

# Nipah virus breaks out, stay cautioned

STAR HEALTH DESK

The recent outbreak of Nipah virus (NiV) in the northern region of Bangladesh has created panic like previous years and drawn much attention of media. The total death of 8 people this year has been a significant cause for concern. As there is no vaccine or specific drug to treat it, precaution is the best way to cope.

Nipah virus causes severe illness in both human and animal characterised by inflammation of the brain (called encephalitis) or respiratory diseases.

Nipah virus can be transmitted to humans from animals specially from bat, and can also be transmitted directly from human-to-human.

In the Bangladesh outbreaks, consumption of fruits or fruit products (e.g. raw date palm juice) contaminated with urine or saliva from infected fruit bats

was the most likely source of infection. During the later outbreaks in Bangladesh, Nipah virus spread directly from human-to-human through close contact with people's secretion and excretion. Half of the reported cases in Bangladesh between 2001 and 2008 were due to human-to-human transmission.

Infected people may be symptomless or initially develop influenza-like symptoms — fever, headache, myalgia (muscle pain), vomiting and sore throat. This can be followed by dizziness, drowsiness, altered consciousness and neurological signs that indicate acute encephalitis. Some people can also experience atypical pneumonia and severe breathing problems, including acute respiratory distress. Encephalitis and convulsion occur in severe cases, progressing to coma within 24 to 48 hours.

Most people who survive acute encephalitis make a full recovery, but around 20% are left with residual neurological consequences such as persistent convulsions and personality changes. The case fatality rate is estimated at 40% to 75%; however, this rate can vary by outbreak depending on local capabilities for surveillance investigations.

Intensive supportive care with treatment of symptoms is the main approach to managing the infections in people. Prevention is the best way to fight Nipah virus infection.

Here are some messages to help prevent the transmission of the virus:

- Reducing the risk of bat-to-human transmission:** Efforts to prevent transmission should first focus on decreasing bat access to date palm sap. Freshly collected date palm juice should also be boiled and fruits should



be thoroughly washed and peeled before consumption.

- Reducing the risk of human-to-human transmission:** Close physical contact with Nipah virus-infected people should be avoided. Gloves and protective equipment should be worn when taking care of ill people. Regular hand washing should be carried out after caring for or visiting sick people.

- Reducing the risk of animal-to-human transmission:** Gloves and other protective clothing should be worn while handling sick animals or their

tissues, and during slaughtering and culling procedures.

- Controlling infection in health-care settings:** Health-care workers caring for patients with suspected or confirmed Nipah virus infection or handling specimens from them, should implement standard infection control precautions. Samples taken from people and animals with suspected Nipah virus infection should be handled by trained staff working in suitably equipped laboratories.

Source: World Health Organisation

## FACTS

### Dengue is fastest-spreading tropical disease

Dengue is the world's fastest-spreading tropical disease and represents a "pandemic threat", infecting an estimated 50 million people across all continents, the World Health Organisation (WHO) stated recently.

Transmitted by the bite of female mosquitoes, the disease is occurring more widely due to increased movement of people and goods — including carrier objects such as bamboo plants and used tires — as well as floods linked to climate change. The viral disease, which affected only a handful of areas in the 1950s, is now present in more than 125 countries — significantly more than malaria, historically the most notorious mosquito-borne disease.

The most advanced vaccine against dengue is only 30% effective, trials last year showed.

"In 2012, dengue ranked as the fastest spreading vector-borne viral disease with an epidemic potential in the world, registering a 30-fold increase in disease incidence over the past 50 years," the WHO said in a statement.

Dengue causes flu-like symptoms that subside in a few days in some sufferers. But the severe form of the disease requires hospitalisation for complications, including severe bleeding, that may be lethal.

There is no specific treatment but early detection and access to proper medical care lowers fatality rates below 1%, according WHO.

Source: Reuters

## HEALTH bulletin

### No exercise, more than couch, tied to fat in kids

For kids, time spent inactive seems less of a factor in higher body fat than does a lack of exercise, according to a new study published in the Journal of Paediatrics.

Researchers found that the more minutes kids spent exercising at the pace of a fast walk each day, the lower their body fat percentage was. But the time they spent as couch potatoes made no difference, according to results.

### Vitamin D deficient newborns have high risk of infection

Newborns deficient in vitamin D are twice as likely as newborns with higher levels to develop respiratory infections, says a new study out of Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

Researchers have found that low blood levels of vitamin D are linked to markers of respiratory disease, indicating that increased sun exposure or supplementation with the vitamin by mothers during pregnancy may be the solution.

## Chase the challenge: control high blood pressure

STAR HEALTH DESK

High blood pressure can easily be manageable. Yet it remains a leading cause of heart attacks, strokes, heart failure and kidney disease. As it usually remains silent, many people do not know that they have high blood pressure. In more than half cases, including many receiving treatment, have blood pressure that remains too high to be healthy.

A normal blood pressure is lower than 120 over 80. Although there is a huge number of drugs available to control blood pressure, many people are still at increased risk of disease, disability and premature death.

Experts identified certain common and correctable reasons in this regard. Many people affected never or rarely see a doctor who checks their pressure and that is why they are ignorant about it.

Among people who are aware of their condition, some do not appreciate how serious it can be and fail to get treated, even when their doctors say they should.

Some who have been treated develop bothersome side effects, causing them to abandon therapy or to use it haphazardly. Many others do little to change lifestyle factors, like obesity, lack of exercise



and a high-salt diet, that can make hypertension harder to control.

Again, some people with hypertension who are currently being treated are taking the wrong drugs or the wrong dosages of the right ones.

With so many drugs available, doctors should take into account many factors while prescribing the drugs. They should consider the underlying causes of each patient's high blood pressure and the side effects that may prompt patients to abandon therapy.

When treatment is tailored to the individual, nearly all cases of high blood pressure can be brought and

kept under control with available drugs and at a reasonable cost.

Experts said that no new drugs need to be developed for most people. We just need to use them better.

### Tips for measuring blood pressure:

- Sit quietly for a few minutes, without talking, after putting on the cuff and before checking your pressure.

- Check your pressure in one arm only, and take three readings (not more) one or two minutes apart.

- Check your pressure at random, ordinary times of the day, not just when you think it is high.

## HealthPrior21 — a portal for health movement



A health portal from Bangladesh named HealthPrior21 offers numerous services to improve health and access healthcare services in an easier ways.

Since the inception, it has been working to create awareness on the usefulness and development of ICT for health.

They have already included different health services for people with the use of ICT that can be accessed through the website [www.healthprior21.com](http://www.healthprior21.com)



Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital (JBFH) and AMDA Bangladesh have jointly organized a free health care campaign for the marginalised people in Hossaindi Union, Gazaria Upazila, Munshiganj District recently. JBFH has been rendering door step free health care services to the marginalised people in the remote areas since last 8 years.

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## Knowing for better living

Over **50%** of kidney failure can be prevented!

- Drink plenty of water
- Control your blood pressure
- Check your diabetes regularly
- Maintain healthy weight
- Eat low-fat diet
- Avoid smoking & alcohol
- Consult your Doctor



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