

Kangaroo Mother Care

Natural incubator improving newborn survival

PROF M A K AZAD CHOWDHURY

Bangladesh has made a commendable success in reducing the mortality rate of under-5 children. But neonatal mortality which indicates the death of a newborn within 28 days of birth is still a big concern and accounts for more than half of all under-5 deaths in Bangladesh. Pre-mature births, infections and birth complications such as initiation of breathing at birth, injury are three principal causes of these deaths. There is evidence that certain cost-effective interventions could reduce these deaths even without the availability of costly neonatal intensive care. Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) is such a simple and cost-effective solution that can save premature and low birth weight babies from death and long term complications of prematurity.

Kangaroo Mother Care is a simple intervention in which mothers serve as human incubators for their newborns. The infant is held skin-to-skin on the mother's chest and placed between the mother's breasts in an upright position, the head is



turned to the side in a slightly extended position with legs and arms flexed and wrapped securely with a binder.

Researches have shown that maternal infant skin-to-skin contact is an effective and inexpensive way for keeping babies warm and synchronizes with mother's temperature. It

helps initiating breastfeeding early and ensures exclusive breastfeeding. It provides better breathing and heart rate and better growth. KMC keeps bonding between mother and her baby with closer eye contact and reduces the stress of the infant and sleep problems. It also reduces energy expenditure of the

baby and thus helps gain weight. It reduces infections of the newborn even better than incubator. KMC aids generating more mature and organised electrical brain activity leading to better development of nervous system.

The practice of KMC is crucial for a resource poor country like

Bangladesh where improved neonatal care facilities is limited to big hospitals. Also the high cost of managing preterm complications specially with incubator impinges a huge financial burden to the family. In those areas where no incubators are available for caring the preterm or low birth weight babies, KMC can be life-saving. KMC has the greatest impact during the first week of a preterm baby's life, when deaths are most likely to occur. Apart from mother, father and grandmother can also help keeping baby warm with Kangaroo Care in the absence of mother.

Although KMC has potentials to save many premature babies, it is not implemented widely in Bangladesh. Only a few centers have been providing the service at a small scale. There is a dire need to scale up the intervention throughout the country specially in rural parts of Bangladesh where it can demonstrate its greatest benefits.

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FISH FACTS

A friendly food for healthy life

Fish has long been considered as healthy food. Fish and other seafood are the major sources of healthful long-chain omega-3 fats and are also rich in other nutrients such as vitamin D and selenium, high in protein, and low in saturated fat. Omega-3 fatty acids are polyunsaturated fatty acids that may protect against heart attacks and stroke, help control blood clotting and build cell membranes in the brain. They are also important to an infant's visual and neurological development.

Omega-3s may also help ameliorate a variety of conditions, such as cancer, depression, inflammatory bowel disease and autoimmune disorders like lupus and rheumatoid arthritis.

Nearly three decades ago, Dutch researchers published a groundbreaking study in The New England Journal of Medicine. Intrigued by the extremely low death rate from coronary heart disease among Greenland Eskimos, the Dutch team found that those who ate as little as one or two fish meals a week had a 50 percent lower death rate from heart attacks than those who did not eat fish.

Other studies linked fish consumption to a reduced risk of strokes, although later research concluded that the lifesaving benefit was limited to people at high risk of cardiovascular disease. The strong and consistent evidence for benefits is such that the American Heart Association, and others suggest that everyone eat fish twice a week.

Recent study appears in The American Journal of Preventive Medicine reveals that eating fish is associated with an increase in brain volume. The researchers found that weekly consumption of baked or broiled fish, but not fried fish, was associated with larger gray matter volumes in areas of the brain responsible for memory and cognition, including areas where amyloid plaques, a sign of Alzheimer's disease, first appear. The association persisted after controlling for age, sex, race, education, physical activity, body mass index and any tissue damage found on the initial magnetic resonance imaging scan of the brain.

There is a common saying that fish and rice make a Bengali. Now a days, many factors inhibit consumption of our favorite food- fish. Thus, we need to address those factors and make sure people get it in order to stay hale and hearty.

Source: The New York Times

HEALTH bulletin



Exercise may guard against irregular heartbeat in older women

Regular exercise may help older women avoid a condition that causes a life-threatening irregular heartbeat, a new study published in the Journal of the American Heart Association shows.

Physically active postmenopausal women had a 10 percent lower risk of developing atrial fibrillation, compared to women who were more sedentary.

For kids, risks of parental smoking persist long-term

Smoking while pregnant or around an infant has long been linked to development of asthma and allergies in young children. Now, researchers have found that the risk may persist into the teen years.

Researchers said in the study published in the journal Pediatrics that exposure to second-hand smoke during pregnancy or infancy increases a child's risk of developing allergic disease even up to adolescence. Fetal exposure to cigarette smoking was linked with an overall 45 percent higher risk of getting asthma up until age 16.

Nutrition is everybody's business

MEHEREEN AZIZ

While it is a common understanding that better nutrition leads to better health, improving the nutritional status of a country can have multiple positive effects, one of them being economic growth. Investment in nutrition is of utmost importance due to the long-term economic implications of an undernourished population.

A strong evidence base shows that investing in infant and young child nutrition can increase a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2-3%, prevent more than 1/3 of child deaths per year and increase school attainment by at least one year.

A key indicator of low nutritional status is the prevalence of stunting, i.e. low height for age, in children under age 5. South Asia alone accounts for almost half of the world's population of stunted children. In Bangladesh, 41% of children under 5 are stunted.

The burden of malnutrition can be erased by focusing on a critical time range. A number of proven and profitable interventions exist to address malnutrition in the first 1,000 days of life, from a mother's pregnancy to her child's second birthday, which is known as a "window of opportunity." Research identifies that the right nutrition during the first 1,000 days can produce a lifetime of benefits such as healthy growth, brain development and stronger immune systems. Further, the healthy physical and



PHOTO: UNICEF

mental development of a child leads to her possessing a higher Intelligence Quotient (IQ), better educational performance, the potential to earn up to 46% more over her lifetime, and most importantly, break the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

A well-nourished citizen is a healthy citizen, and a healthier labour force is more productive, in terms of both physical production and human capital production. This occurs due to productivity gains from reduced stunting and good educational performance, which are both attributable to good health in early childhood. There is no doubt that a productive workforce will not only enjoy a higher standard of

living, but will be a key factor in the international competitiveness potential of a country.

Nutrition policy must be viewed as an investment in the future of the country, rather than a form of social spending for equity purposes with no return. Worldwide, better nutrition in the 1,000 days "window of opportunity" can save up to \$20-30 billion in health costs, be it government spending, personal hospital visits or an employer's expenses. The right nutrition is, therefore, a profitable venture for any economy.

Mehereen Aziz works for the Civil Society Alliance for Scaling Up Nutrition, Bangladesh.

Health Tips

Take kids for a nature walk

To help children disconnect from TV, video games and light-up toys, go outside for a nature walk and get some exercise. The Wilderness Society offers these suggestions for what to do:

- Listen to the sounds of nature, from insects to the wind in the trees.
- Bring along a camera to take pictures of interesting wildlife and plants.
- Peek under rocks to see what kinds of insects and other wildlife lurk below.
- Pack a field guide to look up birds, butterflies and more.



/StarHealthBD

Knowing for better living

One World, One Home, One Heart.

Cardiovascular diseases cause 29% of all deaths globally!

Take low fat diet

Be physically active

Ban smoking at your home

Eat vegetables and fresh fruits

Maintain healthy weight

Consult your Doctor



In Search of Excellence

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