

# Managing common ear problems

Ears are our organs of hearing. They are also part of the mechanism that controls our balance. An ear can be divided into three sections — outer ear, middle ear and inner ear.

- There are two main kinds of deafness:
- Conductive deafness, where sound cannot pass through the outer or middle ear.
  - Sensorineural deafness, where the cause of the deafness is in the cochlea or in the hearing nerve.

## Ear conditions and what to do about them

**In the outer ear:** Blockages in the external ear canal may affect hearing. They are usually caused by wax. The wax is made by the ear to clean itself and normally falls out of the ear on its own, but occasionally you may need to visit doctor to have it removed. Do not attempt to remove wax from ears. Never push cotton buds, fingers or anything else into ears.

Otitis externa is where the skin of the ear canal has become inflamed. This may happen if you have scratched your ear or if you have a skin condition such as eczema. The result can be pain and a watery discharge. There is usually little or no hearing

loss. Do not scratch your ear. See your doctor to get ear drops and keep your ear dry.

**In the middle ear:** Glue ear (Otitis media with effusion) is most common in children. If glue ear persists, an operation called a myringotomy may be advised.

Otosclerosis affects more women than men, often starts around the age of 30, and can run in families. It is caused by a bony overgrowth of the stapes. People with otosclerosis gradually become more deaf. Hearing aids are very useful to someone with this condition. Most people can have an operation — a stapedectomy or stapedotomy — where the stapes is replaced by a tiny piston so that sound can travel to the inner ear. The operation has a high success rate.

Damaged ossicles — the tiny bones in the middle ear — can be repaired or replaced during operations called ossiculoplasties.

Perforated eardrums can be treated by an operation called a myringoplasty, where a tissue graft is used to seal up the hole.

**In the inner ear:** Sensorineural deafness is most often the result of damage to tiny hair cells in your cochlea. This hair cells

cannot be replaced.

Sensorinural deafness from birth may also be genetic although this is rare. People with sensorineural deafness usually find hearing aids very helpful. A cochlear implant may be an option for people who have become completely deaf through sensorineural deafness.

Presbycusis is the natural hearing loss may people experience in old age. Everyone loses hair cells in the cochlea throughout their life and gradually there hearing becomes less acute. You probably find you can hear speech but cannot understand it. This is often because only the high frequency sounds are affected. Other people seem to 'mumble'. Hearing aids will be helpful if they are properly fitted; good advice and support, if possible from a hearing therapist, are even more important.

**Balance problems:** Vertigo (dizziness) and balance problems may be caused by damage to semicircular canals or by a problem with the balance centres at the base of the brain. This damage could be the result of an virus or poor blood supply. In some cases, it is difficult to be sure of the cause.



Usually, your balance will recover on its own, given time. However, you may need to take drugs for the first few days. A physiotherapist can teach you balance exercises that are helpful. You should see a doctor if you have vertigo or balance problems.

**Tinnitus:** noises in your ears or head- is a condition that about one in seven people experience at some point. The noises may be quiet or loud, and can be hissing, rushing or other sounds.

You may get tinnitus when you develop a hearing loss, as a result of listening to loud sounds, or for no clear reason at all. Various therapies for tinnitus are available; one of the newest is Tinnitus Retraining Therapy.

**Noise-induced hearing loss:** When we are exposed to harmful noise, sensitive structures in our inner ear can be damaged, causing noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL). Once damaged, our hair cells cannot grow back.

**The Write up is compiled by Prof Kamrul Hassan Tarafder, Dpt of Otolaryngology, Head & Neck Surgery, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).**

## QUIT SMOKING

### Breaking up affair with smoking

DR MOHAMMAD AZIZUR RAHMAN

The smokers are not just addicted to nicotine, they are in love with the act of lighting up due to its learned behaviour. Recent studies indicate that smokers will die 7-9 years earlier than that of non smoker. In a more recently concluded study, it was determined that male smokers can expect to die about 18 years earlier than if they did not smoke, or if they had stopped smoking at an early age.

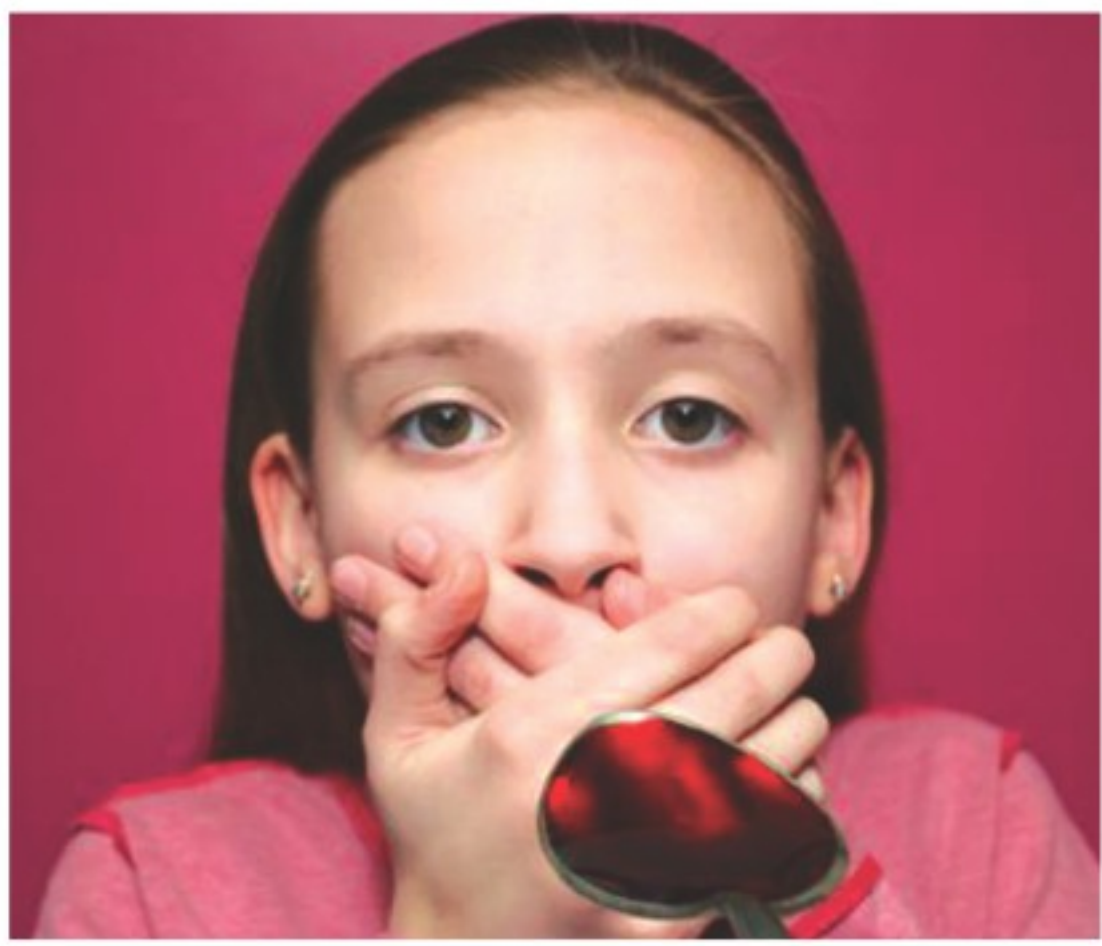
Studies have concluded that about 90% of all lung cancers are seen in smokers. Smokers have a 3-5 times more likelihood of developing heart attack than do non-smokers.

Indirect effect of smoking or passive smoking also does harm to innocents. These innocent members of family of a smokers suffer the adverse effect and experience increased frequency of pneumonia, bronchitis, and other respiratory tract symptoms when compared to people who live in a smoke-free environment. Evidence is also mounting now to show that these passive smokers are also at an increased risk to develop lung cancer.

All forms of tobacco use are detrimental to our physical, mental and spiritual health. It also affects our families, society and innocent bystanders. However, all of the ill effects can be avoided by our strong will to abstention quit smoking. Even for those who already have disease, there are benefits of quitting. For all good reasons, break up your affair with smoking.

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## HEALTH bulletin



### Kids' coughs, colds may last weeks but don't need drugs

Children's coughs and colds can last up to two or three weeks and earaches may take a week to get better, according to a new review of past studies published in British Medical Journal (BMJ).

Researchers said they hope the findings help reassure both doctors and parents that respiratory symptoms can last longer than previously appreciated but typically do not require treatment.

### Balance training seems to prevent falls by elderly

Exercise programmes meant to prevent falls in seniors may also help prevent injuries caused by falls, according to a new review published in the British Medical Journal.

Fall-related injuries are common among seniors and a major cause of long-term pain and disability. They also increase the risk of having to go to a nursing home and have a high economic cost.

## Melioidosis, a rare infection raises concern

PROF M KARIM KHAN

Melioidosis is a bacterial disease that affects humans and many species of animals. Although extremely rare in Bangladesh, it has been found recently in the soil of Kapasia, Gazipur, Kishoreganj and in some parts of Mymensingh District.

Surprisingly, researchers have found that 10% of the population of greater Mymensingh are carrying the organism in their body in dormant stage. The bacterium may become active while the immunity of the person decreases in situation like diabetes, cancer, AIDS etc.

People can get it through direct contact with contaminated soil and surface waters. Humans and animals

are believed to acquire the infection by inhalation of contaminated dust or water droplets, ingestion of contaminated water, and contact with contaminated soil, especially through skin abrasions. It is very rare for people to get the disease from another person. Contaminated soil and surface water remain the primary way in which people become infected.

Disease can range from mild to severe illness. Symptoms include headache, unwillingness to eat and body aches, fever, cough (sometimes with blood) and ulceration of the nasal passages. Long term infections can occur resulting in abscesses and draining lesions in the skin or internal organs (e.g., lungs, heart, joints). If

untreated, Melioidosis can be fatal.

Melioidosis is a public health problem in some part of Thailand, Northern Australia and Vietnam. Cases are also found in India, Hong Kong, South America and Africa.

A bacterium named *Burkholderia pseudomallei* is responsible which is found in soil and surface water of those areas. A history of contact with soil or surface water is therefore almost invariable in patients with Melioidosis.

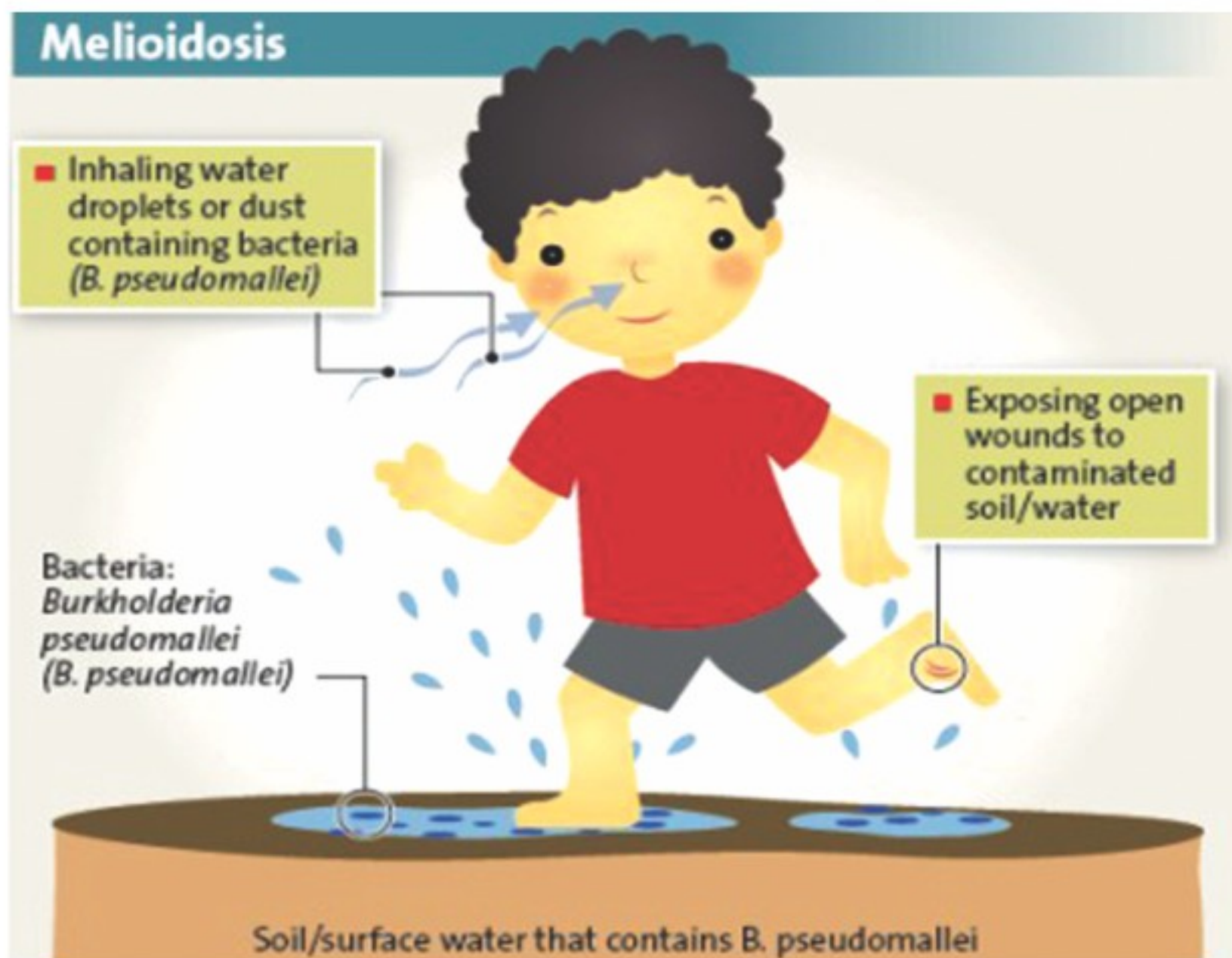
Affected person should be admitted in hospital for treatment with intravenous antibiotic. Doctor might prescribe antibiotic for long time to eradicate the disease.

In areas where the disease is widespread, contact with contaminated soil or water can put people at risk for Melioidosis.

However, in these areas, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends people can do the following things to help minimise the risk of exposure:

- Persons with open skin wounds and those with diabetes or chronic renal disease are at increased risk for Melioidosis and should avoid contact with soil and standing water.
- Those who perform agricultural work should wear boots, which can prevent infection through the feet and lower legs.
- Healthcare workers can use standard contact precautions (mask, gloves, and gown) to help prevent infection.

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## Health Tips

### If you have neck pain

Neck pain can indicate a minor injury or falling asleep in an awkward position. In other cases, it may indicate something more serious. The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons says you should visit a doctor if your neck pain:

- persists despite no known injury
- is severe
- is accompanied by pain radiating to the arms or legs
- is accompanied by numbness, a tingling sensation, weakness or headache

**/StarHealthBD**

## Knowing for better living

### In Bangladesh

### Anemia affects

46% of pregnant women

&

33% of non-pregnant women

Take plenty of Iron and Vitamin rich foods like fish, meat, fruits and green leafy vegetables.

Take care of pregnant women to ensure Iron and Vitamin rich diet everyday.

Consult your Doctor.



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