

WORLD VOICE DAY

Key steps for keeping your voice healthy

Vocal health is critical to our communication-oriented society, but the voice does not receive public recognition and appreciation it deserves. In order to educate patients and communities about the ways to protect their precious voice and to refamiliarise ourselves with the latest advances in voice care.

World Voice Day is observed on April 16 every year. The theme of the day — *Make your voice count* — encourages men and women, young and old, to assess their vocal health and take action to improve or maintain good voice habits. Proper care and use of our voice improves the likelihood of having a healthy voice for our entire lifetime.

There are many different reasons why our voice may sound hoarse or abnormal from time to time. There are steps we can take to prevent many voice problems. The following steps are helpful for anyone who wants to keep their voice healthy, but are particularly important for people who have an occupation, such



as teaching, singing that are heavily depend on voice.

Drink plenty of water: Moisture is good for voice and drinking plenty of water throughout the day is the best way to stay hydrated.

Try not to scream or yell: These are abusive practices for our voice, and put great strain on the lining of our vocal cords.

Warm up voice before heavy use:

Warm up the speaking voice before heavy use, such as teaching a class, preaching, singing or giving a speech. Warm-ups can be simple, such as gently gliding from low to high tones on different vowel sounds, doing lip trills (like the motorboat sound that kids make), or tongue trills.

Don't smoke: In addition to being a potent risk factor for laryngeal (voice

box) cancer, smoking also causes voice very husky, hoarse, and weak.

Use good breath support: Breath flow is the power for voice. Take time to fill lungs before starting to talk and don't wait until you are almost out of air before taking another breath to power your voice.

Use a microphone: When giving a speech or presentation, consider using a microphone to lessen the strain on your voice.

Listen to your voice: When your voice is complaining to you, listen to it. Know that you need to modify and decrease your voice use if you become hoarse in order to allow your vocal cords to recover. If your voice is hoarse frequently or for an extended period of time, you should be evaluated by an Otolaryngologist (ENT specialist).

The write up is compiled by Prof Dr M Alamgir Chowdhury, Head, Department of ENT – Head & Neck Surgery, Anwer Khan Modern Medical College Hospital, Dhaka.

MEDICAL MIRACLE



PHOTO: BBC

Joe Skerratt, fit and well after 251 days with an artificial heart.

Artificial heart keeps boy alive for record 251 days

A three-year-old boy has been kept alive with an artificial heart for more than eight months, which doctors say is a record for a child in the UK.

Joe Skerratt from Gillingham, Kent, was diagnosed with dilated cardiomyopathy, which meant his heart struggled to pump blood around his body. He was temporarily fitted with a Berlin heart (an artificial heart), to give his own a helping hand. After 251 days, he finally had a heart transplant last year.

Dr Alessandro Giardini, consultant paediatric cardiologist at Great Ormond Street, said that we are really delighted to see Joe doing so well and thriving at home. He spent a long time with us in hospital.

Source: BBC

HEALTH bulletin

Cheap device reduces premature births

A cheap medical device can dramatically reduce the number of premature births in some at-risk women, according to a team of doctors in Spain. Being born before 34 weeks of pregnancy is linked to a host of health problems. The study, published in the Lancet, showed that using a "cervical pessary" — a small ring of silicone, inserted into their cervix, reduced the rate in the at-risk group.

In the trial, doctors were looking at women who had a cervix — part of the lower section of the uterus — which was shorter than 25 mm. These pregnant women are thought to be at a higher risk of an early delivery.

Experts said that placement of a pessary is an affordable procedure, non-invasive, and easy to insert and remove as required. The study concluded the pessary was a "reliable alternative for prevention of preterm birth" in a group of at-risk women.

Autism linked to maternal obesity

Obesity during pregnancy can raise the risk of autism, according to a new study published in the journal Paediatrics. The study found the risk of autism and other developmental delays was 60 percent higher among those born to mothers who were obese, hypertensive or diabetic.



Dementia set to triple by 2050, but still largely ignored

STAR HEALTH DESK

Worldwide, nearly 35.6 million people live with dementia — the loss of ability to memorise things or to process thought. This number is expected to double by 2030 and more than triple by 2050. Dementia affects people in all countries, with more than half (58 percent) living in low- and middle-income countries like Bangladesh. By 2050, this is likely to rise to more than 70%.

Although dementia cases are rising rapidly and impinges huge economic burden (costs the world more than US\$ 604 billion per year), it is still largely ignored in most places in the world.

Bangladesh, where a large number of dementia cases are expected to be found has no national programme in place to address dementia. Experts urged to implement programmes focused on improving early diagnosis; raising public awareness about the disease and reducing stigma and providing better care and more support to caregivers.

Dementia is a syndrome that can be caused by a number of brain disorders that affect memory, thinking, behaviour and the ability to perform everyday activities. Alzheimer's



PHOTO: WHO

mer's disease is the most common cause of dementia and possibly contributes to up to 70% of cases.

Lack of diagnosis is a major problem. Even in high-income countries, only one fifth to one half of cases of dementia are routinely recognised. When a diagnosis is made, it often comes at a relatively late stage of the disease.

Experts from World Health Organisation (WHO) urged to increase the capacity to detect dementia early and to provide the necessary health and social care. Recent report from WHO pointed that a general lack of information and understanding about dementia fuels stigma, which in turn contributes to the social isolation of both the person with dementia and their

caregivers, and can lead to delays in seeking diagnosis, health assistance and social support.

To strengthen care, experts recommend involving existing caregivers in designing programmes to provide better support for people with dementia and those looking after them. Community-based services can provide valuable support to families caring for people with dementia in both high- and low-income countries - delaying the need for people to enter into high-cost residential care. At the same time, health workforce training needs to pay closer attention to dementia and the skills required to provide both clinical and long-term care.

Source: World Health Organisation

Vision to develop human resource on health

STAR HEALTH REPORT

There is obvious need to increase the number of skilled nurses and normalise the current reverse doctor-nurse ratio.

With a view to increasing the number of skilled nurses and improving their care, A K Khan Healthcare Trust, a non for profit organisation has taken initiative to train nurses working in different areas of healthcare in Bangladesh. The trust has been providing continuing nursing education through Nursing Bridge Programme.

Currently they are providing specialised hands on training to nurses in 12 hospitals in different divisions of Bangladesh.

Apart from this, they also provide training to midwives in the slums to help in providing assistance for home deliveries to reduce the maternal morbidity and mortality.

The trust has other activities including awareness and outreach programmes in slums specially designed to screen and treat early stages of cervical, breast and oral cancer in female.



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