

# Controlling infections in hospitals

PROF DR M KARIM KHAN

Hospital is a place for eliminating infections. It can also be a place for contacting infections. Any infection that is being acquired in a hospital is known as Hospital Acquired Infection (HAI) or Nosocomial infections. It is a serious cause for concern in a developing country like Bangladesh.

HAI is the cause of extended hospital stay and increased use of antibiotics at a cost of millions of extra bucks. However, we can reduce HAI by implementing policies, surveillance programmes and procedures that aid in breaking the chain of infections.

Infection may spread from direct contact — patient to patient, hospital stuff to patients, especially transferred through hands. It also may occur through different invasive procedure and from bedding, clothing, toys, handkerchiefs, food, water etc. Another method of transmission is through droplet spread through



PHOTO: AP

sneezing, coughing, singing etc.

Most of the public hospitals in countries like Bangladesh are over-flooded with patients — patients on bed, on floor and too many attendants roaming in the hospital wards. Thus, it is very difficult and challenging to maintain the atmosphere what

a standard hospital should have.

In spite of these practical problems, we can take some simple and sustainable measures to minimise contacting infections at hospitals. Following measures may help reduce HAI.

1. Ensuring proper hand washing: It is the single most

important step in the fight against infection prevention.

2. Control of attendants: Limiting the number of attendant and strictly maintain hospital visiting time.

3. Maintenance of personal hygiene by healthcare professionals.

4. Rational use of antibiotics.
5. Reducing hospital stay.
6. Cleaning the hospital round the clock.
7. Use of personal protective equipments, such as mask, gloves, gowns etc.
8. Proper sterilisation of equipment.
9. Ensuring available and recommended vaccine for all.
10. Continuous surveillance.
11. Continuous education on infection control for doctors, nurses, cleaners, technologists and other support staffs.

Educating healthcare personnel as well as enforcing strict guidelines to decontamination and sterilisation are mandatory solution to a problem that will otherwise continue to get worse over time. We all should try to minimise hospital infections for the betterment of the patients as well as care-givers.

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## HEALTH *bulletin*



### Dish size, meal frequency may affect kids' weight

Shrinking the size of kids' plates and bowls and encouraging them to eat more frequently throughout the day might help them eat less and keep off extra weight, new research published in Paediatrics suggests.

### Vitamin D may help prevent uterine fibroids

Women with adequate levels of vitamin D are less likely to develop uterine fibroids than those with insufficient levels, according to the researchers at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), USA.

Uterine fibroids are noncancerous tumours of the uterus that often cause pain and bleeding in premenopausal women and are the leading cause of hysterectomy (removal of uterus or womb).

### Lullabies and other music may help sick preemies

Singing or playing womb-like sounds in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) may help slow the heart rate and improve sleep and eating patterns of premature babies, a new study published in journal Paediatrics suggests.

## Facts about Pilonidal Sinus

A pilonidal sinus is a narrow pocket under skin which commonly contains hairs and may discharge pus on to the overlying skin. It occurs between the buttocks (the natal cleft), a short distance above the anus.

### Who gets Pilonidal Sinus?

This condition is rare in children and in people over the age of 40. It is four times more common in men. Certain factors increase the risk of developing the condition and include sedentary occupation (sitting a lot, such as driver), obesity, a previous persistent irritation or injury to the affected area, having a hairy, deep natal cleft or a family history of the condition.

### What are the symptoms?

A Pilonidal Sinus may not cause any symptoms at first. Some people notice a painless lump at first in the affected area when washing. You may develop acute symptoms like increasing pain and swelling over a number of days as an infected abscess (ball of pus and surrounding skin infection) develops in and around the sinus. You also may notice drainage of pus or blood from the opening in the skin.

### What is the treatment?

If you have no symptoms then you will normally be advised to clear the affected area of hairs (e.g. by shaving) and to keep the area clean with good personal hygiene.

If you have acute symptoms then you may be given some antibiotics. Painkillers may be very helpful to improve the pain.

If you have chronic (persistent) symptoms, in most cases, an operation will be advised. Some surgeons

recommend that even when the wound is healed after operation, people should keep the area free of hair growing by shaving every few weeks, or by other methods to remove the hair. This reduces the chance or a recurrence of the problem.

The write up is compiled by Prof Dr Anisur Rahman, a Senior Consultant and Coordinator of General and Laparoscopic Surgery Department, Apollo Hospitals Dhaka. E-mail: anisur.rahman@apollodhaka.com



**MYTH** Heart attacks always hurt

### FACT

Heart attack **NOT ALWAYS** clearly hurt! If your heart attack hurts, consider yourself lucky.

Pain is often just the body's internal fire alarm, letting you know that you need to get something checked out before things get out of control. The scariest heart attacks are the ones that do not hurt at all. Sometimes it manifests as a sense of doom for no apparent reason especially happens in people with diabetes who feel minimum pain due to damage of nerve that carries sensation.

## CHRONIC DISEASE

### 4 key changes for prevention of heart disease, cancer and diabetes

You can prevent and reverse heart disease, cancer and diabetes, as well as many other chronic illnesses that have been linked to lifestyle such as osteoporosis, dementia, macular degeneration, rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis by some changes in life.

Experts recommended the following four lifestyle habits people should follow to reap the benefits:

1. **Eat a low-fat vegetarian (better yet, vegan) diet:** Animal products cause inflammation of the body's tissues and over time, render them dysfunctional and damaging to surrounding tissues.
2. **Exercise regularly:** On an average 30 minutes a day of moderate exercise on most days or 20-60 minutes of vigorous exercise 3 days a week.
3. **Quit smoking:** Smoking of any kind is linked to disease and to mortality.
4. **Practice stress management:** Learn what can be done to prevent stress taking a toll on your life.

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## HEALTH TIPS

### Choose low-Sodium foods

Cutting back on Sodium can help lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of stroke and heart attack. The American Diabetes Association lists these suggestions to choose healthier versions of typically high-Sodium convenience foods:

- Look for frozen meal options that contain 600 milligrams (mg) of Sodium or less per serving.
- Cut back on cheese in recipes.
- If you buy canned vegetables or beans, choose versions with low sodium or no sodium added; rinse them before eating.
- Stick to fresh, lean meats and other protein choices, and restrict cured, processed meats in your diet.
- Check labels on condiments, as they often are high in sodium.
- Make homemade soups and broths or buy low-sodium versions; avoid pickled foods.



  /StarHealthBD

## 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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