

Am I at risk of getting breast cancer?

DR TASMIA TAHMID

Certain risk factors increase your chance of developing breast cancer. Check on the following points to assess whether you can be at risk. This is very helpful for early diagnosis of breast cancer.

Family history of breast cancer

It is thought that up to 5% of all breast cancers are inherited owing to the presence of abnormal genes. These genes are passed on from mother to daughter, so having a first-degree relative (such as a sister or mother) with breast cancer will increase your chance of developing the disease.

Also, if a male relative (uncle, father) had prostate cancer, your chance of getting breast cancer will raise.

Cancer of the other breast also increases the likelihood of breast cancer in the remaining breast.

Hormonal risk factors

- Starting periods before the age of 11 years

- Later pregnancy — first full term pregnancy after 35 increases breast cancer risk

- Later menopause — after 53 increases risk

- Oral contraceptive pill: Oral contraceptive pill that contains oestrogen within the previous 10 years slightly increases the chance of developing breast cancer. The greater the oestrogen-content in the pill, the higher the risk of developing breast cancer.

- Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT): Taking HRT after the menopause seems to increase the risk of developing breast cancer, especially if it is continued for more than 10 years.

Lifestyle risk factors

Obesity: Obesity after the menopause increases the risk of breast cancer in women, whereas obesity before the menopause seems to reduce breast cancer risk. In post-menopausal women the body fat is the main source of oestrogen production; so obese women will have more oestrogen on board, thus increasing their breast cancer risk.

Diet: The research studies looking at the issue of diet and breast cancer show conflicting results. However, it is thought that a high intake of saturated animal fats and red meat (especially if overcooked) increases the risk of developing

breast cancer, whereas diets high in fibre and vitamins (A, C and E), such as fresh fruits and vegetables, decrease the risk. It is also thought that fish and green tea reduce the risk of breast cancer.

Other risk factors

Previous benign breast biopsy: If your breast biopsy showed, certain microscopic features of a risk lesion, may be associated with a higher risk. For example, the risk is increased by 4-5 times if a condition known as atypical epithelial hyperplasia is found in the breast biopsy.

Environment: Research showed number of women from Eastern world affected with breast cancer, after moving to Western world is increasing.

The breast awareness

5-point code

1. Know what is normal for you
2. Know what changes to look and feel for
3. Look and feel
4. Report any changes to your breast specialist without delay
5. Attend routine breast screening if you are aged 40 or over

The writer is the Lead Breast Surgeon of United Hospital, Dhaka.



It's never too late to benefit from smoking cessation

Quitting smoking helps after serious heart attack damage

It's never too late for smokers to do their hearts good by kicking the habit — even after a heart attack has left them with significant damage to the organ's main pumping chamber, a new study suggests.

Past studies have found that smokers who kick the habit after suffering a heart attack have a lower rate of repeat heart attacks and live longer than their counterparts who continue to smoke.

But little has been known about the benefits of quitting among heart attack patients left with a complication called left ventricular (LV) dysfunction — where damage to the heart's main pumping chamber significantly reduces its blood-pumping efficiency.

So it has been unclear whether that dysfunction might "drown out" the heart benefits of smoking cessation, said Dr. Amil M. Shah, the lead researcher on the new study and a staff cardiologist at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

But in their study, Shah and his colleagues found that heart attack survivors with LV dysfunction may stand to benefit as much from smoking cessation as other heart attack patients do.

When Shah's team accounted for a number of other factors — including age, medical history and body weight — smoking cessation itself was linked to a 40 percent reduction in the risk of death compared with persistent smoking.

Quitters were about 30 percent less likely to die, suffer a repeat heart attack or be hospitalised for heart failure during the study period.

Source: American Journal of Cardiology

Ramadan tips ...

Muscle cramps

Inadequate intake of some macrominerals like calcium, magnesium and potassium containing foods during the holy month of Ramadan can lead to muscle cramp. So we should eat foods rich in the above minerals (e.g. vegetables, fruit, dairy products, meat and dates). In order to get rid of this problem, our muscle should be nourished with right foods containing those minerals.

Lethargy and low blood pressure

Excessive sweating, weakness, tiredness, lack of energy, dizziness, especially on getting up from sitting position, pale appearance and feeling faint are symptoms associated with low blood pressure. This tends to occur towards the afternoon. Too little fluid intake, decreased salt intake during fasting period contribute these conditions. To avoid these, we should keep ourselves cool, increase fluid and salt intake between Iftar and Sehri. However, low blood pressure should be confirmed by taking a



blood pressure reading when symptoms are present. Persons with high blood pressure may need their medication adjusted during Ramadan. They should consult their doctor as a part of preparing for healthy fasting.

Headache

Headache may be common phenomenon during Ramadan fasting. Caffeine and tobacco-withdrawal, doing too much in one day, lack of sleep, hunger usually occurs as the day goes by and worsens at the end of the day. When it is associated with low blood pressure, the headache can be quite severe and can also cause nausea before Iftar. In order to get ease, cut down caffeine and tobacco slowly starting a week or two before Ramadan. Reorganise your schedule during the Ramadan so as to have adequate sleep.

Joint pains

During Ramadan, when extra salah are performed the pressure on the knee joints increases. In the elderly and those with arthritis this may result in pain, stiffness, swelling and discomfort. To avoid the condition, ensure that the knees do not have to carry any extra load. Losing weight is one of the most important tips to reduce pressure on knees. Also you can do exercise of the lower limbs before Ramadan so that they can be prepared for the additional strain. Being physically fit allows greater fulfillment, thus enabling one to be able to perform salah with ease.

It is strongly recommended that people should always consult with doctor for appropriate advice concerning their specific health needs and care during Ramadan.

Children experimenting with drugs — what to do?

DR SATPARKASH

Picture this, a bag of marijuana falls out of the pocket of your son or daughter. Or perhaps you hear from an acquaintance that s/he saw your son or daughter come out of a place where drugs are sold.

Most parents' first reaction is to panic. That is understandable, but as you know panic is a bad advisor. When your child is experimenting with whatever substance, it is important to discuss about that. It is the only way to find out how important the substance is for your child, so that you can judge whether your child is running risks or not. If you forbid right away, your child will feel that s/he needs to hide something, which increases the risk that s/he will experiment out of your reach.

Keep the conversation open and that will lead to a better mutual comprehension and strengthen your contact so that you can let go of your child with a better feeling. Make sure in your conversation that you know enough and are up-to-date

so that you are not stuck for an answer. It also prevents you from worrying for nothing. Don't try to force the conversation; a good conversation can only happen if both parties are open to it. Give your opinion but don't scare your child. Forbidding only is counterproductive.

Keep in mind the fact that youngsters are curious by nature. In fact, curiosity is very important for their development. Experimentation and curiosity go hand in hand. Hence, they tend to experiment with different substances including stimu-



lants. However, a beer at a young age does not make one an alcoholic.

It is important that parents make rules for the children and put some limits. This is an important way through which children learn discipline themselves in the future. Youngsters need parents to set limits for them. Rules give your child something to hold on to and feel that his or her parents are interested.

Finally, it is important to help the children deal with boredom in a healthy manner. Boredom is one of the things that leads youngsters to start using stimulants. Help your child in making a routine and try to get him engaged in as many activities as possible. Get involved in his life and inspire him to take up new hobbies, sports, and increased contact with youngsters of the same age. It is a great idea for the parents to plan some family activities with the child.

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A low-fat diet with a lot of salad dressing, nuts, fish, poultry, and certain fruits and vegetables may help prevent Alzheimer's disease, according to a new study. Vitamin B12 and folate are homocysteine-related vitamins that may have an impact on Alzheimer's disease via their ability of reducing circulating homocysteine levels, vitamin E might prevent Alzheimer's disease via its strong antioxidant effect, and fatty acids may be related to dementia and cognitive function through atherosclerosis, thrombosis, or inflammation via an effect on brain development and membrane functioning or via accumulation of beta-amyloid.

Knowing for better living

Oily & spicy foods, irregular food habit and smoking are the major causes of acidity !

Avoid oily and spicy foods

Take your food timely

Avoid smoking

Take medicine on Doctor's advice



Courtesy...

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