

## Keeping healthy in the heat

DR MD RAJIB HOSSAIN

Sweltering temperature of this summer can make you sick easily. The alarming increase of heat-related diseases like diarrhoea and food poisoning are affecting thousands of people everyday. Some other diseases like heat stroke, heat exhaustion can be as fatal as life threatening.

As we become dehydrated more easily in summer, safe water and salt replacement is the mainstay that can keep us rehydrated enough to enjoy a fresh and active day. Supply of unsafe water from the WASA and so called filtered bottled water used widely help escalate diarrhoeal diseases. People think filtered bottled water is safe. Its cost-effectiveness also attracts people to drink it readily. But many of the bottled water are not safely manufactured and may contain pathogens. Make sure that the water you drink is safe. Boiling water for more than 10 minutes kill the water pathogen. Or aqua tablet can be used to make water safe for drink.

Lack of hygiene practice like handwashing before eating, food preparation also contributes to these

diseases. One Study revealed that less than 1 percent people in study areas were found washing hands with soap before preparing and eating food. Only 17 percent people wash hands with soap or ash after defecation. In fact, this is the most cost-effective way to reduce gastroenteritis (inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract, involving both the stomach and the small intestine), predominantly diarrhoea. Washing for 20 seconds will make hands free from germs.

Like hygiene practices, there are some other simple tips to stay healthy in this hot weather:

The most basic way to prevent heat related illness is to drink adequate fluid at regular intervals. Water is best to drink when you have mild exposure to heat. If you have enough exposure to heat, ORS (Oral Rehydration Solution) can be a good option to replace lost fluid as well as salt.

Regular output of clear urine is a good sign of adequate hydration. Alcoholic beverages, caffeinated and sugar laden drinks should be avoided as they help more water to lose instead of



rehydration. Moreover, these beverages are not rapidly absorbed by the intestines.

We should practice safe food storage, handling, preparation and service. We need to wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly. Cooking food thoroughly and eating it immediately is safe practice. Refrigerate leftover foods and reheat thoroughly before serving.

We should use measures like cap, sunglasses, umbrella. Sunscreen is useful to be protected from harmful

sunrays.

If you have diarrhoea started, take oral rehydration saline (ORS) immediately. Adult over 10 years of age should take as much saline as s/he can. Children aged between 2 to 10 years should take 20-40 spoons and children under the age of 2 should take 10-20 spoons of solution after every loose motion.

In case of children, one 20 mg zinc tablet (found in the trade name Baby Zinc) should be given daily up to 14 days. Infants under six

months old need 10 mg tablet a day. It reduces duration of diarrhoeal episodes by up to 25 percent and decrease the proportion of episodes lasting more than seven days by about 25 percent.

Take your baby to a hospital if the s/he becomes lethargic, has excessive loose motion, is unable to drink or feed, cannot take saline, has severe vomiting, has passage of blood with stool or if diarrhoea persists more than 14 days or associated with high fever.

Again, some people have

false belief that restriction of food like milk, protein is necessary during the episodes of diarrhoea. This is completely wrong and rather it impairs nutrition. Adult or children both should be on normal diet.

If you feel headaches, dizziness and nausea, intense thirst, sudden rise in body temperature, confusion state, sleepiness, then you should follow the rule listed below:

- Move somewhere cool, ideally near a fan
- Drink water or fruit juice but take small sips
- Have a cool shower or bath or wipe yourself down with a wet towel if available
- Put cool packs under the armpits, in the groin or on the back of the neck to reduce body heat
- Do not take aspirin or paracetamol for increased body temperature during this period

You may be more likely to become sick from exposure to heat if you have other diseases like heart problems or if you take certain medications. If you start to feel unwell, seek medical advice as soon as possible.

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## Mom's exercise may help 'normalise' baby's weight

REUTERS HEALTH, New York

Women who work out while they are pregnant have slimmer babies, new research from New Zealand shows.

Because babies born to moms who did not exercise had higher-than-average weights, the study's authors say, exercise could have helped "normalise" the weights of the exercisers' babies.

"The modest reduction in birth weight in this study may lead to a long-term reduction in the risk for obesity in offspring of women who exercised in pregnancy," Dr. Paul L. Hofman of the University of Auckland and his colleagues write.

The team randomly assigned 84 women pregnant with their first baby to up to five 40-minute sessions on an exercise bike at home each week or to a no-exercise group, beginning at 20 weeks of pregnancy through delivery. While there were no differences in the women's body mass index (a measure of weight in relation to height) used to gauge whether someone is overweight or obese) or weight, the women who exercised were fitter than those who did not.

The babies born to the exercisers were about 140 grams (5 ounces) lighter than the control groups, although their average length was the same, leading to a lower BMI. This "modest shift" in weight was still within the normal range, and none of these babies were abnormally small for their age at birth.

The researchers had hypothesised that exercise might help maintain the women's sensitivity to the blood-sugar-regulating hormone insulin, which tends to decline in pregnancy. But there was no difference in insulin sensitivity between the exercisers and the non-exercisers.

The lack of an effect "may be a reassuring finding," Hofman and his team say, given that excessive insulin sensitivity in late pregnancy may limit fetal growth.

Source: Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism



GUT FEELING

## Improving doctor-patient relationship

RICHARD HUBBARD

In January, 2008, I have visited the office of a notable physician in Dhaka. The doctor sat behind his desk, asking a female patient a series of questions. He interrupted her frequently, wanting to speed up the interview. The patient did not complain. After a few minutes, he performed a short physical exam, sent her off for blood tests and moved on to the next case, never to see her again.

Sometimes, improper doctor-patient communication hinders from reaching the diagnosis. Many doctors in Bangladesh are reluctant to improve the communication which is one of the crucial elements of treatment. Many doctors trained in Bangladesh have become highly respected physicians in my own country (the USA). However, whereas Bangladeshi physicians are skilled at treating disease, many times they give little importance to the good relation to heal patients.

Too often, doctors see sick people as bodies to be fixed. The patient is frequently barred from giving information s/he wanted to tell. But patients are not cars or televisions, which can be fixed with a tune-up. They are living human beings whose humanity must be respected if treatment is to succeed. They are also reluctant to share any information about their condition, and have little authority to decide their own treatment. The result is poor health outcomes for the patients. The woman being examined by her doctor left the office with no answers and no understanding of her condition. As a result, she did not manage her illness well, and suffered many more months unnecessarily.

In the past decades, very similar problems existed in America. Doctors felt they were superior to their patients, and therefore performed treatments without properly consulting them. As in Bangladesh, the result was that some patients were made worse instead of better. In response, a Patient's Bill of Rights was created.

The American Cancer Association defines the following rights as fundamental to a patient: the right to information about your health condition, to be given emergency treatment when needed, to be able to choose your own doctor, to be shown respect by medical personnel, to make decisions regarding your treatment, and to complain about ill-treatment.

It is time that patients in Bangladesh take control of their healthcare, to demand they be seen not as machines but as people. Similarly, we, as medical personnel, must choose to be more humble and considerate of our patients' feelings. The result will be better healthcare for all.

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## How to memorise things better

MD ABU MONSUR DINAR

Memory is the mental registration, retention and recollection of past experiences, sensation or thought. Sometimes we cannot retrieve important information that we stored in our brain. Many people forget things easily. Memory impairment is embarrassing too. With some of the following exercise we can memorise things better.

### Brain exercises

Memory is like muscular strength. The more we work out our brain, the better we will be able to process and remember information. Regularly exercising the brain keeps it growing and spurs the development of new nerve connections that can help improve memory.

### Mnemonic to improve memory

Mnemonics are clues of any kind that help us remember something, usually by causing us to associate the information we want to remember with a visual image, a sentence, or a word. Common types of mnemonic devices include visual images, sentences, word, acronyms, rhymes and alliteration, joke etc.

### Regular exercise

Regular exercise increases oxygen to our brain and reduces the risk for disorders that lead to memory loss, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Some study found that it might enhance the effects of helpful brain chemicals and protect brain cells.

### Managing stress

Stress cause release of hormone cortisol that can damage the hippo-

campus (important memory area of brain). Further, stress makes it difficult to concentrate.

### Good sleep habits

Sleep is necessary for memory consolidation. Sleep disorders like insomnia and sleep apnea leave you tired and unable to concentrate during the day.



### Not smoking

Smoking heightens the risk of vascular disorders causing stroke and constrict arteries that deliver oxygen to the brain. Indirectly it impairs brain function.

### Nutrition

It is found that diet based on fruits,

vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats found in fish will provide lots of health benefits along with improving memory. Vitamins B, especially B6, B12, and folic acid protect neurons by breaking down homocysteine, an amino acid that is toxic to nerve cells. They are also involved in making red blood cells, which carry oxygen. Spinach and other dark leafy greens, broccoli, asparagus, strawberries, melons, black beans and other legumes, citrus fruits, soybeans rich in those vitamins.

Antioxidants found in berries, sweet potatoes, red tomatoes, spinach, broccoli, green tea, nuts, seeds, citrus fruits, liver destroy free radicals are highly reactive and can damage brain cells.

Omega-3 fatty acids are concentrated in the brain and are associated with cognitive function. They count as healthy fats, as opposed to saturated fats and trans fats, protecting against inflammation and high cholesterol. Cold-water fish such as salmon, herring, tuna, halibut, mackerel, walnuts and walnut oil rich in omega -3 fatty acids. Iron is also important for staying mentally sharp. It helps create hemoglobin, an iron containing protein in red blood cells, which transport oxygen to the brain. Oxygen in the brain is vital, since it helps to metabolise glucose.

If a child does not receive enough iron, it can impair brain development and lead to deficits in speech, math and reading.

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## Medical tourism booming in Malaysia

MAHBUBA ZANNAT, back from Malaysia

Malacca, the world heritage site in Malaysia now attracts people for not only to enjoy its beauty and charm but also to receive quality treatment from the Mahkota Medical Centre (MMC). The MMC one of the most reputed hospitals in Malaysia is witnessing more patients day by day due to its high quality at reasonable price and location in such a beautiful place as well. Like MMC, big hospitals with highly skilled professionals and advanced technology are growing in Malaysian heritage sites where people can enjoy both world standard health services and tourism as well.

"Our principal objective is to provide accessible, advanced and affordable health care for our patients. We are a comprehensive one stop centre for healthcare services and provide a full range of diagnostic, radiology and clinical laboratory services. 25



Mahkota Medical Centre, Malaysia

percent of our patients are foreigners," said Francis Lim, chief executive officer of MMC.

Mahkota Medical Centre (MMC) is actively involved in Medical Tourism, which is strongly supported by the Malaysian government. Medical Tourism has always been a major part of MMC. Its number of foreign patients has grown from less than 500 in 1996 to almost 50,000 in 2006, say the hospital authorities.

"The treatment cost in the medical centre is minimum comparing to that of the quality hospitals in other parts of the region. Besides, as it is a tourist spot, there are many hotels including budget hotels and five star hotels. There are lots of restaurants to provide halal foods. In addition, the beauty of the ancient city will attract the patients. Both the locals and foreigners get the same quality treatment from here," said Timothy

Chang, chief operating officer of MMC.

The hospital is currently functioning with 52 full time medical specialists of various disciplines. MMC represents a comprehensive one stop centre for specialist healthcare services and provides a full range of diagnostic, radiology and clinical laboratory services. The hospital has achieved recognition by winning the ASEAN Healthcare Excellence Award (Health Tourism) 2008. In 2008, MMC also received the Malaysian Society for Quality in Health (MSQH) accreditation.

With good credentials and strong track record, MMC continues to attract patients from neighbouring countries such as Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei for medical care, treatment and health screening, informed hospital authority.

MMC plans to set up an information centre in Bangladesh soon from where the patients would come to know detail about the service providing by the MMC.

## Save the Children initiates campaign to save every child's life

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Although Bangladesh has made significant achievements in reducing child mortality in the last decades, almost 250,000 children under-5 die yearly from preventable diseases. Fifty-seven percent of under five deaths occur in the newborn period.

Once they are out of the newborn period, diarrhea (20 percent) and pneumonia (18 percent) are the biggest threats to children's survival. Aside from these direct causes of under-5 mortality, malnutrition is the chief underlying cause contributing to 22 percent of under-5 deaths.

Moreover, there are various structural causes, such as the lack of a proper and comprehensive policy and programmatic response to tackle child hunger and equity, weak health systems, poor maternal health, vulnerability to natural disasters and low involvement of male decision makers that continue to obstruct the full realisation of MDG 4 (reduce child mortality by two thirds) in Bangladesh.

To combat this problem, Save the Children will run a world-wide campaign for the next 5 years to ensure that MDG 4 is met. It will invites all concerned agencies—the government, civil society, health workers, media, youth, affluent families and affected families—to give every child an equal chance to survive.

Around the world almost 9 million children die from preventable causes before getting a chance to celebrate their 5th birthday—that is one child every three seconds. The campaign aimed at helping 10 million children to survive, develop and grow to their full potential where primary focus will be the poorest, most marginalised and most vulnerable children in areas with the highest rates of newborn and child mortality.

The deaths of children are not random events beyond our control. They are an outcome of the decisions we take as a nation. They are also influenced by cultural, economic, environmental, political and social factors that governments, international institutions, the private sector and civil society could help shape or mitigate.

Every child—no matter where or to whom they are born—has an equal right and deserves an equal chance to survive. And every one of us has a responsibility to act. Saving children's lives is no longer just up to health professionals and the governments, but that every one of us has a role to play here.

SEMINAR

## Prevention of heart diseases and treatment options



Dr Sivathanan Cumaraswamy, Senior Consultant Cardiothoracic Surgeon of Mount Elizabeth and Dr Tan Chong Hiock, Senior Consultant Cardiologist of Mount Elizabeth Hospital, Singapore presided over a health talk on "Prevention of heart diseases and treatment options" recently. Mr Zahid Khan, Director, Parkway Health Bangladesh office is also seen in the photo.