

## Is a nap good for health?

Nap, also called Siesta (Latin, Spanish) is widely referred to short period of sleep, usually taken in the early afternoon, often after the midday meal. This is not very deep sleep but rather for a short, usually 20-40 minute period of time.

In farming countries, a midday break is customary because of their early and late work schedules. Countries like Japan, offer special areas in the workplace set up as napping rooms, while people in Spain would prefer taking their siesta in their own homes.

Recently a new term has been introduced by researchers, known as "ultra-short sleep" which could launch memory processing in the brain. One UK researcher disagreed, saying that longer sleep was needed to have an impact on memory. University of Dusseldorf researchers demonstrated for the first time that an ultra-brief sleep episode provides an effective memory enhancement.

There are lots of benefits related to naps. Sometimes it can be a solution when you are too much stressed. Take a short and sound nap and forget about worries. When you wake up, you will have a clear brain to think the issues.

Some researchers believe conditions such as poor health also can bring on sudden drowsiness during the afternoon. When the night's sleeping cycles are frequently interrupted and deep sleep or REM (rapid eye movement-dream) sleep is disturbed, an afternoon nap will be required to refresh the system.

While a full night's sleep is vital for good health, stamina and alertness, a short nap also can do wonders for your mood and performance. Although a short sleep is believed to be awesome, but a small portion of people have reported nausea, constant and headaches after waking up from short sleeps. In that case, those people may need a good night's sleep as well and if it is serious — one should consult a doctor.

Make sure you have a good sleep environment. Choose a cool, dark and quiet room to help you fall asleep and have a restful nap. Choose the right time to nap. Your body may not be ready for more sleep if it is early in the day, while napping too late can cause problems falling asleep at bedtime. If you want to have a good nap, avoid caffeine which can disrupt a sound sleep and stay in your system longer than you think.

As well, do not forget to set an alarm, if you want to have a short nap.

# Skin care in the monsoon

DR. MOHSENA AKHTER NIPUN

You may love the rain but too much moisture in this weather may cause harm to your beloved skin. Depending on the skin type, humid and wet weather causes unusual activities on the surface of the skin and leads to oily, patchy, and dry skin. Soaked skin particularly of the feet and legs, is very much prone to fungal infections. With a little precaution and simple measures we can save ourselves a lot of misery over bad skin.

One important problem of the rainy season is dull and lifeless skin. This is mainly due to the high humidity in the atmosphere and uneven distribution of moisture. The first and foremost thing to get rid of this is cleanliness. We should follow a regular routine of cleansing, toning and moisturising the skin. It is best to use a gentle non drying soap and splash plain water several times a day on the face. It is best to follow up this measure with use an exfoliating face scrub to remove dead cells and increase collagen production. Do not apply oil on your skin, especially face. If you apply oil, your skin will remain oily throughout the

day. This way you will allow your skin to accumulate dust and different other harmful elements.

Since your face is exposed all the time, there are all the chances that you pick up an infection on it. If you have got wet due to rains, dry yourself up, as soon as possible. Do not think that since you are already washed up with rain water there is no need to wash up your face and hands. In fact, it is advisable that you take a bath after getting wet due to rain water.

Reason number one is that it washes out all rain water from your skin, hair and head. This will prevent rain water from being absorbed by your head, which otherwise become a cause of headache, fever and related troubles. Another reason is that you will save your skin from the contact of any harmful elements contained by the rain water.

Your skin feels sticky during the rains, but this is not because your oil glands are overactive. During the rains, due to the humidity in the air, you sweat more. This leaves a sticky, moist layer on your skin. To feel better, wash your face with plain water. Avoid using soap because too much soap can dry up your skin —



and steal its natural oils.

One may notice pimples, and breakouts on the skin, which is mainly due to dirt and pollutants attracted by the sweat. The tip to solve this problem during the rainy season lies in cleaning and maintaining a clean skin.

One of the biggest skin complaints during the monsoon is fungal infections. A fungus thrives in humidity — wet skin folds rubbing against each other get macerated easily, providing easy entry to fungi and yeast. As a

result, you develop itchy, circular, reddish, flaking patches on the body, especially in skin folds at the groin, underarms and around the breast in women.

Fungal infections can also affect your feet, especially if you wear closed shoes all day. Staying dry is the best way to avoid them. Carry a set of dry clothes and footwear to the office and change immediately if you have gotten drenched on your way.

Once you are seated at your desk, take your shoes

advisable after the wash to soak your feet for a few minutes in a tub of warm water. Scabies is another common infection that preys on both children and adults during the monsoon — it is caused by a mite infestation. If your child complains about a body itch that intensifies at night and you see a few red bumps or a rash on his/her hands, wrists, underarms, abdomen, groin and buttocks, then rush to the dermatologist — this condition is highly contagious and invariably spreads to the family if not treated properly.

Drink a lot of fluid as the rainy season can be deceptively dehydrating. Fruits like guavas, papayas, apples, oranges and also include dry-fruits like nuts, almonds are also a good option that are rich in anti-oxidants and nutrients that fight against microorganism and prevent infections. Skin is a sensitive and important organ that should be taken care of properly particularly in this season. A bit of negligence on this part can become a cause of trouble for you.

The writer is a Honorary Medical Officer, Department of Dermatology, Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).



## Eating seafood while pregnant may boost mood

Eating omega-3-rich seafood may be a mood-lifter for women who are feeling depressed during pregnancy, suggests a study of British women.

In the study, Dr. Jean Golding, at the University of Bristol, and colleagues found an association between a low omega-3 fatty acid intake from seafood and an increased risk of high levels of depressive symptoms during pregnancy.

The association between low seafood intake and

greater symptoms of depression remained strong even when Golding's team accounted for a variety of factors that might influence the results.

Depression during pregnancy is harmful for both mother and child, Golding and colleagues note in their report. Although common in western countries, depression appears to be virtually absent in countries where people eat a lot of fish.

Source: Epidemiology

## Female condom and women's empowerment

RADYAN RAHAVE

Female now account for half of all people infected by HIV in developing countries. Female condom which can make to prevent both HIV transmission and unwanted pregnancy is failed to get sufficient attention of policy makers and women users in Bangladesh due to leadership, awareness and price of condom at large. Female condoms

remain inaccessible and their contribution remains unused.

The burning need for access to female condoms is evident in the feminisation of the HIV pandemic, the large unmet need for contraception and the pitiful progress towards meeting MDG 5 and 6 on maternal health and stumbling and reversing the spread of HIV.

Why we should provide female condoms, when male condoms are readily



should be available everywhere for universal access.

The year 2009 marks 16 years since the female condom was invented. Ironically, we have failed to make them accessible within this long period to the women who need them the most. Despite the want of any other female-initiated form of protection and unprecedented rises in funding for the response to HIV, female condoms

available, much cheaper and provide a comparable level of protection? Two reasons reflect are — female condoms are a tool to assist women's empowerment. Women who use female condoms report an increased sense of power for negotiation of safer sex and a greater sense of control and safety during sex. Still women do not have any alternative female-initiated means of protecting themselves.

Other one, providing both female and male condoms leads to more instances of protected sex and reductions in the incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Their additive effect, providing protection in instances which would not be protected by male condoms, makes them a cost-effective form of HIV prevention.

The female condom is a strong, soft, transparent polyurethane sheath inserted in the vagina before sexual intercourse, providing protection against both pregnancy and STIs. It is stronger than latex, odorless, causes no allergic reactions and unlike latex, may be used with both oil-based and water-based lubricants.

It can be inserted prior to intercourse, is not dependent on the male erection, and does not require immediate withdrawal after ejaculation. The female condom, therefore, contributes to women's sense of personal control and empowerment, increases women's knowledge about their bodies and STIs and improves communication between men and women.

This female friendly new measure that can play a vital part in reproductive health programmes and needs to be introduced strategically to provide the greatest public health impact. To create the impasse of population boom in Bangladesh, the expansion of use of female condom is of dire need. Donors and policy makers should come forward to reach the outreach.

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## Keep cholesterol in check to ward off dementia

High cholesterol levels in midlife — even cholesterol levels considered only borderline elevated — significantly increases the risk of Alzheimer's disease 30 years later, results of a large study indicate.

"This is the first study, to our knowledge, to show that not only high cholesterol, but also borderline high cholesterol, is associated with dementia," Dr. Rachel Whitmer, the study's senior author, noted.

The studies have shown that treatment with a cholesterol-lowering statin drug may lower the risk of dementia.

The study, published in the journal *Dementia and Geriatric Cognitive Disorders*, involved 9,844 men and women whose cholesterol levels were determined between 1964 and 1973 when they were 40 to 45 years old.

Between 1994 and 2007, a review of their medical records showed that 469 had Alzheimer's disease and 127

had vascular dementia, the second most common form of dementia after Alzheimer's disease, which is caused by clogged blood vessels and other conditions affecting the blood supply to the brain.

Compared to people with "desirable" cholesterol levels below 200 milligrams per deciliter of blood (mg/dL) in midlife, the risk of Alzheimer's disease three decades later was 57 percent higher in people with high midlife cholesterol levels of 240 mg/dL and above.

"Borderline" high cholesterol (200 to 239 mg/dL) tended to increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease as well, but the results were not statistically significant.

However, midlife borderline high cholesterol increased the risk of vascular dementia by 50 percent. High midlife cholesterol also tended to increase the risk of this type of dementia.

Source: *Dementia & Geriatric Cognitive Disorders*

## Blood test may diagnose lung cancer

REUTERS, Washington

A blood test that detects nine compounds in blood may offer a safe way to diagnose early cases of lung cancer, Celera Corporation reported recently.

Such a test would allow quick treatment of lung cancer, which is usually not detected before it has spread, Celera, a newly independent division of Applera Corp. said in a statement.

The researchers tested people who had been diagnosed with stage 1 lung cancer, which can often be cured, and found it detected the cancer with more than 90

percent accuracy.

The test uses a mass spectrometer to detect the nine compounds in the blood. Overall, they tested 103 patients with non-small-cell lung cancer and smokers without the disease.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death globally, killing 1.2 million people a year. Most cases are diagnosed after the cancer has spread from the lung, when it cannot be cured.

Maryland-based Celera, founded by gene pioneer Craig Venter as a genetic discovery company, has rediscovered itself as a maker of diagnostic tests.

## 30 years of freedom from smallpox

STAR HEALTH REPORT

The World Health Organisation (WHO) commemorated 30 years of freedom from smallpox recently. Health professionals who actively participated in the campaign to eradicate smallpox from the South-East Asia Region gathered in New Delhi to mark the event.

Also present at the meeting were Dr William Foege, former Director of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Atlanta who played a key role in developing the strategy which was used for smallpox eradication, and Ms Rahima Begum, a Bangladeshi woman who was the last case of smallpox in the South-East Asia Region.

The strategy to eradicate smallpox employed by the South-East Asia Region was based on some of the basic princi-



ples of public health: enhanced surveillance, case finding, isolation and creating awareness regarding vaccination. Thirty years later, the smallpox eradication programme continues to inspire public health campaigns.

Bangladesh reported the last case from the Region and the whole of Asia on 16 October 1975. The eradication of the disease from Bangladesh was also the result of the active mobilisation, organisation and diligent efforts of thousands of health workers, officials and experts from all levels of the health system.

The global eradication of smallpox was certified, based on intensified verification activities in countries, by a commission of eminent scientists in December 1979 and subsequently endorsed by the World Health Assembly in 1980.



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