

How to reduce the risk of breast cancer

STAR HEALTH DESK

October which is observed as Breast Cancer Awareness Month reminds our pledge to boost awareness about breast cancer. Every year, the deadly cancer affects thousands of women in Bangladesh. Many of the deaths from this cancer could be prevented through adopting useful measures like self examination of breast, regular and periodic screening, early diagnosis and treatment.

Experts recommend that certain simple measures like maintaining a healthy weight, regular exercise, taking a low-fat diet rich in fruit and vegetables and low in animal fats and taking vitamin-D can reduce the risk of developing breast cancer to a significant level.

The research by American Institute for Cancer Research and the World Cancer Research Fund has found that 40 percent of all cases of breast cancer could be prevented with lifestyle changes. Lifestyle changes concerning certain risk factors may help prevent breast cancer. The best

advice today to help lower the risk of the disease is to maintain a healthy body weight, especially after menopause.

Maintain a healthy body weight

There is a clear link between obesity, especially if you have gained the weight later in life, after menopause. Excess fat is a source of circulating estrogen. And breast cancer risk is linked to how much estrogen we are exposed to during our lifetime. Regular exercise can help us maintain healthy weight and, also helps in lowering the risk of breast cancer.

Eat a healthy diet

Aim for a low-fat diet, rich in fruit and vegetables and low in animal fats. It is not known which specific foods increase the risk. More and more evidence shows alcohol is related to breast cancer, but some evidence shows moderate drinking is beneficial for heart disease prevention.

According to the studies, foods that may help preventing breast cancer include fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains. Fill two-thirds



of your plate with plant-based foods—fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans. Include whole grains, canned tomato products such as pasta sauce, and cruciferous vegetables (including cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower) often, as these foods in particular may offer protection against breast cancer.

Stay physically active

Women should get 30 minutes of exercise or physical activity everyday. According to the National Cancer Institute, women can reduce their risk of dying from breast cancer by 25 percent with exercise. If you have not been particularly active in the past, start your exercise program slowly and gradually work up.

Take vitamin D

In a study of 1,760 women, scientists of California

to recommend that adults get 800–1,000 IU of vitamin D per day. Vitamin-D is a fat-soluble vitamin that is naturally present in very few foods like egg, cod liver oil, tuna, margarine, butter (fortified) and available as a dietary supplement. It is also produced endogenously when ultraviolet rays from sunlight strike the skin and trigger vitamin D synthesis.

Avoid hormone replacement therapy

Hormone replacement therapy really does increase breast cancer. Try to avoid hormone replacement therapy. If you need it, use the lowest possible dose for the shortest period possible. These measures cannot provide a guarantee that you will not develop the disease, but, they will give you a great start towards breast cancer prevention.

There are risks for breast cancer that we cannot control like age, gender, family genes and the environment. So the easiest thing for us to control is our choices of foods and drinks, and next is our activity levels. Let's start the simple strategies to decrease the risk of breast cancer.



Poor sleep linked to higher BMI

A good night's sleep may be more important than we think. In addition to allowing us to feel rested, energetic and clear-thinking, studies have shown that there are connections between sleep and heart health. There also has been research demonstrating that sleep may affect body weight.

The latest to shed light on the sleep-weight connection is a study presented recently at the American Thoracic Society's 105th International Conference in San Diego, which indicates that body mass index, or BMI (which measure the percentage of body) is linked to length and quality of sleep in a surprisingly consistent fashion.

Attempt to get very regular amounts of a certain length of sleep for a few weeks, and keep a diary recording how you feel during that period. For example, get 7 hours of sleep per night for three to four weeks, noting what time you go to bed and get up, when you nap, and how you feel. Keep those regular sleep hours on week days, weekends and holidays. Then, expand your sleep time to 7 hours 20 minutes per night for three to four weeks recording similar variables. Then, expand to 7 hours 40 minutes per night for three to four weeks, and so on. Over six months, you will be able to zero in on the amount of sleep needed to feel rested and be functioning in peak form.

James Gangwisch, a post-doctoral fellow in psychiatric epidemiology at Columbia University, led an earlier study that found a relationship between sleep and obesity. He hypothesised that sleeping less might trigger our bodies to store more fat because we are still functioning biologically like primitive humans. Early humans may have slept less during the long days of summer when food was plentiful. Gangwisch suggested, and their bodies may have then stored extra fat in anticipation of the winter, when food would be scarce. Perhaps the bodies of short sleepers now function as though it is perpetually summer, and they are always storing as much fat as possible.

Source: Daily News Central

Ensuring eye care services for the urban poor

DUCEC project restored the sight of more than 24,000 poor people and served more than 1 lakh people with eye care services

DR TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

One of the important health hazards in Bangladesh is blindness. It puts an additional burden to its socio-economic condition. Eye problems are more miserable in urban slums and non-slum populations belonging to the lower socio-economic class as demonstrated by various studies.

Existing barriers behind the blindness considering the poor people are:

- Store cosmetics safely—tightly closed and out of heat and sunlight, which can destroy germ-fighting preservatives.
- Throw out makeup that is old, or if its appearance or odor changes.
- Be careful not to inhale powders or spray products, which could harm the lungs.

• Don't use cosmetics when you have an eye infection, and discard any cosmetics you were using before your infection was diagnosed.

• Don't share cosmetics, which can spread germs. When trying cosmetics in a store, make sure that the



Mobile folk singer team performs popular songs incorporating eye care messages in different parts of Dhaka city as part of observance of World Sight Day 2009

After conduction of an evaluation in the year of 2008, next phase of the project have been designed as "Dhaka Urban Comprehensive Eye Care Project" (DUCECP) which is funded by Standard Chartered Bank under its Seeing is Believing (SiB) Phase-4 funding from October 2008 to September 2013.

The phase of the project covers 15 constituencies of Dhaka. Islamia Eye Hospital remains as lead partner and collaborating with three other hospitals—Bangladesh National Society for the Blind (BNSB), Dhaka, for a duration of three half-years.

This project was based in the capital city of Dhaka, covering a population of 12 million, with financial and technical support from Sightsavers International, Bangladesh Country Office.

The new phase has outreach activities to raise aware-

ness of eye conditions through eye health education as well as screening services in the community in collaboration with these hospitals working with local community-based organisations.

The provision for school screening, refractive error and low vision services are currently inadequate to meet the need in urban area. The project will work to build the capacity of these services.

The project will reduce the backlog of blindness due to cataract, allowing who have had their sight restored to become more independent and take part in family and social activities. Result achieved from the project will last after the project is completed and the impacts will

extend beyond the project period. The project is expected to produce the long lasting changes in eye care sector.

The project serves through organising various eye camps where services to the patients are offered at free of cost at the screening camps and partner hospitals. They underscore the cataract patients who are becoming needlessly blind due to various reasons. Poor and hardcore poor people get the service of the cataract surgery at a range of Tk 300 only to free of cost respectively.

The project focuses not only the clinical treatment of the patients, but also they emphasises on the mass awareness of the common people through various activities. Recently on the occasion of World Sight Day 2009, a mobile folk singer team performed popular songs incorporating eye care messages in different parts of Dhaka city as part of observance of the day.

Dhaka Urban Comprehensive Eye Care Project of Islamia Eye Hospital worked with GrameenPhone to identify refractive error patients at different schools, garments factories and GrameenPhone customer services centers.

Till date, more than 24,000 people got their sight restored and more than one lakh people got eye care services through the project.

Innovative initiative for healthy heart

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Quaker, a product of PepsiCo in association with Apollo Group of Hospitals has launched a unique initiative in India to help increase awareness on the risk and prevention of heart diseases through diet, health and exercise.

The call to action entitled "Mission to make India heart healthy" is set to spread awareness about the need to be vigilant about lifestyle moderation, eating habits and prevention through screening.

Oats contains a specific type of fiber known as beta glucan, which helps in decreasing LDL (bad cholesterol), without lowering

good cholesterol, thus further improving the ratio with added benefits. Regular intake of whole grains such as oats is linked to a reduced risk of heart diseases.

The idea is to help people define their risk of heart disease and then guide them to a healthy and active lifestyle. This is to be achieved through a website www.goodmorningheart.com, which encourages people to take the Quaker Heart Health test, developed by Apollo Hospitals. The test helps people find out if their heart is older than they are.

The website offers advice on maintaining or improving Heart health depending on the results.

STEPS OF PROPER HANDWASHING



1. Wet your hands under warm running water and apply soap

2. Rub palms together until soap is bubbly

3. Rub each palm over the back of the other hand

4. Rub between your fingers on each hand

5. Rub back of fingers (interlocked)

6. Rub around each of your thumbs

7. Rub both palms with finger tips

8. Then rinse and dry your hands