

Saving preterm babies with simple steroid

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Preterm birth (birth before 37 weeks of pregnancy) is the biggest killer of babies worldwide, causing more than one million deaths per year. In Bangladesh, the complications arising from preterm deliveries contribute 45% of all newborn deaths.

Corticosteroids, an inexpensive drug given before birth have long been considered very effective to significantly lower preterm infants' risk of death, breathing problems, bleeding in the brain, and long-term complications such as cerebral palsy and poor motor skills. Yet, only half of eligible women in low- and middle-income countries like Bangladesh at risk for preterm birth receive the drug that seems to help prevent complications and deaths in premature infants, according to a recently published study in *The Lancet*.

Corticosteroids are a class of drugs which can reduce the risk of newborn deaths by more than 53% in facilities where ventilation support is not available and by roughly 30% even where advanced Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs) are available. These drugs are among the best documented, most effective,



safest, and least expensive interventions to reduce preterm deaths. Antenatal corticosteroids have been included in UN Commission on Life-Saving Commodities for Women and Children as an essential medicine that should be available everywhere. When this drug is administered to the woman, it accelerates lung maturation of

the growing baby while it is still in the womb. If the baby has more mature lungs at birth s/he is less likely to suffer from breathing problems, and thus more likely to survive. These have also been shown to have a protective effect on the cerebral blood vessels, and intestine, thus reducing the risk of bleeding into brain as well as reducing the

chance of fatal infection to gut. Fluid leaking from the vagina, painful contractions, vaginal bleeding or signs of pre-eclampsia like swelling of leg and high blood pressure and convulsion are the symptoms that signal labour.

If these occur well ahead her expected delivery date within 24 weeks to 37 weeks, the pregnant

woman should be considered an ideal candidate for corticosteroid and should consult a healthcare professionals in nearby facility. Even if there is not sufficient time before delivery for a full course of dexamethasone, experts recommend giving at-least first dosage immediately and then give as many additional doses (until four) as time allows. Even less than a full course of the medication will benefit the baby.

Preterm delivery occurs in 14% pregnancies in Bangladesh and is associated with a number of medical complications that may need advance medical care and require re-hospitalisation. It impinges a huge economic burden for the family, society and as a whole the country. Estimates show that more than three-quarters of premature babies could be saved with cost-effective interventions like steroid. And this is particularly important in Bangladesh, where resources are scarce and it is difficult to provide expensive neonatal care.

It is quiet unfortunate that a significant number of premature infants are dying and being disabled despite the simple solution in our hands. A little awareness could save these infants from early grave.

NEW GUIDELINE



Treating IBS

An estimated 5-15% of the world's population has Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), a condition that can cause symptoms such as abdominal pain, diarrhoea or constipation, cramping and bloating, and gas. It can affect people at any age but is especially common when people are in their 20s and 30s.

The condition can be difficult to diagnose because other conditions share the same symptoms. Unlike other conditions, however, there is no specific diagnostic test for IBS. Physicians must rely purely on symptoms to make the diagnosis.

Newly released guidelines for the treatment of IBS and a type of constipation known as chronic idiopathic constipation reveal a number of proven treatments for these two common conditions. The new guidelines, released recently by the American College of Gastroenterology, say there is evidence to support the following treatments for irritable bowel syndrome:

- Fiber
- Probiotics
- An antibiotic called rifaximin.
- Medications known as linaclotide and lubiprostone

The irritable bowel syndrome guidelines also say that research has boosted the case for using antidepressant medications and psychological therapy.

The guidelines for chronic idiopathic constipation strongly recommend the use of fiber supplements plus laxatives such as polyethylene glycol, lactulose, sodium picosulfate and bisacodyl. Chronic idiopathic constipation is long-term constipation that does not have a known cause.

HEALTH bulletin



Coffee may keep your ears from ringing

Being a coffee lover may be good for your ears, according to the study in the recent issue of the *American Journal of Medicine*.

Researchers found that women who consumed higher amounts of caffeine were less likely to have tinnitus, which is a steady ringing or buzzing in the ear. Women who consumed less than 150 mg a day of caffeine (found in about one-and-a-half 8-ounce cups of coffee) were 15% more likely to develop tinnitus than those who consumed 450-599 mg a day of caffeine, the investigators found.

Older adults sharpest in the morning

Older adults' minds may be sharpest in the morning, according to the study recently published in the journal *Psychology and Aging*. The findings offer strong evidence that older adults' brain function can vary widely during the day.

Teen depression: The way out

STAR HEALTH DESK

Teens are emotionally fragile. Thus, depression and related illnesses threaten to wreck the lives of many teens and their families. Suicide driven by these illnesses is one of the top killers of young people. A recent survey reported that many teens experience feelings of depression and sadness that often go untreated — and that 9 out of 10 adolescents have periods of depression that last at least two weeks. However, for most teens, depression symptoms ease with treatment such as medication and psychological counselling.

Depression has no definite symptoms and people experience it differently. There are, however, some common problems and symptoms that teens with depression experience.

- Constantly feel irritable, sad, or angry.
- Nothing seems fun anymore, and teen just does not see the point of trying.
- Feeling bad about themselves — worthless, guilty, or just "wrong" in some way.
- Sleep too much or not enough.
- Have frequent, unexplained headaches or other physical problems.
- Anything and everything makes you cry.
- Gaining or losing weight without consciously trying to.
- Inability to concentrate and grades may be plummeting because of it.
- Feeling helpless and hopeless.
- Suicidal thoughts or thinking



about death too much. (If so, talk to a psychiatrist right away)

Depression can come to any teen and is not due to your fault. Here are some ways to cope with depression.

When you are depressed, you may not feel like seeing anybody or doing anything. Just getting out of bed in the morning can be difficult, but isolating yourself only makes depression worse. Make it a point to stay social, even if that is the last thing you want to do. As you get out into the world, you may find yourself feeling better.

Things like diet and exercise have been shown to help depression. Exercising releases a rush of endorphins, which makes you feel instantly happier. You actually get a rush of endorphins from exercising, which makes you feel instantly happier. Physical activity can be as effective as medications or therapy for depression, so get involved in sports,

ride your bike, or take a dance class.

You may be tempted to excessive smoking, drink or use drugs in an effort to escape from your feelings and get a mood boost, even if just for a short time. However, substance use can not only make depression worse, but can cause you to become depressed in the first place.

Stress and worry can take a big toll, even leading to depression. Talk to close people to share your feelings. Likewise, if you have a health concern you feel you cannot talk to your parents about — such as a pregnancy scare or drug problem — seek medical attention at a clinic or see a doctor. A health professional can help you approach your parents and guide you toward appropriate treatment. If you are dealing with relationship, friendship, or family problems, talk to an adult you trust.

Source: www.helpguide.org

Health Tips

Eating at your 60

Eating the right foods can help you maintain health, energy and help you feel your best. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics offers these tips for men in their 60s:

- Eat plenty of fiber- and antioxidant-rich foods.
- Eggs and leafy green vegetables can help reduce the risk of age-related macular degeneration.
- Eat plenty of proteins to help replace lost muscle, focusing on foods that are lower in fats and good sources of oils. Sea fish, beans and peas are good choices.



/StarHealthBD

Knowing for better living

Exercise regularly

Maintain a healthy diet

Control your body weight

Avoid smoking

Control your diabetes

Consult your Doctor

If you control blood glucose, you can reduce the risk of a **cardiovascular disease event by 42%**



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