

Ray of hope for children with vascular anomalies

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Vascular anomaly, a developmental defect of blood vessels (arteries, veins, capillaries, lymphatic) is the most common birth defect affecting 10 in 100 live births. Most common presentations of such anomalies are seen as skin pigmentation in the form of birthmark or skin growth frequently noticed on face, neck, arms, legs or the trunk. Although 90 percent of all these skin defects either disappear or remain unnoticeable as minor skin blemish within 6 to 8 years of age, these can be severely disfiguring in remaining 10 percent cases; sometimes leading to serious complications if left untreated.

Many parents do not know that birthmark (what we call a normal phenomenon and a sign of birth) is a misnomer. In most cases, birthmarks are vascular defects and can be cause for concern in certain instances for which treatment is essential. Unfortunately, most of the chil-

dren who need timely and appropriate medical attention are misdiagnosed or maltreated. A significant percentage receive inappropriate treatment due to lack of expertise and sophisticated treatment facility.

In order to provide appropriate treatment, Vascular Anomalies Treatment and Research Center (VATRC), the first of its kind in Bangladesh has been established recently at CARE Hospital, Dhaka in association with Vascular Anomalies Centre, Harvard Medical School, USA. They will share their expertise, provide regular consultation of referred and complicated cases and has taken initiative to trained up local doctors to deal with vascular anomalies in children of Bangladesh.

The sufferings of the children living with permanent defects range from social stigma to functional impairment (vision or hearing loss if related organs are affected) or even life-threatening conditions such as blood clotting or bleeding disorder, heart fail-



ure, hypothyroidism (lack of hormone called thyroid) and stroke (brain haemorrhage).

As the level of awareness and knowledge regarding vascular anomalies are extremely low,

many patients at risk do not seek medical treatment at early stage or until an obvious complication. This makes treatment more complicated. Sometimes it goes beyond complete recov-

ery. That is why timely treatment is essential to normalise the defects.

Skin pigmentation present since birth or appears few months after birth that becomes large, raised, pink/red/blue in colour or if it grows with age or does not disappear as child grows, needs to be evaluated by a specialist physician. Parents should also take their child for consultation if the skin mark present in vital structure of body like nose, eye, ear or other parts of face and when more than five in number.

Treatment of vascular anomalies is not always surgery and costly interventions. The methods of treatment range from simple observation by physician, medication, minor intervention to surgery.

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DRUG REHAB

Effective approach to treat drug and alcohol addiction

Addiction is a complex but treatable disease that alters the brain's structure and function, resulting in changes that persist long after drug use has ceased. This may explain why drug abusers are at risk for relapse even after long periods of abstinence and despite the potentially devastating consequences. Here are some standard approaches to combat addiction:

- Treatment needs to be tailored to the individual. Matching treatment settings, interventions, and services to an individual's particular problems and needs is critical to successful and productive future functioning.
- Treatment needs to be readily available. As with other chronic diseases, the earlier treatment is offered, the greater the likelihood of positive outcomes.
- To be effective, treatment must address the individual's drug abuse and any associated problems. It is also important that treatment is appropriate to the individual's age, gender, ethnicity, and culture.
- At least 3 months in treatment is needed to significantly reduce or stop drug use. Recovery from drug addiction is a long-term process and frequently requires multiple episodes of treatment.
- Individual and group counselling are the most common forms of drug abuse treatment. Behavioural therapies may involve addressing a patient's motivation to change, providing incentives for abstinence, and facilitating better interpersonal relationships.
- Many drug-addicted individuals also have other mental disorders. Patients should be assessed for both. And when these problems arise concurrently, treatment should address both.
- Medically assisted detoxification is only the first stage of addiction treatment and by itself does little to change long-term drug abuse. Patients should be encouraged to continue drug treatment following detoxification.
- Treatment does not need to be voluntary to be effective. Sanctions or enticements from family, employment settings and the law enforcement agencies system can significantly contribute in the ultimate success of drug treatment interventions.

The write-up is compiled by Dr Satparkash, Consultant, Prottoy Medical Clinic Ltd, Dhaka. E-mail: drsat@hotmail.com



HEALTH bulletin

Zinc will help your cold, at least a little

REUTERS, New York

A new look at the medical evidence shows zinc supplements may take the edge off the common cold. But not a whole. Researchers found that people who started taking zinc-loaded lozenges or syrups within 24 hours of showing symptoms — a sore throat, say, or runny nose — shortened their cold by one day. By comparison, a normal cold lasts about a week. The review also shows that people taking the supplements tended to have milder symptoms.

Vitamin D may help keep blood sugar under control

Drinking yogurt with extra vitamin D may help people with diabetes regulate their blood sugar, a study from Iran finds.

In type 2 diabetes, the most common form of the disease, the body has trouble using insulin to process glucose from foods, resulting in excessive levels of the sugar in the bloodstream. Vitamin D is thought to help regulate the body's sensitivity to insulin and possibly insulin production by the pancreas.

Yogurt contains probiotics, the good bugs that help us digest food, and there is some evidence that these may also be important in diabetes.

Source: American Journal of Clinical Nutrition

Do oral contraceptives really cause weight gain?

It is common to associate weight gain to be a side effect of birth control pills. Many women and healthcare providers believe that pills and patches used for contraception can cause weight gain. Concern about weight gain has led many women to limit the use of some birth control methods, while some even stop using them.

Recent studies have revealed the reverse scenario. A randomised trial on 150 young female runners conducted by University of Massachusetts Medical School, research-



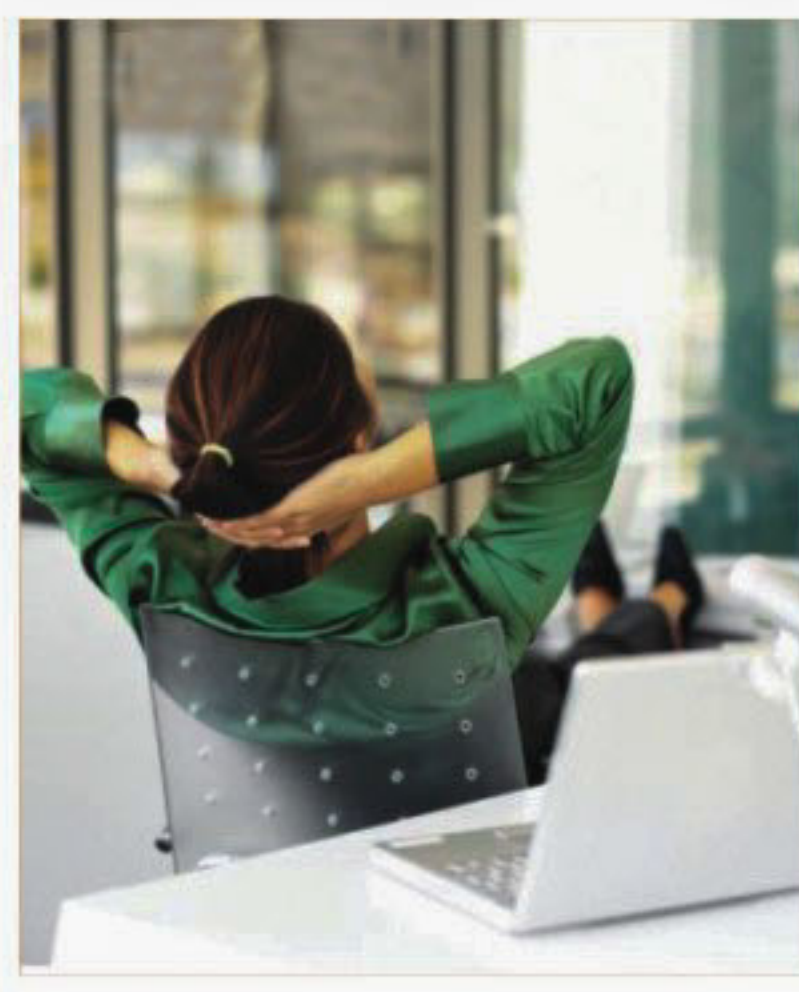
ers confirmed that use of oral contraceptive does not cause weight or fat gain.

In another broader analysis published in the Cochrane Data-

base of Systematic Reviews, researchers did not find evidence supporting any causal association between combination oral contraceptives or skin patch and weight gain.

According to experts, women who end up gaining weight, may simply be misperceiving normal weight gain over time as an unwanted side effect of contraceptives.

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Stretch your legs, save your life

Sitting behind a desk all day or driving in a long hour can already wreak havoc on your back and your backside, and then add to that lazing on the couch after an arduous work week, your body is in danger of too much rest.

One study from Canada and another from the Karolinska Institute and the Swedish School of Sport and Health have shown that sitting too much can increase your risk for serious health problems.

Sitting for more than four hours — the minimum period of inactivity the scientists deemed more dangerous — they found that allowing the body to become sloppy can lead to a problematic production of lipase, the enzyme secreted by the pancreas that breaks down the fat molecules of your body.

So, it is time to put a little more sweat on your brow whether during a stressful work week or relaxing full weekend.

Knowing for better living

In Bangladesh ...

1 out of 1,000 adults suffers from **typhoid fever**!

Drink pure water

Avoid unhygienic food

Wash hands properly before preparing and eating food

Follow prescription strictly while taking antibiotic

Consult your Doctor



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