



Study finds eating nuts helps lowering cholesterol

Eating nuts every day helps lower total cholesterol and bad LDL cholesterol and improves the ratio of total cholesterol to good HDL cholesterol, a study reports.

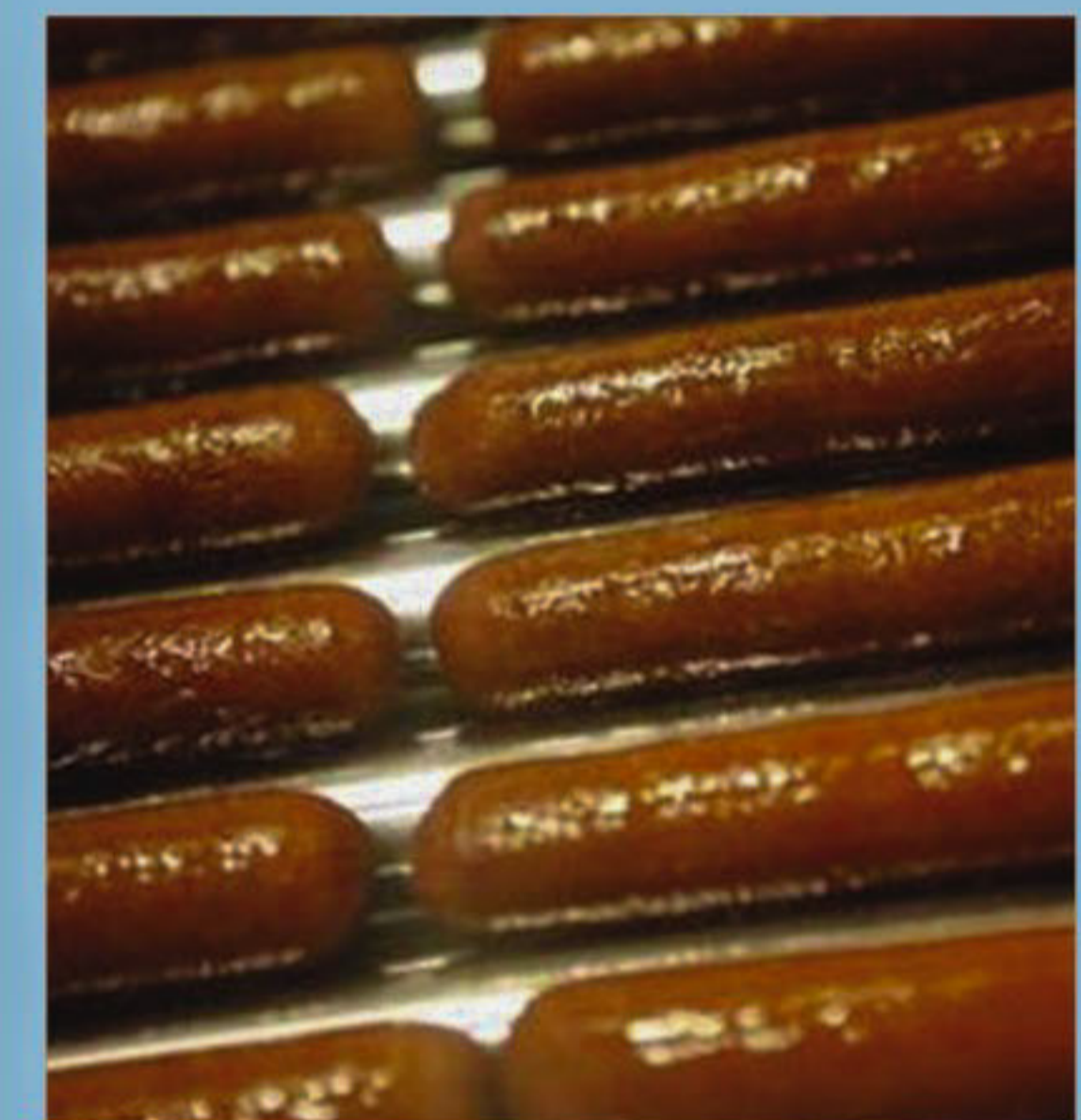
The study, which was published recently in the Archives of Internal Medicine reported that eating just 2.4 ounces of nuts of any kind was associated with declines of 10.2 milligrams per deciliter in bad cholesterol, a drop of about 7.4 percent, and 10.9 milligrams in total cholesterol, or 5.1 percent.

"Nuts are rich in unsaturated fats, and that is a main driver in lowering cholesterol," said the lead author, Dr Joan Sabaté, a professor of nutrition at the School of Public Health at Loma Linda University in California.

"They are the richest source of protein in the plant kingdom and they also contain fiber and phytosterols, which compete with cholesterol to be absorbed. All these nutrients have been demonstrated to lower cholesterol," he added.

The effect was most pronounced among people with higher LDL cholesterol to begin with and among those who were not obese. The more nuts they ate, the greater the effect.

Source: Archives of Internal Medicine



Processed meat products increase health risks

Canned food might bring an additional risk to your health due to the addition of salt and chemical additives required to process, cure and preserve meat products, a new study suggests. The journal Circulation, published the study recently revealed that salt and chemicals in processed meats to an increased risk of heart disease and diabetes.

Just one serving a day of crispy bacon, a corn dog, sausage or even processed lunch meat was associated with a 42 percent higher risk of heart disease and 19 percent increased risk of diabetes.

Eating unprocessed meats, your typical steak, chop or chicken breast, showed no increase in either heart disease or diabetes, and the saturated fat and cholesterol also was not a factor (as both processed and unprocessed meats have similar fat and cholesterol contents). The factor that contributed to the increase in disease was the salt and chemical additives.

Source: Circulation

Save newborns at risk of hepatitis B virus

For seven years, vaccination for hepatitis B virus has been running with improper schedule that is unlikely to give effective protection putting high risk newborns at greater risk.

DR MD RAJIB HOSSAIN

Every year, a significant number of children is born with Hepatitis B virus (HBV) and a considerable number is exposed latter in their lifetime. However, vaccine to prevent the virus introduced in the national immunisation programme in Bangladesh is inaccurately scheduled that does not comply with scientific recommendation.

For seven years, it has been running with an improper schedule that fails to give effective protection and puts high risk newborns at greater risk. Hepatitis B vaccine was introduced in the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) schedule in 2003 with a view to preventing transmission of HBV from hepatitis B positive mothers to newborn babies and to provide a lifelong protection from subsequent infections.

In the national programme, the schedule of immunising babies with 3 doses of hepatitis B vaccine is at 6, 10 and 14 weeks after birth along with DPT. However, the World Health Organisation (WHO) Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) recommended that all infant should receive first dose of hepatitis B vaccine within first 24 hours of delivery. Whereas, national schedule in Bangladesh suggests immunising babies at 6 weeks of life with the first dose of vaccine. But the virus do not wait to be transmitted until six weeks and can easily be transmitted from hepatitis B positive mothers to their babies during delivery process. As a result, it leaves many at risk babies unprotected in their neonatal period when they need it the most.

According to a paper by Harunor Rashid,



Rafiq SM published in international journal named Hepatitis Monthly, it has been found that about 1.2 to 3.5 percent of the pregnant ladies in Bangladesh are HbsAg positive who can potentially transmit the virus. So, delay in vaccination for the first six weeks will put 70-90 percent babies at risk of acquiring infection immediately after birth.

As the current schedule suggests waiting unit six weeks, it is unlikely for the parents to vaccinate their babies in time after birth even if they are at high risk. This phenomenon increases the risk rather than protec-

tion. Experts recommend making the vaccine effective by giving it immediately after birth along with BCG vaccine. The 2nd dose can be scheduled on 6th weeks after birth with other vaccines at the same setting.

Professor Mohammad Ali, Secretary General of Liver Foundation and member of the World Hepatitis Alliance Public Health Panel pointed out that the routine immunisation schedule for HBV should be changed to the standard form on an urgent basis in order to protect huge number of at risk

babies from contracting HBV. He underscored on antenatal screening combined with effective neonatal vaccine and immunoglobulin that can effectively reduce the transmission and at a lower cost.

He also opined, "Children who are being infected with the virus since birth and become a chronic carrier, have much greater risk of developing fatal complications like liver cirrhosis, liver cancer. Again, blocking the virus at an early age will subsequently reduce the necessity of mass screening in near future."

Since the introduction of the vaccine in EPI, the issue of changing the schedule is grossly overlooked and health policy makers are reluctant to review and reschedule. Dr Mahmudur Rahman, Director of Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) said that most of the newborn babies have been brought to get vaccinated at six weeks along with the first dose of DPT. As there is low coverage of vaccine immediately after birth, the first dose of hepatitis vaccine is scheduled at six weeks to get wider coverage. However, he expressed that it needs to be modified and they, as an authority concerned are reviewing to change the strategy.

Immunising newborns at risk within the first 24 hours of birth is scientifically the best approach to protect them. National immunisation schedule regarding the first dose of the vaccine needs to be provided on the first day of life. Otherwise, a number of at risk newborn babies might get the virus before they get the vaccine.

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More bran tied to longer life in diabetic women

REUTERS HEALTH, New York

Among women with diabetes, those who bulk up their diets with plenty of bran may live longer and be less likely to die of heart disease, a new study hints.

A number of studies have linked higher consumption of whole grains to lower risks of developing type 2 diabetes and heart disease. The new study extends those findings by suggesting that even among people with type 2 diabetes — which raises the risk of heart disease — whole grains may help protect the heart.

Grains consist of three layers: the fiber- and nutrient-containing bran and germ layers and the starchy kernel layer. Refined grains, like white flour, are largely stripped of the bran and germ; whole grains — such as oatmeal, brown rice, barley and breads made from whole wheat — retain more of those components.

Studies suggest that the fiber, antioxidants and other nutrients in whole grains

may help lower cholesterol, blood sugar and insulin levels, as well as improve blood vessel functioning and reduce inflammation in



the circulatory system. In the new study, Dr. Lu Qi, one of the researchers on the study and his colleagues at Harvard Medical School in

Boston found that among 7,800 U.S. women followed for 26 years, those with the highest bran intake were 28 percent less likely to die

cardiovascular disease (heart disease or stroke) specifically. Bran intake itself may help lower diabetics' risk of premature death, according to Qi. He suggested that women and men with diabetes try to replace refined grains in their diets with bran-rich whole grains. Overall, Qi's team found, women in the top 20 percent for bran intake had a 28 percent lower risk of dying from any cause during the study period, compared with women in the lowest 20 percent. Their risk of death from cardiovascular disease was 35 percent lower. The group with the highest bran intake typically consumed 9 grams of bran per day — about 10 times more than the lowest-intake group. In general, experts recommend that adults get at least 3 to 4 "ounce equivalents" of whole grains each day; a slice of whole-grain bread or a cup of whole-grain cereal are examples of one ounce equivalent.



INTERNATIONAL AIDS CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL

Many lights for human rights

DR KHALID HASAN

The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial, a programme of the Global Health Council, based in the USA, is one of the oldest and largest grassroots mobilisation campaigns for HIV/AIDS awareness in the world.

Started in 1983, the Candlelight Memorial takes place every third Sunday in May and is led by a coalition of some 1,200 community organisations in 115 countries hosting local memorials that honour the lost and raise social consciousness about the disease.

The Candlelight is also much more than just a memorial. It provides opportunities for leadership development, policy advocacy, partnerships, and improvement of community mobilisation skills. With 33 million people living with HIV/AIDS today, the Candlelight continues to serve as an important intervention for global solidarity, breaking down barriers, and giving hope to new generations.

The Theme of this year's memorial is "Many Lights for Human Rights". The communities all over the world would gather together in solidarity to light the candle to honour the memory of those lost to AIDS, show support for those living with HIV/AIDS, raise awareness of the disease, and mobilise individuals for a common goal of responding to the local impact of HIV/AIDS.

This year, Rotary Club of Dhaka Midtown in partnership with UNFPA Bangladesh has come forward to mark the day and observe the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial. The event was highlighted with sharing of commemoration speech, chorus songs and lighting the candles gathering in a circle by all participants to remember those who have lost their lives by AIDS, to support those living with HIV and affected by its impact and to move communities to action. All the audiences present at the event light candles. With a glowing flame burning from each candle, members stood for a minute's silence to think of those whose lives have been affected by HIV and AIDS.

The writer is the AIDS Candlelight Coordinator, Bangladesh and Managing Director, Nielsen Bangladesh and member of Rotary Club of Dhaka Midtown. E-mail: hasan.k.dhaka@gmail.com

Benefits of prenatal vitamin A last a decade: study

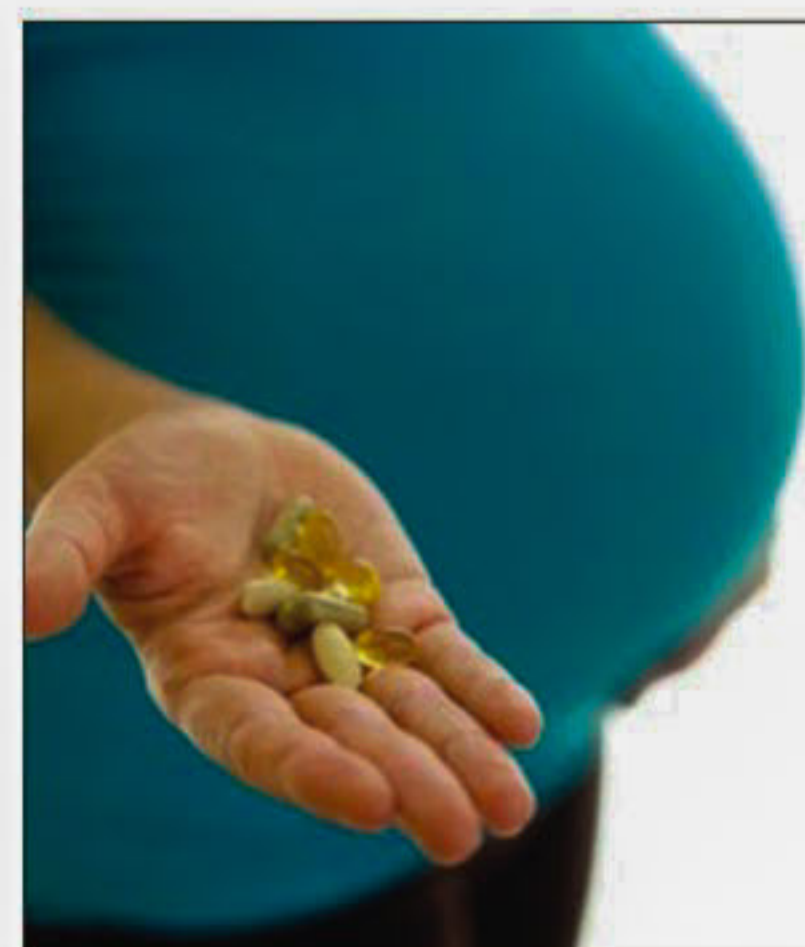
REUTERS, Boston

Children whose malnourished mothers took vitamin A during pregnancy had stronger lungs throughout childhood, with the benefits measurable well past the age of 9, researchers reported recently.

Lung capacity was about 3 percent higher in children whose mothers took vitamin A compared to those whose mothers received a placebo, the study of 1,371 children in Nepal showed.

"Early interventions involving vitamin A supplementation in communities where undernutrition is highly prevalent may have long-lasting consequences for lung health," Dr. William Checkley of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and colleagues wrote in the New England Journal of Medicine.

When mothers were given beta carotene, a precursor of vitamin A, their children did not score higher on the lung capacity test.



The benefits are believed to have come from treatment during pregnancy because all the children received regular vitamin A supplements after birth.

The researchers said an estimated 190 million preschool-age children and 19 million pregnant women have vitamin A deficiency worldwide. The short-

fall can cause health problems during pregnancy and early development, including lung problems.

The study piggybacked off a test done in the 1990s in which 44,646 women in 30 village developments in Nepal were given weekly supplements before, during and after pregnancy.

The older test included 2,055 newborns, and researchers from Johns Hopkins decided to track those children down to test their lung capacity.

"The magnitude of the effect observed in this study is slightly greater than that associated with preventing exposure to parental smoking in school-aged children," the researchers wrote.

The original study found that supplementation with either vitamin A or beta carotene reduced by 44 percent the risk of a woman dying because of complications of pregnancy, compared to women who got placebo capsules. The supplements, however, had no effect on infant mortality.

Seminar on complex coronary intervention

STAR HEALTH REPORT

With a view to updating knowledge on challenging coronary interventions, recently Cardiology Department of Sir Salimullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital (SSMC and MH) organised a seminar in a local hotel in the city.

Seminar entitled "Complex coronary intervention: Focus on practical and clinical implication" was dedicated to the interventional cardiologists, especially to the budding cardiologists who will contribute to lessen the burden of heart ailment in near future. Young cardiologists congregated in the seminar to update knowledge with the newer modalities of coronary angioplasty, especially the complex and challenging one.

Percutaneous coronary intervention also known as coronary angiogram/angioplasty has become an efficient and cost-effective modality of revascularisation in coronary heart disease. Renowned interventional cardiologist of the country Prof Dr Md Afzalur Rahman, and also head of the Cardiology Department of SSMC and MH spoke as the keynote speaker in the seminar.

He said "We have to go a long way to make the state-of-the-art cardiac interventions versatile in every nook and corner of the country. In order to keep pace with the rapidly advancing world, we are bound to continuously update our knowledge, acquire newer skills and adopt latest technology. We have to nurture our budding cardiologist with utmost priority to shape the future of interventional cardiology in Bangladesh."

Prof Brig (Retd) Abdul Malik was present as chief guest while Prof M Jalaluddin, former Director NICVD delivered welcome address. Several more distinguished interventional cardiologists of the country spoke on the occasion. Dr Jairaman Lingamanaicker of Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre of Singapore, spoke as a guest lecturer.