

## ESSENTIAL NEWBORN CARE (ENC)

## A key strategy to save newborn

DR MD RAJIB HOSSAIN

Although Bangladesh has made a commendable success in reducing child mortality, the number of newborn deaths in Bangladesh is still very high. In Bangladesh, more than 113,884 newborns died in 2008, most of those could be prevented by ensuring home based Essential Newborn Care (ENC) by a health worker at or within two days of birth.

Providing ENC that comprises a set of basic measures including hygienic cord care, thermal control, early and exclusive breastfeeding, and immunisation can make a big difference in preventing these needless deaths. Despite having a vital role, this simple but lifesaving strategy is yet to be fully implemented in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, about half of the neonatal deaths (death within 28 days of birth) occur in the first day of life and about three quarters in the first week, often at home and without any contact of a healthcare professionals. Studies have shown that home-based newborn care interventions can prevent 30-60 percent of newborn deaths in high mortality settings under controlled conditions. There-



A health worker is seen providing home-based newborn care intervention at a house in a remote village of Jokigonj, Sylhet in Bangladesh.

PHOTO: TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

fore, experts recommend that any health worker trained in ENC should pay a visit at the baby's home within the first two days of birth to improve newborn survival.

ENC is based on certain preventive messages and encourages healthy practice. As infection is one of the major killers, ENC started with the focus on

cleanliness during delivery such as ensuring clean place, clean and sterile instrument. Immediate drying thoroughly using a clean, dry cloth and making uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact are important. Proper cord clamping and cutting after waiting for up to three minutes or until the pulsations stop is found to reduce chances of anemia

in full term and pre-term babies. Initiating breastfeeding within 1 hour contributes to a host of medical benefits. Washing or bathing within 3 days of birth may be harmful for baby and hence it is not recommended.

Although ENC has been included in the National Neonatal Health Strategy, and integrated into Bangladesh's recent

Health Population and Nutrition Sector Development Programme 2011-2016, a number of issues are lacking and under-recognised to translate the policy into action. Experts identified lack of specification -- what kind of health worker will provide ENC, inadequate and unequal distribution of health workers trained in ENC, lack of monitoring tools, lack of large scale training and awareness programme are the challenges to implement ENC fully.

Dr Syed Rubayet, Programme Manager, Save the Children explained that there are several types of health workers in government sector and also involve in NGO's programmes. The Government should specify one from those different types of health workers who will be responsible for home visit at delivery or within 2 days of birth. He pointed out that currently there is no available form to collect data on ENC from government set up and thus, monitoring and evaluation becomes very difficult. He underscored the need of adequate community health worker and increase of training facility for them to save thousands of newborns.

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## FLASHBACK

2011 in review:  
Key health issues

The year 2011 was marked with several crucial progresses in healthcare like fewer deaths and fewer new infections recorded in the global reports on AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. On the other side, earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power plant damage in Japan was one of the disasters that had an awful effect on healthcare of lot of people. Conflicts disrupted health services and added to health demands in a number of countries, notably in Libya.

## Highlighting new challenges

The shortage of qualified midwives, placing in danger the health of women and infants; the need to fight heart disease and stroke, diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease; air pollution; social inequity and so on.

## Immunisation week helps vaccinate millions

For the first time, this year immunisation week took place in about 180 countries and territories simultaneously.

## Japan: Earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power plant damage

In March, an earthquake struck Japan and resulted in a tsunami that damaged nuclear power plants in Fukushima, Japan.

## Malaria deaths are down but progress remains fragile

Malaria mortality rates have fallen by more than 25 percent globally since 2000. However, steps must be taken now to control the spread of resistant parasites.

## Safeguarding drug treatments

Drug resistance is becoming widespread and many infections are no longer cured with the first line drugs. On World Health Day 2011, WHO called for urgent and concerted action to slow down the spread of drug resistance, limit its impact today and preserve medical advances for future generations.

## Unlocking the potential of people with disabilities

The first World report on disability revealed in 2011 depicted that some of the barriers faced by over a billion people with disabilities in their daily lives.

Source: WHO



41 Field Ambulance of Bangladesh Army has been arranging a series of health camps to provide free healthcare services to poor and marooned people including minor surgery with prescription, free medicine and health awareness programmes since mid-December in Khulna Division. An officer from Bangladesh Army Medical Corps is seen in the picture delivering health services to common people at remote area.

PHOTO: COURTESY

## HEALTH bulletin



## Brushing teeth twice daily may reduce risk of pneumonia

People who brush their teeth twice a day not only have a good oral hygiene, but are also less likely to suffer from pneumonia compared to those who brush just once. Researchers from Yale University School of Medicine led by Dr Samit Joshi found that the onset of pneumonia was preceded by changes in the bacteria present in the mouth.

## More time at school boosts IQ

Spending more time at school may increase intelligence, according to a study of Norwegian men. The research, in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, suggested that an extra year in the classroom could boost IQ by nearly four points.



IFG sometimes progresses to type 2 diabetes mellitus. There is a 50 percent risk over 10 years of progressing to overt diabetes. A recent study cited the average time for progression as less than three years.

Fasting plasma glucose screening should begin at age 30-45 and be repeated at least every three years. Earlier and more frequent screening should be conducted in at-risk individuals.

Prediabetes is usually diagnosed with a blood test and called when fasting blood sugar (glucose) level of 110 to 125 mg/dL (6.1 mM to 6.9 mM) — according to WHO criteria.

## Key points to prevention of delay the onset of type 2 diabetes:

- Healthy meals (low-fat, low-sugar, low-salt diet)
- Physical exercise (45 minutes of exercise per day, five days a week)
- Reducing weight by as little as 5-10 percent can have a significant impact on overall health.

For patients with severe risk factors, prescription medication may be appropriate. This can be considered in patients for whom lifestyle therapy has failed or is not sustainable and who are at high-risk for developing type 2 diabetes.

This write up is compiled by Dr Shahjada Selim who works at Department of Endocrinology and Metabolism, BIRDEM Hospital. E-mail: selimshahjada@gmail.com

## Knowing for better living

## In Bangladesh ...

**30%** women are affected by passive smoking in working place !

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