dinner. Stretch during TV commercials. Choose only those resolutions that are realistic and that help you feel good about yourself. When the clock strikes midnight, you will be poised for success.

India's West Bengal reports fresh bird flu outbreak

REUTERS, Kolkata, India

Health and veterinary workers culled poultry in a densely populated eastern Indian state on last Saturday after a fresh outbreak of H5N1 bird flu, officials said.

The latest outbreak of the virus in poultry is the fourth in the state of West Bengal since 2007.

Bird flu first broke out in India in 2006. Millions of chicken and ducks have been culled since to contain the virus, but it has resurfaced from time to time. India has reported no human infections.

West Bengal officials said they had begun culling about 60,000 poultry after the fourth outbreak was confirmed on last Saturday near Siliguri town, bordering Bangladesh.

Culling operations in West Bengal to contain the third

outbreak had ended barely a fortnight ago.

"We have sent 30 teams to kill chickens and ducks in the village where dead birds tested positive," Surendra Gupta, a senior government official, told news agency Reuters.

Hundreds of thousands of birds had also been culled in India's northeastern Assam state and neighboring Meghalaya after bird flu was detected in November. Experts have warned that the H5N1 virus might mutate or combine with the highly contagious seasonal influenza virus and spark a pandemic that could kill millions of people across the world.

According to the World Health Organisation, H5N1 bird flu has infected more than 390 people in 15 countries and killed at least 247 of them since the virus resurfaced in Asia in 2003.



A health worker culls poultry at Matigara village on the outskirts of the northeastern Indian city of Siliguri January 4, 2009

Management of Psoriasis in pregnancy

DR SYEDA ISHRAAT JAHAN

Psoriasis is a chronic disease of the immune system that appears on the skin, usually in the form of thick, red, scaly patches. Women who develop psoriasis often worry about becoming pregnant. They ask themselves if the baby will develop normally. Will they be able to breastfeed? Will their psoriasis get worse during pregnancy? Are the treatments safe for the baby?

According to medical science, Psoriasis is not necessarily a barrier to pregnancy, nor does it affect a woman's ability to have children. Women with psoriasis generally progress through pregnancy and give birth just like anyone else. However, expectant mothers who suffer from psoriasis need special precaution in their treatment and should be aware of the hereditary nature of this condition, the effect of hormonal changes and tips for ease in breastfeeding.

Treatment options

Pregnant women with psoriasis need to be aware that some treatments for psoriasis may harm their babies. There are not many drugs available to treat pregnant women as most anti-psoriatic drugs are toxic for the fetus. The appropriate



Dr Ishrat examines a patient of Psoriasis

treatment for psoriasis in a woman who is pregnant, or who plans pregnancy, will depend on the extent and severity of the skin condition.

Topical treatment: Topical treatments are first line treatments for psoriasis in pregnancy as most of systemic drugs are toxic to fetus. However, medications for external use are not free from side effects as they are absorbed by the body. Some should be completely avoided during pregnancy as they are potentially teratogenic (causes birth defect).

Emollients: Soothing and moisturising creams may be used without incurring any

risk.

Vitamin A derivatives for local use should be avoided because of their teratogenic effect.

Vitamin D derivatives can be used in small quantities in very specific areas.

Corticosteroids (Cortisone): Dermatologists sometimes prescribe corticosteroids in small quantities for use on very limited areas. It can increase the risk of stretch marks, so it should not be applied to certain parts of the body such as the breasts, abdomen and hips.

Exfoliants such as urea and Salicylic acid: These treatments can be used if their application is limited to small areas of the skin.

Systemic treatment:

Systemic treatments are often teratogenic. These risks are very high when medication is taken during the first trimester of pregnancy. Consequently, most orally administered medicines are stopped during pregnancy.

Systemic treatments to avoid

Acitretine (and other vitamin A derivatives) and methotrexate: These can bring about serious congenital abnormalities and miscarriage in some cases.

PURA therapy: This can be dangerous for the foetus because of the psoralens (light-sensitising chemicals) administered prior to the PURA sessions.

Possible systemic treatment in cases of widespread psoriasis

Cyclosporine: This drug is not dangerous for the foetus, but it does have side effects. A short course can be prescribed in exceptional cases for pregnant women who have severe psoriasis.

UVB treatment: Narrow spectrum UVB therapies which treat widespread psoriasis are safe during pregnancy.

The writer is an Associate Consultant of Department of Dermatology at Square Hospitals Ltd, Dhaka.

Antibiotics before infections save lives: study

Giving antibiotics to patients in intensive care units as a precaution saves lives, according to a major Dutch study published recently.

The findings in the New England Journal of Medicine suggest the benefits of administering antibiotics right away, even before an infection develops, outweigh the risks people will develop resistance to them, the researchers said.

"We have seen that using antibiotics clearly results in a reduction in the number of deaths and intensive care units should make use of this knowledge," Anne Marie de

Smet, a researcher at University Medical Center Utrecht, said in a statement.

Drug-resistant bacteria are a growing problem in hospitals worldwide, marked by the rise of superbugs such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA.

The World Health Organisation cites hospital-acquired infections as a major cause of death and disability worldwide and experts have been saying for years that poor hospital practices spread dangerous bacteria. At the same time, doctors are told to cut back on using antibiotics to prevent

the rise of resistant "superbugs."

The infections can cause life-threatening and disfiguring infections that can kill within days and can often only be treated with expensive, intravenous antibiotics.

The risk of infection increases the longer people remain in the hospital.

De Smet and colleagues looked at 6,000 men and women who stayed in intensive care units for at least two days at 13 hospitals in the Netherlands to compare the effects of different antibiotic treatments.

Volunteers who received

oral antibiotics right away were 11 percent less likely to die, and those given oral and intravenous combinations right away were 13 percent less likely to die than people who did not get the drugs, the researchers found.

At the same time the number of antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections did not increase among the people on the drugs.

Because the researchers tracked deaths 28 days after treatment began, the next step is looking to see how resistance may develop in the long term.

Source: New England Journal of Medicine

Coffee may protect against oral cancers

New research indicates that drinking coffee lowers the risk of developing cancer of the oral cavity or throat, at least in the general population of Japan.

The consumption of coffee in Japan is relatively high, as is the rate of cancer of the esophagus in men. To look into any protective effect of coffee drinking, Dr. Toru Naganuma of Tohoku University, Sendai, and colleagues, analysed data from the population-based Miyagi Cohort Study in Japan.

The study included information about diet, including coffee consumption. Among more than 38,000 study participants aged 40 to 64 years with no prior history of cancer, 157 cases of cancer of the mouth, pharynx and esophagus occurred during 13 years of follow-up.

Compared with people who did not drink coffee, those who drank one or more cups per day had half

the risk of developing these cancers, Naganuma's group reports in the American Journal of Epidemiology.

They note that the reduction in risk included people who are at high risk for these cancers, namely, those who were current drinkers and/or smokers at the start of the study.

"We had not expected that we could observe such a substantial inverse association with coffee consumption and the risk of these cancers," Naganuma commented, "and the inverse association in high-risk groups for these cancers as well."

The researchers conclude in their article, "Although cessation of alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking is currently the best known way to help reduce the risk of developing these cancers, coffee could be a preventive factor in both low-risk and high-risk populations."

Source: American Journal of Epidemiology



A man drinks coffee at a coffee shop

New health screening packages at Apollo Hospitals Dhaka

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Apollo Hospitals, Dhaka has added 4 new screening packages recently to strengthen its Master Health Check (MHC) system, says a press release.

New screening packages include liver screening, screening tests for smokers, thyroid check, DAP screening (Drugs with Additional Potential).

Since its first introduction in 2005, it has been providing a number of preventive health screening services with a separate clinic. Till

date it has served more than 16,500 patients with screening needs.

According to the hospital authority, they have now 12 screening packages like whole body check, heart check, diabetic check, common cancers screening etc.

Among the packages, Apollo DAP screening is the first of its kind in our country that is used to screen the people with history of alcoholism or other drug addiction and to detect the presence and level of drugs with addiction potentiality.