

Hazards of radiation exposure: when to worry

DR MD RAJIB HOSSAIN

Radiation release from the earthquake-stricken Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant explosion in Japan has raised fears among people residing in Japan and its neighbouring countries. People are very anxious about possible health hazards of radiation exposure — both long and short term. Many have been unnecessarily self-medicating themselves with potassium iodide to get protection from cancer of Thyroid (also called Adam's apple). But experts cautioned not to do so and advised to follow public health guideline without paying attention to rumour.

It is very difficult to predict properly the extent of damage of human health by the leaked radiation. Experts say, the situation is worrisome but in terms of public health, it is not highly endangering in comparison to radiation levels seen in some of the past's worst nuclear disasters as of Chernobyl.



Officials are checking the radiation level as Japan faces serious radiation leak after third explosion at N-plant following the devastating earthquake.

The greatest disaster from radiation exposure occurred after Chernobyl blast was epidemic of Thyroid cancer — more than 6,000 cases so far. We could prevent the cancer if we knew the main source of radiation — the locally produced milk. Cows ate grass contaminated by fallout from the reactors and secreted radioactive iodine in their milk. From the past incidences and research on radiation exposure, we know better than ever before.

Japanese government has already evacuated people within 20 Km of the nuclear plant and advised people within 30 Km to stay indoors and distributed the drug potassium iodide to people at risk to protect their Thyroid gland from radioactive iodine.

A recent United Nations report revealed that there is no evidence of a major public health impact attributable to radiation exposure two decades after the accident at Chernobyl in part

because of the evacuation efforts.

Exposure to radiation can cause a range of health effects from simple diarrhoea to deadly cancer. Mild exposure may not have any symptom. Nausea and vomiting often begin within hours of moderate exposure, followed by diarrhoea, headaches and fever. After the first round of symptoms, there may be a brief period with no apparent illness, but this may be followed within weeks by new, more serious symptoms. At higher levels of radiation, all of these symptoms may be immediately apparent, along with widespread — and potentially fatal — damage to internal organs.

If you suspect to have radiation exposure, the first thing you should do is to remove clothes and shoes that eliminates about 90 percent of external radiation contamination and washing with soap and water takes radiation off the skin. This lowers your risk of breathing or ingesting radiation particles, or having them get into open wounds.

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HAVE A NICE DAY Dates as medicine

Health benefits of dates are uncountable. This fruit is affluent in natural fibres and rich in several vitamins and minerals. These natural products contain oil, Calcium, Sulphur, Iron, Potassium, Phosphorous, Manganese, Copper and Magnesium which are advantageous for health.

It is said that eating one date daily is necessary for a balanced and healthy diet. Dates help in fighting constipation, intestinal disorders, sexual weakness and digesting food. Some believe that dates are useful in preventing abdominal cancer. American Cancer Society recommends intake of 20-35 grams of dietary fibre in a day, supplied through dates. Dates are quiet useful in guarding the night blindness problems.

Dates are important as medicine for their tonic effect. They are useful for supplying energy. Nevertheless, Dates are consist of sugar, fats and proteins. If dates are consumed with the paste of cucumber, it is effective for gaining more weight.

One kilogram of Dates contains almost 3,000 calories. These calories alone are sufficient to meet the daily requirements of a human body.



Dr Rubaiul Murshed



WORLD WATER DAY

Water for cities: Responding to the urban challenge

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Access to safe water and sanitation is the daily battle for the dwellers living in rapidly growing cities, especially in slums. Dhaka, one of the world's fastest growing megacities is facing abysmal challenges to ensure the right to safe water and sanitation for its people. Experts urged to fill the fissures in the water management plan to cope with the growing number of population and meet the target of Millennium Development Goals.

One out of four city residents worldwide, 789 million in total, lives without access to improved sanitation facilities and 497 million people in cities rely on shared sanitation. The poor in cities receive

the worst services, paying up to 50 times more per litre of water than their richer neighbours because they usually have to buy their water from private vendors.

In order to focus the international attention on the impact of rapid urbanisation, industrialisation and uncertainties on urban water systems, World Water Day will be observed tomorrow. This year's theme, "Water for cities: Responding to the urban challenge" aims to spotlight and encourage governments, organisations, communities and individuals to actively engage in addressing the defy of urban water management.

Slums dwellers, 30 to 50 percent of total Dhaka residents are continuously facing hurdles to access safe

water and proper sanitation. The situation is getting more complicated by consistent burden of the new migrants who arrive every day. Nearly 40 percent of world's urban expansion is growing slums that threatens outbreak of diseases like Cholera, Diarrhoea, Malaria.

Along with existing population, around 2,100 people migrating to Dhaka everyday need potable water, sanitation services, and a wastewater system that keeps the city free of disease and ensures sustainable development. Governments, policymakers, municipalities and civil society need to work harder and plan better to deal with the ever growing water and sanitation needs of everyone. Water, after all is life and sanitation is dignity.

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HEALTH bulletin

Passive smoking increases stillbirth risk

Fathers-to-be should stop smoking to protect their unborn child from the risk of stillbirth or birth defects, scientists say. Researchers of University of Nottingham found that pregnant women exposed to smoke at work or home increased their risk of stillbirth by 23 percent and of having a baby with defects by 13 percent.

It is vital that parents are made aware of the possible risks associated with second-hand smoke and alert those around them of the impact it could potentially have on the health of their unborn baby.

Source: BBC Health



Recently a minimally invasive or cosmetic heart surgery (which is done to avoid big scars and hassles of open heart surgery) was performed at Apollo Hospitals, Dhaka.



Stay cautioned as bird flu makes alarming comeback

STAR HEALTH REPORT

The first case of human infection of avian influenza or bird flu this year has been detected by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) on last Monday. As bird flu caused by H5N1 virus has comeback, here are some tips to prevent the virus from catching you.

1. Avoid contact with birds and bird-related material in areas where bird flu is occurring.
2. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser to help prevent the spread of infection.
3. Use proper respiratory hygiene by covering your mouth and nose with tissue when you cough or sneeze; discard used tissues immediately.
4. Wear latex gloves when caring for someone with flu.
5. Consider wearing a respiratory mask.
6. Be careful about the food you eat — if they contain undercooked poultry or raw eggs.

Knowing for better living

In Bangladesh ...

1 in every 6 people suffers from chronic kidney disease !

Drink plenty of water instead of other drinks

Control your blood pressure

Check your diabetes regularly

Maintain a healthy weight

Eat low-fat diet

Avoid smoking & alcohol

Consult your Doctor



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