

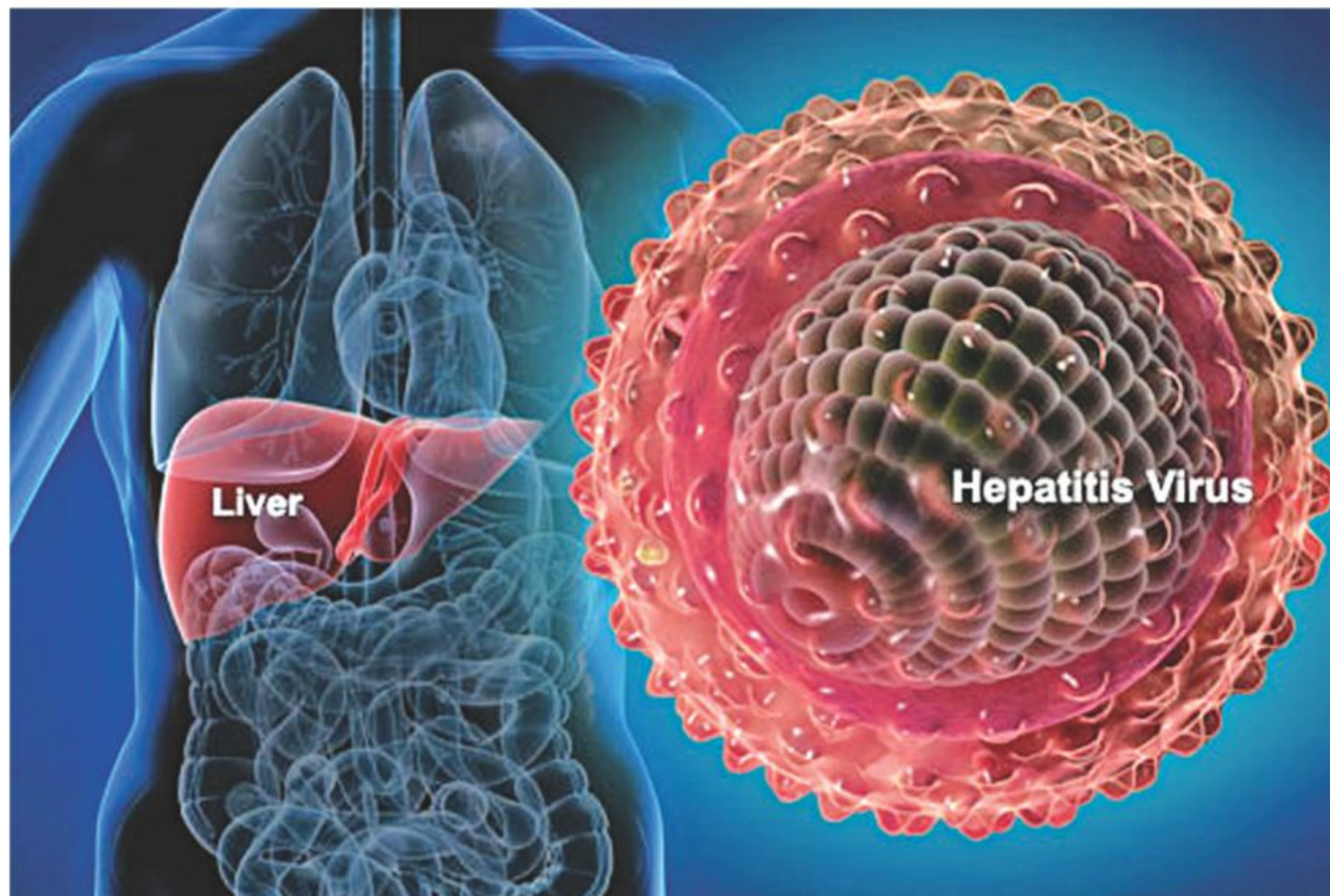
# Rethink about Hepatitis

STAR HEALTH DESK

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver, most commonly caused by a viral infection. It affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide, causing acute and chronic liver disease and killing close to 1.4 million people every year. But hepatitis remains largely ignored or unknown. The disease is often stigmatised or misunderstood. We need to think again to change the perception.

There are five main hepatitis viruses, referred to as types A, B, C, D and E causing hepatitis. These five types are of greatest concern because of the burden of illness and death they cause and the potential for outbreaks and epidemic spread. These viruses all cause acute hepatitis which is characterised by fatigue, loss of appetite, fever and jaundice. Most persons fully recover, but a small proportion of persons can die from acute hepatitis. In addition, hepatitis B and C infections can become chronic leading to cirrhosis and liver cancer in hundreds of millions of people and, together, are the most common cause of liver cirrhosis and cancer.

Hepatitis A and E are typically caused by ingestion of contaminated food or water. Hepatitis B,



C and D usually occur as a result of parenteral contact with infected body fluids. Common modes of transmission for these viruses include receipt of contaminated blood or blood products, invasive medical procedures using contaminated equipment and for hepatitis B transmission from mother to

baby at birth, from family member to child, and also by sexual contact.

Acute infection may occur with limited or no symptoms, or may include symptoms such as jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes), dark urine, extreme fatigue, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain.

Viral hepatitis places a heavy burden on the health care system because of the costs of treatment of liver failure and chronic liver disease. Although the burden of disease is very high, the problem has not been addressed in a serious way for many reasons, including the relatively recent discovery of the causative viruses,

the mostly silent or benign nature of the disease in its early stages and the insidious way in which it causes chronic liver disease. Decades-long delay between infection and the expression of chronic liver disease or liver cancer made it difficult to link these diseases to earlier HBV or HCV infections. All these factors have resulted in "the silent epidemic" we are experiencing today.

Affordable measures, such as vaccination, safe blood supply, safe injections, and safe food, can reduce the transmission of viral hepatitis infections. Most of these measures not only reduce the transmission of viral hepatitis but also have spill over effects on the prevention of other infectious diseases.

Further, current therapies for hepatitis B and C give health care providers effective tools to combat the disease. For the first time in history, hepatitis C is curable. New therapies are also being developed for hepatitis B and C and the future is more promising than ever. Apart from interventions, awareness is the key to fight this silent epidemic. We all should work hand in hand to end this epidemic.

Source: World Health Organisation

## VITAMIN

### Vitamin D: could be a key to a longer life

Star Health Report

Higher levels of vitamin D may protect people from an earlier death, particularly from cancer and heart disease, suggests a new analysis of existing research published in BMJ recently.

Researchers said that people with low vitamin D die more frequently from heart disease and cancer, but it is not known if the low vitamin D is a cause of these diseases or just a byproduct of generally poor health.

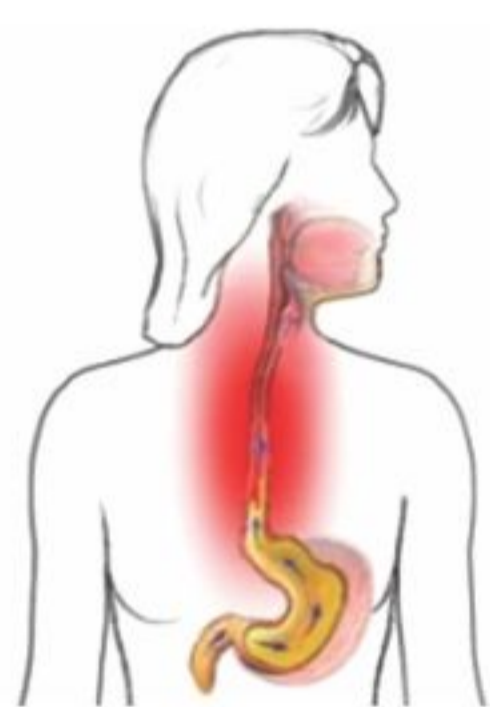
Vitamin D is nicknamed the sunshine vitamin because the body produces vitamin D when exposed to sunlight. People also get vitamin D through foods like eggs, milk, yogurt, tuna, salmon, cereal and orange juice. Those with the lowest levels of vitamin D were about 1.5 times more likely than those with the highest levels to die from any cause and from heart disease during the periods of the studies. Those with low levels of vitamin D and a history of cancer were 1.7 times more likely to die of the disease. People who had not previously had cancer saw no change in the risk of cancer death by vitamin D levels.

The researchers pointed out that vitamin D may not change levels of risk for health problems and earlier deaths. It is possible that levels of vitamin D reflect overall health. Low levels of vitamin D may just be a sign of poor health rather than a cause of it, according to the study.



## HEALTH bulletin

### Try to avoid sleeping pills



Burning sensation in the chest and throat

### Take heartburn medicine before breakfast for best effect

Many people with heartburn are not taking their acid-reducing medicine at the right time, which makes the drugs less effective and wastes money, according to new research published recently in The American Journal of Gastroenterology.

Researcher said that these acid reducing drugs are activated once in the body and in order to activate the medicine, you must eat. For that reason, people need to take it before breakfast.

### Diets rich in protein may help protect against stroke

Diets rich in protein appear to reduce a person's risk of stroke, particularly if it is a lean animal protein like fish, a new analysis published in the journal Neurology suggests.

Researchers have found that people with the highest amounts of animal protein in their diets were 20% less likely to suffer a stroke, compared with those who ate little to no protein. For every additional 20 grams per day of protein that people ate, their risk of stroke decreased by 26%.

Sleeping tablets are considered a 'last resort' if you have poor sleep (insomnia). They are sometimes prescribed for a short period to get over a particularly bad spell of insomnia. Many people who have little tension, fatigue, depression, insomnia and psychiatric problems without the advice of a specialised doctor, take different types of drugs as sleeping pill.

Between a third and half of all Americans have insomnia and complain of poor sleep. If so, like Americans, you may consider taking sleeping pills. A sleeping pill may be effective at ending your sleep problems short-term. But it is important to make sure you understand everything you need to know about sleeping pills. That includes knowing about the side effects.

Most sleeping pills are sedative hypnotics. That is a specific class of drugs used to induce and maintain sleep. Sedative hypnotics include

benzodiazepines, barbiturates and various hypnotics. Benzodiazepines increase drowsiness and help people sleep. While these drugs may be useful short-term, all benzodiazepines are potentially addictive. Barbiturates, another drug in this sedative-hypnotic class, depress the central nervous system and can cause sedation. Short- or long-acting barbiturates are prescribed as sedatives or sleeping pills. But more commonly these hypnotic drugs are limited to use as anaesthesia.

Newer medication helps reduce the time it takes to fall asleep. These sleep-inducing drugs work quickly to increase drowsiness and sleep. Sleeping pills have side effects like most medications. You will not know, though, whether you will experience side effects with a particular sleeping pill until you try it. Your doctor may be able to alert you to the possibility of side effects if

you have asthma or other health conditions.

Sleeping pills make you breathe more slowly and less deeply. That can be dangerous for people with uncontrolled lung problems such as asthma or COPD. Common side effects of prescription sleeping pills may include: burning or tingling in the hands, changes in appetite, constipation, diarrhoea, difficulty keeping balance, dizziness, drowsiness, dry mouth or throat, gas, headache, heartburn, stomach pain or tenderness, uncontrollable shaking of a part of the body, unusual dreams, weakness etc.

For short-term insomnia, your doctor may prescribe sleeping pills for several weeks. Yet after regular use for a longer period, your sleeping pill may stop working as you build a tolerance to the medication. You may also become psychologically dependent on the medicine. Then the idea of going to sleep without it will make you anxious. Without the sleeping pill, you might find it difficult to sleep. If that happens it could be a sign of a physical or emotional dependence or both. Some studies show that long-term use of sleeping pills actually interferes with sleep.

The best way to avoid developing a physical or emotional dependence on sleeping pills is to follow your doctor's instructions and stop taking the drug when recommended. It is important to be aware of possible sleeping pill side effects so you can stop the drug and call your doctor immediately to avoid a more serious health problem.

The write up is compiled by Muhammad Arifur Rahman, Assistant Professor of Department of Pharmacy, Daffodil International University.



### Saving newborn lives

STAR HEALTH REPORT

In partnership with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Saving Newborn Lives (SNL) programme of Save the Children, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Child Health Research Foundation organised a dissemination workshop to share the findings of three recently completed clinical trials conducted in Asia and African on treatment regimens of young infants aged 0-59 days old with signs of possible serious bacterial infection. The trials specifically studied the use of outpatient-based simple antibiotic regimens among young infants who need, but do not have access to, hospital-based treatment.

Global public health experts estimate that each year around 2.9 million newborns die in the first month of life and infection is one of the major causes of these deaths. Recent BDHS survey 2011 reveals that possible serious infection including pneumonia account for 37% of all newborn deaths in Bangladesh. Most of these deaths could be averted with timely treatment using appropriate antibiotics. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends hospitalisation and injectable antibiotics for at least 7 days to treat potentially serious newborn infections. Antibiotics should be started as soon as illness is detected in order to be effective. Unfortunately hospital treatment may not be accessible for sick newborns in many low-resource settings, especially outside of the major cities. Even when available, hospital-based treatment may not be acceptable or affordable for many families.

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## Knowing for better living

Women are

**4 times**

more likely to have *poor bone health*

Eat calcium rich food regularly

Sunbathe for at least 10-15 minutes daily

Take balanced diet regularly

Exercise regularly

Consult your doctor



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