

World Hepatitis Day

# Prevent hepatitis: Act now

STAR HEALTH DESK

Viral hepatitis – a group of infectious diseases known as hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E – affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide, causing acute and chronic liver disease and killing close to 1.5 million people every year, mostly from hepatitis B and C. These infections can be prevented, but most people don't know how.

On World Hepatitis Day, 28 July 2015, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and partners urge policy-makers, health workers and the public to act now to prevent infection and death from hepatitis.

The date of 28 July was chosen for World Hepatitis Day in honour of the birthday of Nobel Laureate Professor Baruch Samuel Blumberg, discoverer of the hepatitis B virus and developer of the first hepatitis B vaccine.

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver, most commonly caused by a viral infection. There are five main hepatitis viruses, referred to as types A, B, C, D and E. 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.

In particular, types B and C lead to chronic disease in hundreds of millions of people and, together, are the most common cause of



PHOTO: WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

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

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.

Hepatitis infection can be

prevented by providing safe food and water (hepatitis A and E), vaccines (hepatitis A, B, and E), screening of blood donations and provision of sterile injecting equipment and assuring infection control (hepatitis B and C). However, prevention and awareness efforts are largely insufficient. Chronic hepatitis B and C infections can be treated, but most people, especially those

### Key messages of the World Hepatitis Day 2015

**Prevent hepatitis – know the risks:** Unsafe blood, unsafe injections, and sharing drug-injection equipment can all result in hepatitis infection.

**Prevent hepatitis – demand safe injections:** 2 million people a year contract hepatitis from unsafe injections. Using sterile, single-use syringes can prevent these infections

**Prevent hepatitis – vaccinate children:** Approximately 780,000 persons die each year from hepatitis B infection. A safe and effective vaccine can protect from hepatitis B infection for life.

**Prevent hepatitis – get tested, seek treatment:** Effective medicines exist to treat hepatitis B and cure hepatitis C.

### EMERGENCY



### Risk communication

Risk communication is an integral part of any public health emergency response. In epidemics and pandemics, in humanitarian crises and natural disasters, risk communication allows people at risk to understand and adopt protective behaviours.

It allows authorities and experts to listen to and address people's concerns and needs so the advice they provide is relevant, trusted and acceptable.

Risk communication refers to the exchange of real-time information, advice and opinions between experts and people facing threats to their health, economic or social well-being. The ultimate purpose of risk communication is to enable people at risk to take informed decisions to protect themselves and their loved ones.

Risk communication uses many communications techniques ranging from media and social media communications, mass communications and community engagement. It requires a sound understanding of people's perceptions, concerns and beliefs as well as their knowledge and practices. It also requires the early identification and management of rumours, misinformation and other challenges.

As health emergencies become increasingly complex, as witnessed during the recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa and in the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus, more help is being requested from WHO and partners. We need to get prepared for this kind of emergency response.

Source: World Health Organisation

## HEALTH bulletin

# Head neck cancer in Bangladesh

DR MD ABU HANIF

Bangladesh is advancing fast in the horizon of head, neck and thyroid diseases. Cancer specialties of these regions are becoming much more important as head, neck and thyroid cancer incidences are increasing day by day. Cancers of the head and neck region constitute 5% of all cancers. 95% of them are curable by treatment if detected earlier.

Head and neck region cancers include cancers of the lip, oral cavity, tongue, pharynx, larynx, nose with para-nasal sinuses, salivary glands and the neck.

The risk factors of developing these cancers are consumption of betel quid, betel nut, jarda, gul, bidi, cigarettes, viral infection, poor oral hygiene, exposure to radiation, industrial fumes, alcohol, chemicals etc.

The symptoms are according to the primary site of origin. These are difficulty in taking food, change of voice, respiratory distress, nasal obstruction, bleeding from the nose, swelling in the neck and pain in the different sites of head and neck which starts from above the chest to up to the top of the head.

Thyroid gland is situated in the neck and secretes thyroid hormones which are essential for life. 3% of all cancers occur in the thyroid gland. 95% thyroid cancers have good prognosis after surgery. Thyroid cancers spread quickly in the lymph

nodes, lungs and bones. The major challenge for thyroid surgery is saving the recurrent laryngeal nerve which controls the voice and preservation of parathyroid glands which maintains the blood calcium level.

India has about 30 regional cancer centers where cancer surgeons, radiation and medical oncologists are appointed. Patients get complete treatment from there. They have many good govt. and private cancer hospitals. Bangladesh should adopt the same strategy. More cancer surgeons should be trained. Our cancer treatment is mainly dependent on radiotherapy and chemother-

apy both in govt. and private sectors. Few numbers of head neck cancer surgeons are present in our country. So our patients are not getting proper treatment.

Cancer destroys the tissue, gradually the person and ultimately the whole family. We are fighting against cancer every day and this fight is difficult and relentless. But we must not lose hope. For cancer treatment, multi disciplinary approach is necessary. The main treatment modality is surgery. Radiotherapy is also helpful in some cases.

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PHOTO: BBC

Dr Kevin Smith, from Abertay University in Dundee, says sperm-banking on the NHS should "become the norm".

### Freeze sperm at 18, bioethicist urges men

The sperm of all 18-year-olds should be frozen for use in later life because of the risks attached with being an older father, a UK bioethicist has argued.

Sperm becomes more prone to errors with age, increasing the risk of autism, schizophrenia and other disorders.

Dr Kevin Smith, from Abertay University in Dundee, says sperm-banking on the NHS should "become the norm", reports BBC.

The British Fertility Society said such a move would "provide a very artificial approach to procreation".

It called for a greater focus in the UK on supporting young couples to have work and have children.



### Mushroom used in Chinese medicine slows weight gain

A mushroom used for centuries in Chinese medicine reduces weight gain in animals, say researchers in Taiwan.

The study, published in Nature Communications, suggested *Ganoderma lucidum* slowed weight gain by altering bacteria in the gut.

The researchers suggested the mushroom could eventually be used in the treatment of obesity.

Experts said the science was good, but putting mushroom extract in cans of cola would not help people lose weight.

*G. lucidum* has traditionally been sold for "health and longevity" say researchers at Chang Gung University.

They analysed the impact of the fungus on mice being fed a high-fat diet.



## Knowing for better living

Take Iftar on time

Take normal amounts of food in Iftar

Avoid salty & fried foods in Iftar

Drink sufficient water and juices in Iftar

Avoid taking tea & coffee in Iftar

Consult your doctor

"The people will continue to prosper as long as they hasten the breaking of the fast"

Al-Hadith (Muslim, 2417)



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