

Preparing for a healthy pregnancy

STAR HEALTH DESK

Healthy pregnancy brings healthy baby and secures mothers' health. A perfect pre-pregnancy plan is the first step that leads pregnancy safer to you and your upcoming baby. There are certain essential things like folic acid, vaccination, cautious medication use you should consider with due importance in your pre-conception period.

Experts recommend that women should start preparing for pregnancy one to three months before trying to conceive. You should secure your general well being and physical fitness before think about pregnancy. The followings things should add in your pre-pregnancy checklist to prevent any complications and pass a smooth period.

Start taking folic acid

Folic acid is an essential nutrition for pregnancy state. It has been shown to reduce the risk of a common birth defect ---neural tube defect of the brain and spinal cord in unborn children. As it can be difficult to get all the folate we

need from our diet, it is a good idea to take folate supplements (in the form of tablet). Experts recommend taking 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day for at least 1 month before getting pregnant to help prevent birth defects. It should be continued till first trimester (12th week of pregnancy) as the brain and spinal cord are developing.

Evaluate your birth control method

If you have been taking the Pill (oral contraception) or using monthly hormone injections, try to wait until you have had your first full menstrual period before trying to conceive. Although 50 percent of women will become pregnant in the first 3 months after stopping the pill, it may take some women as long as a year to conceive. When you do start your period, write down the date of the first day of your menstrual flow.

Using the date of your last menstrual period (LMP) before a pregnancy is the easiest way to calculate your fetus's age since conception. In turn, fetal age is important to know when making a



number of testing, treatment and delivery decisions. If you use an intrauterine device (IUD), arrange to have it removed.

Avoid unnecessary medication use

Before trying to conceive, talk to a physician about any medications or dietary

supplements you are taking. Many commonly taken medication medications are actually dangerous during pregnancy. For example, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like Ibuprofen, Naproxen are commonly taken as pain killers that may increase your

risk of miscarriage, especially at the time of conception or when used for more than a week.

Talk to a specialist for any medical condition

Some conditions include asthma, diabetes, oral health, obesity, or epilepsy may hamper your normal

pregnancy. If you have such medical conditions, talk to a specialist to control it and take advice for safer pregnancy.

Check your vaccination status

Tetanus, measles, mumps and rubella are notorious for pregnancy. Make sure you are fully immunised against those to prevent potential fetal harm. If you have never been vaccinated or are unsure, consult a doctor for vaccination. You should then wait at least 3 months after being vaccinated before you try to get pregnant.

Make lifestyle changes

Cut down on caffeinated drinks, such as coffee, tea, and cola drinks. Stop drinking alcoholic beverages and stop smoking. Alcohol and tobacco use can severely harm a developing fetus.

Exercise is good for healthy pregnant women. Try to get 30 minutes or more of moderate exercise a day for most, if not all, days of the week.

Avoid contact with toxic substances or materials that could cause infection at work and at home. Stay away from chemicals and cat or rodent feces.



New name, same great mission

STAR HEALTH REPORT

GAVI Alliance Immunise Every Child is now the GAVI Campaign! The mission is still the same: to save children's lives and protect people's health by increasing access to immunisation in poor countries. GAVI has a large goal ahead: preventing close to 5 million deaths in the next 5 years.

An essential part of this goal is to raise the funds to provide vaccines to fight the two top killers of children, pneumonia and diarrhoea. To achieve this goal, GAVI needs people's help.

Dirk Sellers, Executive Director of GAVI Campaign urged to visit the new website, www.gavicampaign.org, to donate, take action, read the Immunise Every Child Blog, host your own fundraiser to benefit GAVI.

Vitamin B6 and folate reduce stroke, heart disease deaths

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Foods rich in folate and B-6 may reduce the risk of death from stroke and heart problems, a new study revealed recently. The study conducted by Japanese researchers is published in the recent issue of Stroke: Journal of the American Heart Association has found that these vitamins are associated with lower incidence of heart failure and death from stroke.

Sources of folate include vegetables, fruits, whole or enriched grains, fortified cereals, beans, and legumes. B-6 sources include fish, vegetables, liver, meats, whole grains, and fortified cereals.

The researchers say B6 and folate may fight cardiovascular disease by lowering levels of homocysteine, an amino acid in the blood that is affected by diet, but also heredity. Homocysteine is believed to cause damage to the inner linings of arteries, promoting blood clots.

The researchers say the correlation between intake of folate and B vitamins with cardiovascular disease is controversial and that evidence of benefits has been limited to Asian populations. Given their findings, the researchers say there is an urgent need for more research aimed at replicating the results of their study in different populations.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM), the health arm in the U.S. of the National Academy of Sciences, recommends 1.3 to 1.7 milligrams of vitamin B6 per day, depending on age and sex. The IOM says extremely high-dose folate supplements should be avoided and recommends adult intake of 400 micrograms daily.

Source: Stroke: Journal of the American Heart Association.

WORLD VOICE DAY

Love your voice

PROF DR M ALAMGIR CHOWDHURY

Voice, the primary means of communication needs special care for protection and enhancement. With a view to raising awareness among people on the importance of voice preservation and enhancement, World Voice Day was observed yesterday. Bangladesh observed the second year of World Voice Day with this year's theme "Love your voice" that prompts us to consider ways to preserve and protect our voices.

We generate a voice from the vibration of two vocal cords. The following things people should consider protecting and improving their voice:

- Practice your voice before heavy voice use; you would not start a long run or workout without a brief stretch. The same applies to the voice.
- Take plenty of breath support when you speak; airflow from your lungs powers your voice. Good breath support during both speak-

ing and singing will give you more vocal strength, improved quality, and less fatigue.

- Have plenty of water about ten glasses per day. Water is the best way to stay hydrated and keep your vocal cords lubricated.
- Use a microphone. When giving a speech or presentation, consider using a microphone to lessen the strain on your voice.
- Schedule periods of the day with no talking to allow your voice to rest. Brief voice naps throughout the day lessen vocal

fatigue and overuse and can help keep you in good voice.

- Listen to your voice. When it is complaining, know that you need to modify and decrease your voice cords to recover. You should be evaluated by an Otolaryngologist (Ear Nose Throat Surgeon).

The writer is Professor and Head, Department of ENT, Medical College for Women & Hospital, Uttara and also the Chairman of Organising Committee for World Voice Day 2010.

Diet can prevent seizure!

DR ABU SAYEED SHIMUL

Many drugs are used to prevent seizure. Some of them are costly and have severe side effects, but now diet can also prevent seizure! Sometimes diet is better than the drugs even!

A diet called "Ketogenic diet" does this excellent job. The ketogenic diet is a high fat, adequate protein and low carbohydrate diet. It is primarily used to treat difficult-to-control (refractory) epilepsy in children. Recent recommendation for starting ketogenic diet is failure to improve in spite of adequate trial of two anti-convulsants, as the chance of other drugs succeeding is only 10%.

Ketogenic diet was first introduced by John Hopkins University, USA. Now many countries use this. Commercial form of this ketogenic diets ("Atkin", "Ketocal") are available in developed country which is very costly and not available in Bangladesh. But we are lucky enough that doctors of Dhaka Medical College Hospital recently prepared ketogenic diet with locally available foods. Dr Narayan Chandra Shaha, an associate professor of Paediatrics of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with the help of Prof M Ekhlasar Rahman and Professor Abid Hossain Mollah has done this tremendous job. Dr Afroz and Dr Sayeed also assisted Dr Narayan. Recently they have successfully treated few patients with this new diet.

The ketogenic diet mimics aspects of starvation by forcing the body to burn fat rather than carbohydrate. Normally, the carbohydrates in food are converted into glucose, which is then transported across the body and is particularly important in fuelling the brain. However, if there is very little carbohydrate in the diet, the liver converts fat into fatty acids and ketone bodies. The ketone bodies pass into the brain and replace glucose

as an energy source.

Ketone bodies have anticonvulsant effects. The diet has just enough protein for body growth and repair and sufficient calories to maintain the correct weight for age and height. The "classic" ketogenic diet contains a 4:1 ratio by weight of fat to combined protein and carbohydrate. This is achieved by eliminating foods high in carbohydrates (starchy



Ketogenic diet: High fat, adequate protein and low carbohydrate diet is used to treat difficult-to-control epilepsy in children.

fruits and vegetables, bread, pasta, grains and sugar) while increasing the consumption of foods high in fat (cream and butter).

The potential use of the diet as a treatment for medical conditions other than epilepsy is, as of 2008, still at the research stage. In 2008, a randomised controlled trial showed a clear benefit for treating refractory epilepsy in

children. This added weight to conclusions drawn from the many earlier uncontrolled trials of the ketogenic diet's efficacy and safety, which already provided sufficient evidence to recommend clinical use.

In children with refractory epilepsy, the ketogenic diet is more likely to be effective than trying an alternative anticonvulsant drug. There is some evidence that adults with

drome), severe myoclonic epilepsy of infancy (dravet syndrome), rett syndrome and tuberous sclerosis complex.

Because the ketogenic diet radically alters the metabolic state of the body, it is a first-line therapy in children with certain congenital metabolic diseases, but in others, it is an absolutely contraindicated. Calculating the ketogenic diet is three parts science and one part art. The art part is a combination of common sense, empathy and intuition. In each case, a child's individual needs must be taken into account. After treating with ketogenic diet, lack of energy and lethargy are common but disappear within two weeks.

At around two years on the diet, or after six months of seizure freedom, the diet may be gradually discontinued over a two- to three-months period. This is done by lowering the ketogenic ratio until urinary ketosis is no longer detected, and then lifting all calorie restrictions. Children who discontinue after achieving seizure freedom have about a 20% risk of seizure recurrence. The length of time until recurrence is highly variable but averages two years.

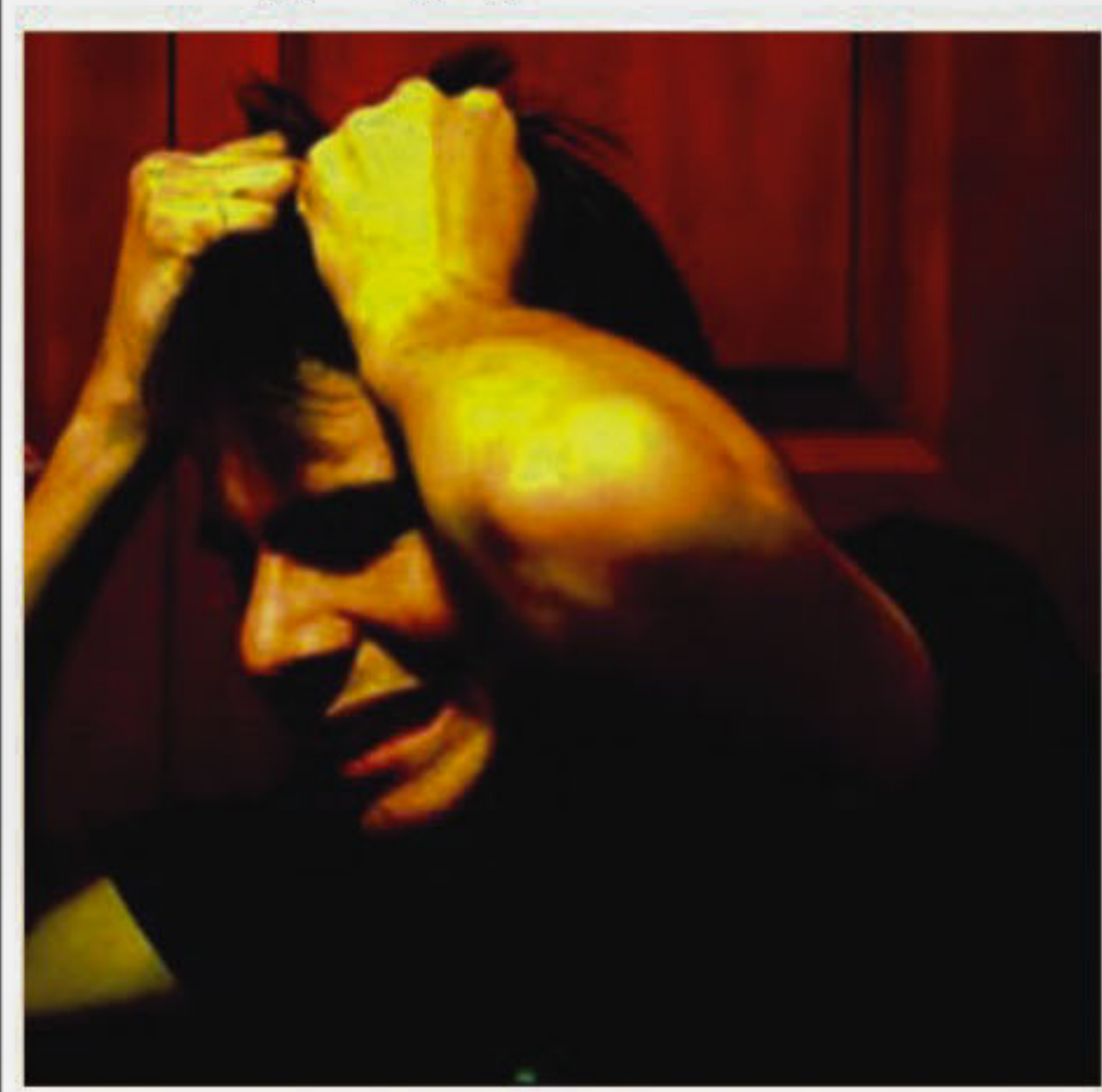
Ketogenic diet is now the treatment of choice for intractable epilepsy in developed world. They use it for many years. But we need to prepare ketogenic diet by locally available foods. It is a very hard task but we prove that it is not impossible.

As only few cases of intractable epilepsy are managed with ketogenic diet, still there may be some portion to be improved. We hope that in future we can manage better with ketogenic diet and make more palatable and tolerable meal with locally available foods.

The writer is an Assistant Registrar at the Department of Paediatrics of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. E-mail: shimulsayed@hotmail.com

HEALTH TIP

Managing your emotions



Suggestions to help understand and express your feelings understanding and controlling your emotions is as important as managing your physical health.

Here are suggestions from the American Academy of Family Physicians that may help:

- Express your feelings, but do it in an appropriate way. Don't keep your emotions bottled up. Talk to a close friend or relative if something is bothering you.
- Don't ignore your emotions. If talking with a close friend or relative does not work, seek professional help.
- Prepare before you act out emotionally. Don't simply lash out in anger, frustration or sadness, or you may regret what you say.
- Achieve a healthy balance of work, play and relaxation, remembering to look for the positive in all situations.
- Since your physical health affects you emotionally, eat a healthy diet, avoid drugs and alcohol, and get frequent exercise.

Dandruff Crisis?

www.antidandruff-bd.com

Complete Solution
in Primary Health Care

Appointment : (02)-8845242
Emergency Hotline : 10678

Apollo Hospitals Dhaka
Internal Medicine Department

✓ Managed by experienced World Class Consultants ✓ Dedicated skilled Medical Care Team for diagnosing and treating simple to complex health problems
✓ Prompt and timely referral service under the same roof as per patients' need
✓ Total integrated life style management support

Apollo Hospitals
touching lives