

More trained midwives, more lives saved

DR KASHFIA AHMED KEYA
Midwives not only deliver babies. They do much more. They care for mothers before and after delivery. They protect the health of newborn and children. They offer family planning counselling and supplies tools. They are crucial for the communities and to the survival of women and children. The crucial role of midwives was highlighted in the first State of the World's Midwifery report published recently, commissioned and coordinated by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Every year, 358,000 women and 3.6 million newborn babies die due to largely preventable complications during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period. In addition, every year, nearly 3 million babies are stillborn. Most of these deaths occur

in low-income countries and happen because women — often poor and marginalised — have no access to functioning health facilities or to qualified health professionals, notably midwives and others with midwifery skills. The report highlights the shortage of skilled midwives in many low-income countries, stressing the need to train and deploy more midwives in all parts of a country — especially remote and rural areas. The nursing shortage is extreme and the ratio of registered nurse-midwives to births is one of the world's lowest. Retention is hampered by lack of advancement opportunities, poor working conditions, weak supervision and lack of autonomy. Until recently midwives were not defined as a professional cadre and received only 6 months of midwifery education. Other providers of maternity



services include the Community Skilled Birth Attendant and Family Welfare Visitors, both with 12-18 months' education. Bangladesh has made remarkable achievements in reproductive health and reducing maternal mortality over the past decade and is on track to achieve MDGs 4 and 5. However,

addressing workforce need is critical, with particular attention to a defined role for midwives in regulation, education and deployment. Experts recommended that Bangladesh needs to intensify efforts to make sufficient midwifery staff available to provide quality skilled attendance to the estimated 3 million births per year. So, more investment in midwifery could save millions of babies and women who still die every year because of a lack of skilled healthcare during childbirth. Let's ensure that every woman and her newborn have access to quality midwifery services. **The writer is a Medical Officer in the department of Gynaecology and Obstetrics, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), Dhaka. E-mail: kashfia.keya@gmail.com**

HEALTH TIPS

Coping with low blood pressure

High blood pressure gets all of the attention, but very low blood pressure can be just as dangerous, experts say. If severe enough, low blood pressure (hypotension) can lead to dizziness and fainting. The U.S. National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute offers following suggestions for dealing with low blood pressure:

- After you have been sitting or lying down for an extended period, stand up slowly. Also, change the position of your legs before you stand.
- Eat frequent, small meals that are low in carbohydrates.
- If your doctor mentions that you have risk for hypotension, avoid standing for long periods. If you must stand for a long time, wear compression stockings and walk around frequently.
- Drink sports drinks that contain sodium and potassium, or water, throughout the day.
- Try to avoid scary or upsetting situations.

How to minimise radiation from x-rays

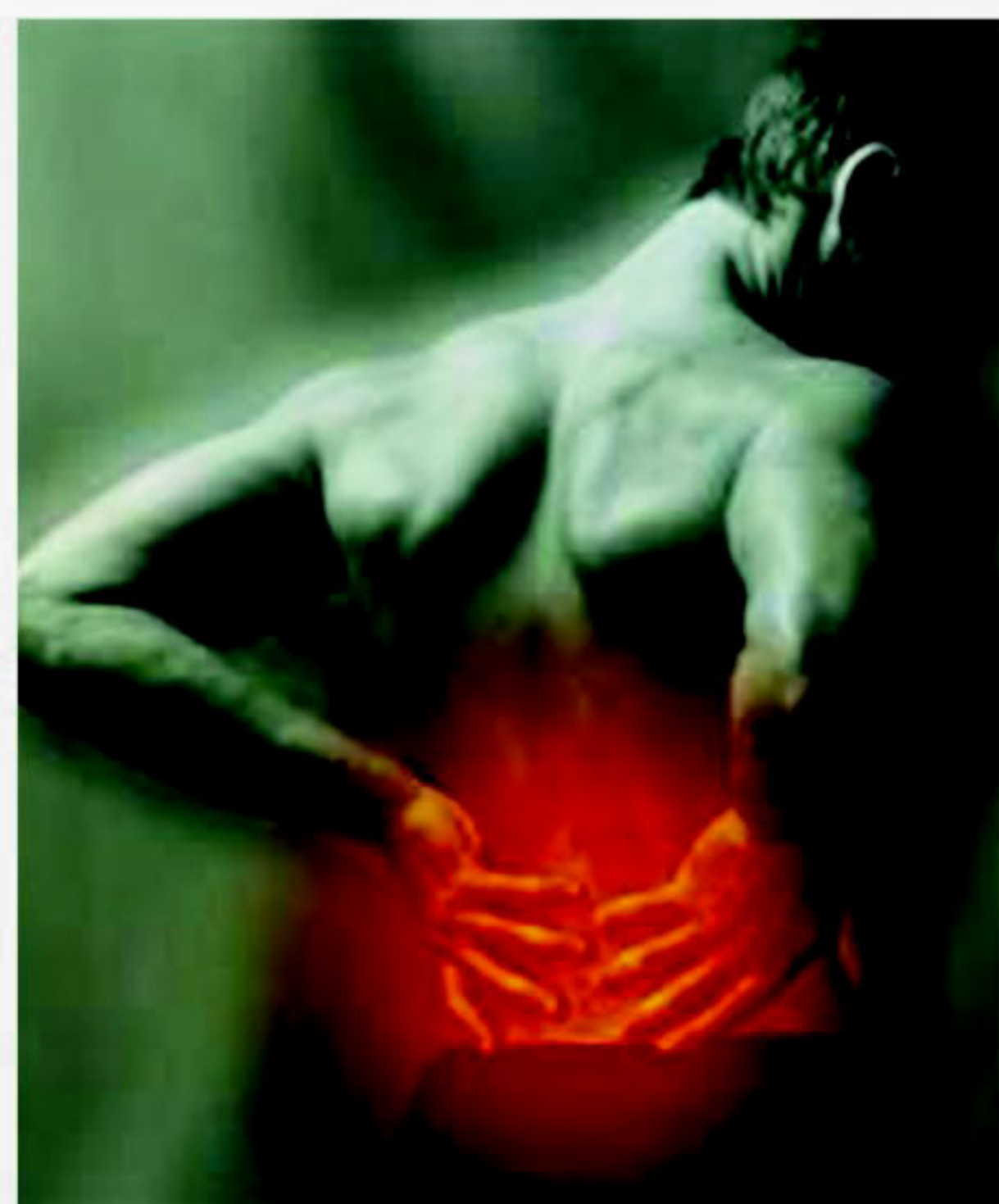
Whether you need a better picture of an aching arm after a fall or an inside glimpse of your pearly whites, some X-rays are a medical necessity. But despite their undisputed value, X-rays also expose you to radiation. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration offers following guidelines to minimise unnecessary radiation exposure:

- Find out how an X-ray will benefit you. Do not refuse an X-ray that is medically necessary.
- On the other hand, do not push for an X-ray if your doctor says one is not needed.
- If you are pregnant or even think you might be, always let the technician know before getting an X-ray.
- Ask if you can wear a protective lead shield.
- Ask if lower-radiation X-rays are available.
- Keep a list of your X-ray history to track how often you have them.

Sit up straight, your back thanks you

STAR HEALTH DESK

Everyone wants to avoid back trouble, but surprisingly few of us manage to escape it. A significant number of people experience back pain at some point in their lives. Back pain is notoriously difficult, and expensive, to remedy. The majority of back pain is the result of muscle and ligament strain or weakness, and can often be prevented by developing core strength and proper posture. Maintaining good posture not only helps you



look better, it improves muscle tone, makes breathing easier and is one of the best ways to stave off back and neck pain. Posture is the key. If your spine is not balanced, you will inevitably have problems in your back, neck, shoulders and even joints. The following advice may help you make it a daily habit and stave off expensive back problems to boot. First, try correcting your slouching habits on your own. Stand up and lift your chin slightly; align your ears over your shoulders and your shoulders over your hips. Place your hands on your hips and pitch forward about two inches. There should be a slight inward curve in your lower back, an outward curve in your upper back, and another inward curve at your neck. Maintain this posture and sit down. When you are sitting or driving for long periods of time, place a cushion or rolled-up towel between the curve of your lower spine and the back of your seat. Supporting your lower back will maintain the natural curve of your spine; when the back is supported, the shoulders more naturally fall into place. If you sit at a desk all day, get help from ergonomics expert who can assess your work area. An ergonomist can make sure your chair, desk and keyboard are at the optimal height and can adjust your sitting posture. If no expert is on hand, make adjustments yourself. The center of your computer screen should be at eye level, and the desk height should allow your forearms to rest comfortably at a 90-degree angle. Work with your feet flat on the floor and your back against the chair. Whether you work in an office or at home, get up and stretch every 30 to 60 minutes. Sitting for long periods puts pressure on discs and fatigues muscles.

HEALTH bulletin



Diabetes rate doubles!

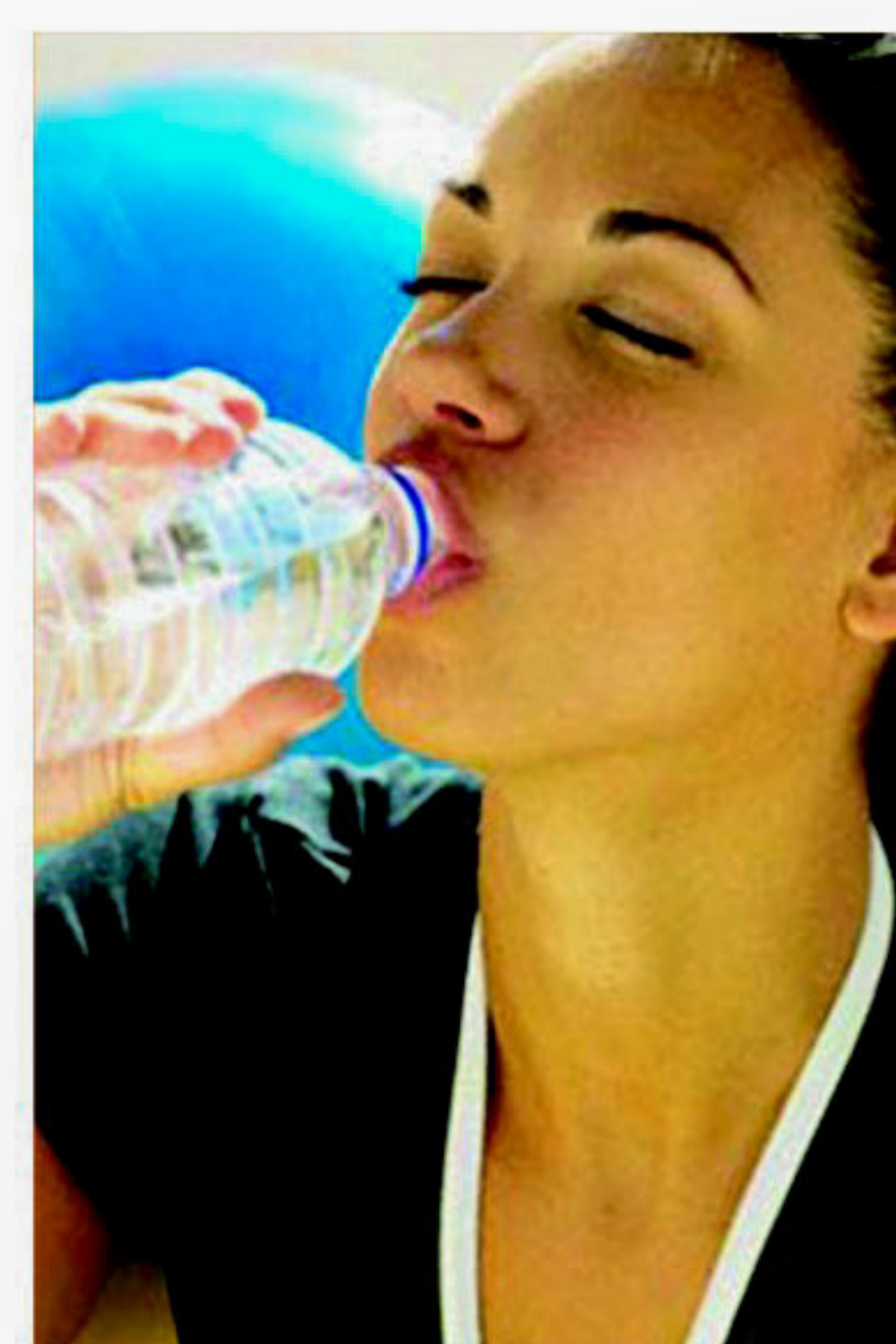
The number of adults with diabetes in the world has more than doubled since 1980, a study published in the Lancet recently reveals. Researchers from Imperial College London and Harvard University in the U.S. analysed data from 2.7m people across the world, using statistical techniques to project a worldwide figure. The total number of people with all forms of the disease — which can be fatal — has risen from 153m to 347m.

Source: BBC Health

Cinnamon extract inhibits progression of Alzheimer's disease

Researcher from Tel Aviv University has discovered that cinnamon extract can inhibit the development of Alzheimer's disease — the degenerative brain disorder that disrupts memory, thought and behavior. The extract found in cinnamon bark, called CEppt, contains the therapeutic properties.

Source: MedlinePlus



Dehydration and electrolyte imbalance can cause muscle cramps. A glass of water with a pinch of salt and some sugar can help.

Knowing for better living

In Bangladesh . . .

1 in 5 children aged between **12-17 years** suffer from any form of mental illnesses

Practice mindfulness

Laugh out loud

Sleep adequately

Cut-out caffeinated drinks & foods

Consult your Doctor



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