

WORLD HEART DAY

Work with your heart

STAR HEALTH DESK

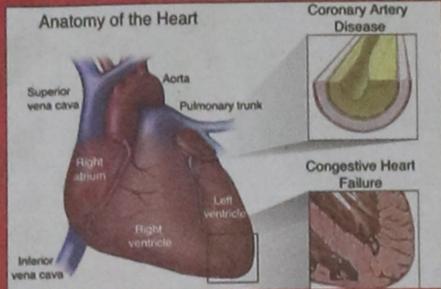
Heart diseases or cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the world's largest killers, claiming more than 17.2 million lives a year. It often affects many people in middle age, very often severely limiting the income and savings of affected individuals and their families. 80 percent of these premature deaths could be avoided by controlling the main risk factors: tobacco, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity.

World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Economic Forum have recognised the importance of employee health and decided the theme of World Heart Day 2009 (September 27) focusing it. This year's theme is "work with heart". The theme signifies the urgent need to extend health benefits to all employees in all workplaces. In particular, workers in low- and middle-income countries, where over 80 percent of deaths from cardiovascular disease currently occur, could benefit greatly from the implementation of such programmes.

It takes away millions of productive lives annually posing significant threats to the vitality of our highly-interdependent global system, especially in the context of the current financial crisis. The economic consequences - driven by productivity reduction and increase in costs caused by these diseases among workforces - are dramatic.

Experts suggested certain strategies to prevent and minimise the extent of heart diseases. Individuals can

KEY MESSAGES TO PROTECT HEART HEALTH



Heart attacks and strokes are major - but preventable - killers worldwide. It occurs almost equally in men and women. Here are some simple but very useful measures that can largely prevent heart diseases.

Take regular physical activity: At least 30 minutes of regular physical activity every day helps to maintain cardiovascular fitness and significantly reduce the chance of developing heart diseases. Doing exercise for at least 60 minutes on most days helps to maintain healthy weight.

Eat a healthy diet: A balanced diet is crucial to a healthy heart and circulation system. This should include plenty of fruit and vegetables, whole grains, lean meat, fish and pulses, and restricted salt and sugar intake. Limiting your salt intake to less than one teaspoon a day helps to prevent heart attacks and strokes.

Avoid tobacco use: Tobacco in every form is very harmful to health - cigarettes, cigars, pipes, or chewable tobacco. Exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke is also dangerous. The risk of heart attack and stroke starts to drop immediately after a person stops using tobacco products, and can drop by as much as half after one year.

Know your blood pressure: High blood pressure usually has no symptoms, but can cause a sudden stroke or heart attack. Have your blood pressure checked.

Know your blood sugar: Raised blood glucose (diabetes) increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes. If you have diabetes it is very important to control your blood pressure and blood sugar to minimize the risk.

Know your blood lipids: Raised blood cholesterol increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Blood cholesterol needs to be controlled through a healthy diet and, if necessary, by appropriate medications.

reduce their risk by engaging in regular physical activity, avoiding tobacco use and second-hand tobacco smoke, choosing a diet rich in fruit and vegetables and avoiding foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt, and maintaining a healthy body weight.

Comprehensive and integrated action means to prevent and control cardiovascular diseases:

- Comprehensive action requires combining approaches that seek to reduce the risks throughout the entire population with strategies that target individuals at high risk or with established disease;

- Examples of population-wide interventions that can be implemented to reduce CVDs include: comprehensive tobacco control policies, taxation to reduce the intake of foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt, building walking and cycle ways to increase physical activity, providing healthy school meals to children

- Integrated approaches focus on the main common risk factors for a range of chronic diseases such as CVD, diabetes and cancer: unhealthy diet, physically inactivity and tobacco use

- After a heart attack or stroke, the risk of a recurrence or death can be substantially lowered with a combination of drugs - statins to lower cholesterol, drugs to lower blood pressure, and aspirin.

- Effective and inexpensive medical devices have been developed to treat CVDs, such as pacemakers, prosthetic valves, and patches for closing holes in the heart

WORLD RABIES DAY

Rabies: A neglected zoonotic disease

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Rabies is a zoonotic disease (a disease that is transmitted to humans from animals) that is caused by a virus. Rabies infects domestic and wild animals, and is spread to people through close contact with infected saliva (via bites or scratches).

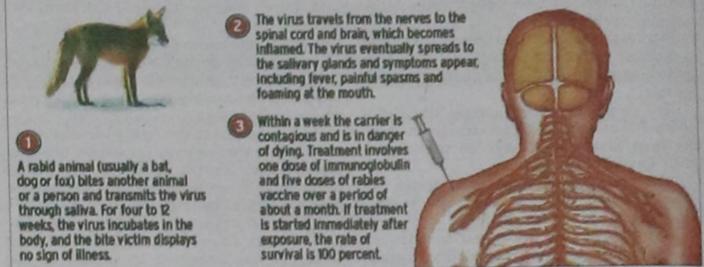
World Rabies Day (September 28) highlights the impact of human and animal rabies and promotes how to prevent and stop the disease by combating it in animals. 55000 people die every year from rabies, an average of one death every 10 minutes. There are safe and effective vaccines available for people who have been bitten by an animal that might have the disease, but usage in developing countries is low due to the high cost.

Being a vaccine-preventable disease, it is still a significant public health problem in many countries of Asia and Africa. Most of the victims are children: 30-50% of the reported cases of rabies—and therefore deaths—occur in children under 15 years of age.

Most of the children who die from rabies were not treated or did not receive adequate post-exposure treatment. Although the efficacy and safety of modern cell culture vaccines have been recognized, some Asian countries still produce and use nervous tissue vaccines, which are less effective, require repeated visits to the hospital and often have severe side-effects. More-

How rabies is spread

Rabies is an infectious disease in mammals that attacks the nervous system, causing encephalitis and even death.



over, these patients do not receive the necessary rabies immunoglobulin, because of a perennial global shortage and because of its high price, so that it is unaffordable in countries where canine rabies is endemic.

Most rabies victims die at home rather than being admitted to a hospital in abysmal conditions. These circumstances add to the notorious lack of surveillance data. Underestimating the health implications of rabies leads many high ranking decision-makers in public health and animal health to perceive rabies as a rare disease of humans resulting from a bite of an uneconomically important animal (the dog). Therefore, rabies usually falls between two stools and is not dealt with appropriately either by the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Agriculture.

Symptoms: The first symptoms of rabies are flu-like, including fever, headache

and fatigue, and then progress to involve the respiratory, gastrointestinal and/or central nervous systems. In the critical stage, signs of hyperactivity (furious rabies) or paralysis (dumb rabies) dominate. In both furious and dumb rabies, some paralysis eventually progresses to complete paralysis, followed by coma and death in all cases, usually due to breathing failure. Once symptoms of the disease develop, rabies is fatal. Without intensive care, death occurs during the first seven days of illness.

Treatment after exposure: Recommended treatment to prevent rabies depends on the category of the contact:

- Category I: touching or feeding suspect animals, but skin is intact
- Category II: minor scratches without bleeding from contact, or licks on broken skin
- Category III: one or more

bites, scratches, licks on broken skin, or other contact that breaks the skin; or exposure to bats

Post-exposure care to prevent rabies includes cleaning and disinfecting a wound, or point of contact, and then administering anti-rabies immunisations as soon as possible. Anti-rabies vaccine is given for Category II and III exposures. Anti-rabies immunoglobulin, or antibody, should be given for Category III contact, or to people with weaker immune systems.

When humans are exposed to suspect animals, attempts to identify, capture or humanely sacrifice the animal involved should be undertaken immediately. Post-exposure treatment should start right away and only be stopped if the animal is a dog or cat and remains healthy after 10 days. Animals that are sacrificed or have died should be tested for the virus.

PROSTATE CANCER

Vitamin B6 tied to better survival

REUTERS HEALTH, New York

Men with earlier-stage prostate cancer may have better survival odds if they get a little more than the recommended amount of vitamin B6 everyday, a new study suggests.

The findings, reported in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, do not prove that vitamin B6 improves prostate cancer survival. But they do point to an association between survival and amounts of the vitamin that are readily attainable through a balanced diet.

Researchers found that among 525 Swedish men with prostate cancer, the one-quarter with the highest B6 intakes were 29 percent less likely than those with the lowest intakes to die of the disease during the study period.

Men in the former group averaged 2.2 to 2.9 milligrams of vitamin B6 per day, while those in the latter group got 1.3 to 1.9 milligrams daily. The recommended vitamin B6 intake for men age 50 and younger is 1.3 mg per day, while older men are encouraged to get 1.7 mg.

The protective effect of B6 appeared confined to men whose tumors had not yet spread beyond the prostate at the time of diagnosis.

When the researchers considered only these men, they found that

those who got the most B6 had only 5 percent of the risk of dying as their counterparts with the lowest intakes of the vitamin.

The results offer "exciting preliminary support" for dietary factors in long-term prostate cancer survival, according to lead researcher Dr. Julie L. Kasperzyk, a post-doctoral fellow at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston.

Vitamin B6 is found in a range of foods, including beans, potatoes, bananas, meat, chicken, peanut butter and certain fish, like salmon and tuna. It serves a variety of functions in the body - one being its role, together with other B vitamins, in DNA synthesis and repair. Cancer arises from the uncontrolled growth of genetically abnormal cells - which, in theory, means that the B vitamins could affect the development or spread of certain cancers.

Overall, 42 percent of the men died of prostate cancer during the study period. The odds were lower, however, among those with the highest vitamin B6 intakes - although there was no evidence of protection among men diagnosed with advanced cancer. None of the other nutrients was linked to prostate cancer survival.

Sources: American Journal of Clinical Nutrition



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Selenium: The new disease fighter

STAR HEALTH DESK

Selenium (Se) is an important trace mineral for human. Selenium acts as protective agent against heavy metal toxicity, cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Selenium along with vitamin E, acts as antioxidant that protect cells from damage by substances called free radicals. This trace mineral is essential to many body functions and can be found in every body cell, but especially in the kidneys, liver, spleen, pancreas and testes.

Besides selenium supplements, selenium are usually found in foods that are grown in selenium rich areas. These are usually plants but meat can also contain selenium if they ate foods rich in selenium. Grains and nuts usually contain a high percentage of selenium. Here is the list of foods that are usually rich in selenium: wheat germ, whole grains, brewer's yeast, brown rice, oats, cereal, bread, sesame seeds, garlic, broccoli, eggs, chicken, meat, beef, liver, mushrooms, red grapes, oysters, shellfish, lobsters and tuna.

Possible benefits that can be derived from healthy amounts of selenium in the body include:

- Protection against cataracts and muscular degeneration
- Alleviates hot flashes and many menopause-related problems



Grains & nuts usually contain a high percentage of selenium

- Fights viral infections and reduces severity of cold sores and shingles
- Neutralises certain carcinogens (cancer causing agents)
- Helps in treatment and prevention of dandruff
- Helps in sperm production for males and reputed to increase male sex drive
- May help reduce pain and stiffness of arthritis through its anti-inflammatory properties
- Detoxifies toxic metals present in the body like arsenic and mercury
- It keeps the heart healthy, slows down aging, and prevents the hardening of tissues through oxidation.

Although rare, selenium deficiency may contribute to the development of cancer and heart disease, weakened

immune systems, inflammatory conditions mostly of the skin, muscular weakness, hypothyroidism, fatigue and red blood cell and pancreatic problems.

There is also evidence that selenium deficiency does not usually cause illness by itself. Rather, it can make the body more susceptible to illnesses caused by other nutritional, biochemical or infectious stresses.

Having toxic levels of selenium in the body, which is usually caused by excessive intake of selenium supplements, will also lead to several problems like fatigue, irritability, nervousness, depression, nausea, vomiting, garlic odor to breath, discolored skin, hair and nail loss, gastrointestinal disorders and liver damage.

Modern approach of treating obese children

DR SHANTONO SIHAM

Statistics show that number of obese or overweight children is increasing at an alarming rate. Many parents are not deeply concerned about their child's weight. Negligence in realising the bad impact of overweight can shorten their child's life span and can make their child prone to develop some serious diseases like diabetes, heart diseases, stroke etc.

Together with specialists, parents can help their obese child most to loose weight with an appropriate weight-loose plan. The reasonable and modern approach to lessen weight not only include dietary modifications and exercise, but also focus on teaching children the habits how to remain heal and hearty.

Boosting youngster's self-esteem is now a part of modern approach. Together, you and your child should set some realistic goals. In middle childhood, actual weight loss may be an inappropriate objective for many overweight youngsters.

Indeed, the goals you agree upon should not be principally about weight, but rather about healthy living - eating appropriate amounts and kinds of food, exercising, and dealing with personal and

social factors that encourage poor lifestyle habits. As part of a comprehensive programme, doctors may suggest the maintenance of current weight, keeping your child's weight at its present level while he continues to grow in height, thus causing him to slim down.

However, for children who are more than 40 percent overweight for their age, sex and height, your doctor may recommend a comprehensive plan, including dietary changes aimed at small increments of weight loss. Obese youngsters should avoid fad diets and instead consume a variety of foods relatively low in calories but high in nutritional value. Foods like vegetables, fish and poultry fit this description. While you can limit portion sizes, do not severely restrict your youngster's caloric intake or you may run the risk of impeding normal growth.

Helping your overweight child

You can play an active role to help your child and your whole family in learning healthy eating and physical activity habits that last a lifetime.

Accept your child at any weight. Children are more likely to accept and feel good about themselves when

their parents accept them.

Support your child by your own good eating habits. Cook low-calorie meals for the entire family. You cannot expect your youngster to successfully change his eating and exercise habits on his own, particularly if others in the household are not setting good examples.

Your goal should be to help him learn and adopt healthier lifetime eating habits that can keep his weight permanently under control. Also, encourage your overweight child to become more physically active.

Regular exercise can play an important role in the maintenance of a healthy weight over the long term. You can become a good role model for physical activity, even involving your child in your own exercise program, perhaps bicycling, swimming or brisk walking as a family.

It is probably better to encourage your child to exercise as part of a fitness programme, not as part of a diet. Diets are short-lived, but fitness is a lifelong goal. Encourage your child to exercise, knowing that as he becomes more physically fit, his overall sense of well-being and his feelings of self-worth are likely to improve.

Avoid worm infestations, easily

Although children are mainly affected by worm infestation, it remains a problem for the adults too. It can affect any age group irrespective of sex. Poor sanitation, infective environments, warm moist atmosphere etc. account for higher spread or incidences. It produces nutritional deficiencies and anaemia as the worm share the nutrition from the host.

Due to the habit of keeping hands in the mouth, licking fingers, thumb sucking, children under the age of 5 are most commonly affected. Symptoms may vary according to the type of worms, its load of infection and its affecting site. Common symptoms are abdominal pain with con-



A malnourished child due to worm infestation.

stipation or diarrhoea, loose stools with occasional bleeding. Poor appetite with gas trouble and bloated abdomen,

growth retardation, bottom (anal) itch and vaginal itch - more at night.

Nowadays, people are successfully being treated for worms with different anthelmintic medication. There are convenient single dose of medicine named Albendazol (400mg) is essential to clear the worm specially round worm that infests commonly. But people have to take these de-worming tablets or anti-helminthic drugs at definite interval usually at every 3-6 months to kill worms to ensure proper protection from worm. Taking these tablets according to a doctor's advice can help enjoy worm free sound health.



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