

WORLD CANCER DAY

40% cancer can be prevented!

STAR HEALTH DESK

Being diagnosed with cancer is one of the worst nightmares in anyone's life. The deadly cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide that accounted for 7.6 million deaths (around 13 percent of all deaths) in 2008. Unfortunately, more than 70 percent of all these cancer deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries like Bangladesh where resources available for prevention, diagnosis and treatment are limited or nonexistent.

Evidence from the World Health Organisation (WHO) suggests that over 40 percent of all cancer can be prevented and some of the most common cancers — including breast, colorectal and cervical cancer — are curable if detected early. Even with late cancer, pain can

be reduced, progression of the cancer slowed and patients and their families helped to cope.

However, regardless of resource level, all countries can implement the four basic components of cancer control—prevention, early detection and diagnosis and treatment, palliative care and thus avoid and cure many cancers as well as palliating the suffering.

With a view to encourage effective cancer control, World Cancer Day is observed today (each year on February 4) to help raise people's awareness on cancer and ways to prevent, detect or treat the deadly disease with the recurring themes to preventing cancer and raising quality of life for the patients.

Cancer is to a large extent avoidable by the avoidance of the risk factors. About 30 percent of cancer deaths are due to five

leading behavioural and dietary risks: high body mass index (overweight and obesity), low fruit and vegetable intake, lack of physical activity, tobacco use, alcohol use. Among them tobacco use is the most important risk factor (causing 22 percent of global cancer deaths and 71 percent of global lung cancer deaths).

Cancer causing viral infections such as HBV/HCV (causes liver cancer) and HPV (causes cervical cancer) are responsible for up to 20 percent of cancer deaths in low- and middle-income countries. But these cancers could easily be prevented by vaccines and simple control strategies.

Undertaking 150 minutes a week of moderate physical activities can reduce the risk of breast and colon cancers, according to the Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health.



A cancer survivor.

Recent data from the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC) suggests that a daily consumption of 500 grams of fruits and vegetables can decrease incidence of cancers of the digestive tract by up to 25 percent.

Again, cancer mortality can be reduced if cases are detected and treated early. There are two components of early detection efforts: early diagnosis by mak-

ing people aware with early signs-symptoms and regular screening to detect cancer.

Experts recommend that in a developing country like Bangladesh, cost-effective interventions for the following components: tobacco control, infection control, healthy lifestyle, a curable cancer programme combined with palliative care should be at the core of the cancer control strategy.

INSIDE STORY

Bitter truth about sugar

US Experts urged to adopt taxes to control soaring consumption of sugar and sweeteners

Sugar is as damaging and addictive as alcohol or tobacco and should be regulated, claim the U.S. health experts. Therefore, the research team from the University of California feels that the sale of products containing added sugar should be subject to regulation through taxation and legislation, just like alcohol and tobacco.

Excess sugar makes people fat and also changes the body's metabolism, raises blood pressure, throws hormones off balance and harms the liver. Sugar consumption has tripled worldwide over the past 50 years. Sugary foods and drinks are responsible for illnesses including obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer and liver problems.

Source: BBC Health & Medindia



PHOTO: BBC

HEALTH TIPS

How to store insulin properly

Insulin is a lifesaver for many people with diabetes, but it must be stored correctly. The American Diabetes Association offers these guidelines for proper storage of insulin:

- Insulin typically is stored in the refrigerator, but it may be more painful when injected this way. Insulin stored at room temperature will last about a month.
- Do not keep your insulin in extremely hot or extremely cold temperatures.
- Never keep insulin in the car, in direct sunlight or in the freezer.
- Check the bottle's expiration date, and discard any insulin that is expired.
- Inspect the bottle before inserting the syringe to make sure the insulin looks as it should.
- Do not use insulin that has formed any crystals or clumps.



HEALTH bulletin



Blood pressure should be measured in both arms

Measuring blood pressure in both arms should be routine because the difference between left and right arm could indicate underlying health problems, says a study review published in The Lancet. The researchers found that a large difference could mean an increased risk of vascular disease and death. Although existing guidelines state that blood pressure should be measured in both arms, it is not often done.

Ultrasound as a promising candidate in contraception!

A dose of ultrasound to the testicles can stop the production of sperm, according to a study on rats published in Reproductive Biology and Endocrinology. It showed that sound waves could be used to reduce sperm counts to levels that would cause infertility in humans. Researchers described ultrasound as a promising candidate in contraception.

Screen your newborn for hypothyroidism

DR SHAHJADA SELIM

The thyroid is a small gland (popularly known as Adam's Apple) located in the front of the neck that produces hormones responsible for various functions including growth, use of energy and oxygen, immunity etc.

Hypothyroidism is the condition in which the thyroid is under-active and is producing an insufficient amount of thyroid hormones. Hypothyroidism in the newborn, when left untreated, can lead to mental retardation. Ideally, all babies should be screened for hypothyroidism in order to prevent retardation that can occur if treatment is delayed.

The symptoms of hypothyroidism in children are different than that of in adults. Symptoms are rarely present at birth but develop gradually during infancy and early childhood and include poor growth and development, lethargy and inactivity, feeding problems, slow pulse, subnormal temperature and constipation.

Early symptoms of undetected and untreated hypothyroidism in infants include jaundice, feeding problems, failure to thrive, constipation, hoarse cry and sleepiness. Later on, symptoms in untreated children include protruding abdomens; rough, dry skin; and delayed teething. In case of adolescents, the symptoms include delayed puberty, hoarse voice, slow speech, puffy and swollen face, hair loss, dry skin etc.

However, each child may experience symptoms differently, and often the symptoms are not seen at all. This is why all infants should be screened for low thyroid. Again, the symptoms of hypothyroidism may resemble other conditions or medical problems. Therefore, parents should always consult a physician for a definite diagnosis.

Congenital hypothyroidism is usually detected dur-



ing the routine newborn screening. Early treatment can restore thyroid function and prevent mental retardation. Some children will require hormone replacement therapy for the rest of their lives, while others appear to outgrow the disorder, often by the age of three.

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Knowing for better living

Low-birth-weight, Infections and Asphyxia (lack of oxygen at birth) are the leading causes of neonatal deaths!

Initiate breastfeeding within one hour of birth

Avoid prelacteal foods like honey or water

Ensure adequate nutrition for mother

Ensure exclusive breastfeeding for first six months

Ensure postnatal care for mother & neonate



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