starhealth@thedailystar.net HEALTH

WORLD HEART DAY

Protecting women and children from heart disease

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Heart disease only affects male, older and rich populations — these are the popular myths and still prevailing in many parts of the world including Bangladesh. In fact, women are as vulnerable as men and it is the number one killer of women. However, their risks are largely underestimated and as a result they are under-prevented and bear the brunt of the disease.

Like women, heart disease in children is under-recognised also. About one million babies born each year with a congenital heart defects. With the increasing exposure to unhealthy diets, lack of exercise and smoking, the rising trend continues when they further stepped into adulthood with long exposure of these risk factors. However, with little precaution and lifestyle changes, we can largely prevent the huge number of deaths and disability from heart diseases among women and children. On occasion of World Heart Day that is being observed today, we can take action to promote healthy heart to save the lives of the women and children we love.

Worldwide, heart disease kills more women than cancers, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and malaria put together. Women who have a family history of heart disease, older, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity and smoking (both active and passive smoking) are at increased risk of developing heart disease. Women with high blood pressure have 3.5 times the risk of developing coronary heart disease compared to women with normal blood pressure.

In addition to managing their risk factors, women should engage themselves in physical activity like walking, taking stair, more household cores. A diet rich in fat, sweet and salt increases the risk and should be avoided as much as you can. Diet rich in fish, vegetables and fruits can help prevent heart disease and should be encouraged. Passive smoking is a major risk in women as well as children and people who smoke should take a serious caution about it.

The majority of heart defects in children that present at birth are treatable

and children can enjoy a normal life if they are being treated timely. Children who develop heart disease in course of childhood include Rheumatic heart disease — a bacterial infection in heart valve leading to heart failure can be easily treated and prevented with inexpensive antibiotic.

Childhood heart diseases are the tip of the iceberg. In many cases, heart disease in adult is the result of risks exposed during childhood and represents the vast submerged portion of the iceberg. Alarming increase in obesity in children and societal changes associated with

economic growth, modernisation, physical inactivity due to computer and TV as well as changes in nutrition habits across the world are driving them to the high risk zone of developing heart disease in later life.

Heart disease is causing more devastating consequences in the life of women and children than in man. We need to shift our focus to the facts and put our attention to women and children to protect their heart health and to avoid any future physical, emotional and financial impact of heart disease.

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HEALTHCARE IN HAJJ

Saudi Arabia adopts measures to limit virus infection during Hajj

Saudi Arabia has taken precautions to prevent disease spreading among Muslim pilgrims next month after a Qatari man was infected with a virus related to the deadly SARS, a health ministry official said recently. Recently the World Health Organisation put out

a global alert saying a new, previously unknown, virus had infected a 49-year-old Qatari man who had recently travelled to Saudi Arabia, where another man with an almost identical virus had already died.

Britain's Health Protection Agency and respiratory disease experts said there was no immediate cause for concern, although authorities were watching for any signs of the virus spreading.

Muslims from some 160 countries flock to Mecca and Medina during the annual Haj pilgrimage, which begins in late October.

"The measures include monitoring the entrances through land, sea and air to evaluate the people entering and obtain samples if any symptoms are apparent. There is also continuous monitoring in the holy places in Mecca and Medina and Jeddah, with teams on the ground and hospitals to deal with them," the official said.

In 2009 Saudi Arabia set up thermal cameras at its airports and increased the number of its medics as part of its measures to limit the spread of the H1N1 flu. It will not resort to using thermal cameras this year.

Source: Reuters



IQ linked to levels of happiness

People with lower intelligence are more likely to be unhappy than their brighter colleagues, according to a study published in the journal Psychological Medicine. The study of 6,870 people showed low intelligence was often linked with lower income and poor mental health, which contributed to unhappiness.

Poor sleep may make high blood pressure worse

Natural Care Ltd.

Insomnia is nobody's friend, but new research indicates that those with high blood pressure who struggle to get enough sound sleep are twice as likely to have a resistant case of hypertension as those who sleep well, according to a study from scientists from the University of Pisa in Italy.

Facts about emergency contraception

Emergency contraception, or postcoital contraception, refers to methods of contraception that can be used to prevent pregnancy in the first few days after intercourse. It is intended for emergency use following unprotected intercourse, contraceptive failure or misuse (such as forgotten pills or torn condoms) etc.

There are two methods of emergency contraception: copperbearing intrauterine devices (IUDs) and emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs).

World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that a copperbearing IUD, as an emergency contraceptive, be inserted within 5 days of unprotected intercourse. This may be an ideal emergency

contraceptive for a woman who is hoping for an ongoing, highly effective contraceptive method. When inserted within five days of unprotected intercourse, a copperbearing IUD is over 99% effective in preventing pregnancy. This is the most effective form of emergency contraception available.

Once inserted, the woman can continue to use the IUD as an ongoing method of contraception, and she may choose to change to another contraceptive method in the future.

A copper-bearing IUD is a very safe form of emergency contraception. The risks of infection, expulsion or perforation are low. The only situation in which a copper-

bearing IUD should never be used as emergency contraception is if a woman is already pregnant. WHO also recommends levonorgestrel - a pill for emergency contraceptive use. The pill should be taken as a single dose within five days (120 hours) of

> doses (12 hours apart). Based on reports from nine studies including 10,500 women, the WHO-recommended levonorgestrel regimen is 52–94% effective in preventing pregnancy.

unprotected intercourse. Alterna-

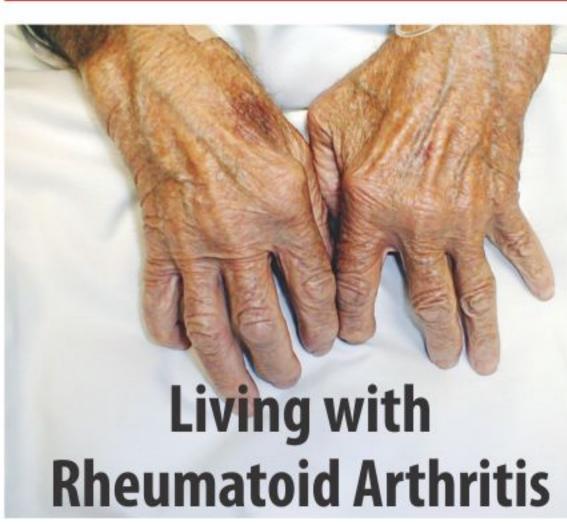
tively, a woman can take this in two

sooner after intercourse it is taken. Levonorgestrel-alone emergency contraception pills are very safe and do not cause abortion or harm future fertility. Side-effects are

The regimen is more effective the

uncommon and generally mild. They should not be given to a woman who already has a confirmed pregnancy. However, if a woman inadvertently takes the pills after she becomes pregnant, the available evidence suggests that the pills will not harm either the mother or her fetus.

Source: WHO



Rheumatoid arthritis is triggered by an overactive immune system that attacks the body's own joints, causing flares of pain and stiffness. The American College of Rheumatology recommends regular exercise, except during painful flares. Here's more of its expert advice:

•When joints are painful or you feel tired, stick to gentle range-of-motion exercises to help keep the joints flexible.

•When you are feeling well, focus on muscle-strength-

ening and low-impact cardiovascular exercises. Work with a physical or occupational therapist to

determine which exercises and intensity are best for you. •Feelings of anxiety, depression or isolation are

common. The doctor concerned can help you work through these feelings, which tend to subside when you are feeling better.





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