

# Surprising things that can damage your liver

DR GOLAM NABI

It is not something you probably think much about, but your liver is a key player in your body's digestive system. You need to treat it right so it can stay healthy and do its job.

Liver has several important things to do. It helps clean your blood by getting rid of harmful chemicals that your body makes. It makes a liquid called bile, which helps you break down fat from food. It also stores sugar called glucose, which gives you a quick energy boost when you need it.

Taking care of your liver is far more about avoiding what is bad. Here are some ways to keep your liver healthy:

**Don't drink a lot of alcohol.** It can damage liver cells and lead to the swelling or scarring that becomes cirrhosis, which can be deadly.

**Eat a healthy diet and get regular exercise.** You will keep your weight under control, which helps prevent non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), a condition that leads to cirrhosis.

**Watch out for certain medicine.** Cholesterol drugs and painkillers like paracetamol can hurt your liver if you take too much. You may be taking more paracetamol than you realise. Some medicine can hurt your liver if you drink alcohol when you take them. And some are harmful when combined with other drugs. Talk to your doctor about your medicine.

**Sugar.** Too much sugar is not just bad for your teeth, it can harm your liver too.



The organ uses one type of sugar, called fructose, to create fat. Too much refined sugar and high-fructose corn syrup cause a fatty buildup that can lead to liver disease. Some studies show that sugar can be as damaging to the liver as alcohol, even if you are not overweight.

**MSG (Monosodium Glutamate).** MSG enhances the flavour of many packaged and prepared foods, from chips to diet drinks. People now a days often go for Thai and Chinese restaurants, where almost every food has added MSG to enhance the taste of food (you might see it on a food label as *hydrolysed vegetable*

*protein, yeast extract or soy extract*). Some studies suggest that the chemical may make the liver fatty and inflamed, which can lead to NAFLD and liver cancer.

**Obesity.** If you are carrying around extra weight, fat can also build up in your liver cells, which can lead to NAFLD. It can make the liver swell. Over time, hardened scar tissue can replace healthy tissue (a condition doctors call cirrhosis). People who are overweight or obese, middle-aged, or have diabetes are at highest risk of NAFLD.

**Too much vitamin A.** Vitamin A helps improve vision, strengthen bones and give a boost to your immune system. But in

very high doses, vitamin A is toxic to the liver. To stay safe, never take more than 10,000 IU a day.

**Soft drinks.** An ingredient besides sugar could play a role in the condition. There is no hard evidence but some researchers think artificial sweeteners might be to blame.

**Antidepressants.** It is rare, but some antidepressants can harm your liver. In some cases, the damage can be deadly. Older people or anyone taking a lot of other meds are at higher risk because their liver may be damaged already. If you are taking antidepressants, talk to your doctor to make sure you are on the smallest dose you need.

**Trans fats.** Trans fats are a man-made fat commonly used in fast food items, in packaged foods and baked goods (you will see them listed in the ingredients as *partially hydrogenated vegetable oil*). A diet high in trans fats not only boosts your chances of gaining weight, it makes severe liver disease with scar tissue more likely. Try to control your children not to have much fast food.

**Drink coffee.** Research shows that it can lower your risk of getting liver disease.

To keep your liver healthy, follow a healthy lifestyle and keep a close eye on medicines. The liver can be a very forgiving organ, but it has its limits. Have a healthy life have a good Liver.

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## CALL FOR ACTION

### Cholera vaccine supply set to double

The global supply of oral cholera vaccines is set to double after World Health Organisation (WHO) approved a third producer, helping to address global shortages and expand access in more countries.

Globally, OCV production is low, with demands currently exceeding supply. Sudan and Haiti last year made requests to WHO for supplies of vaccines to conduct pre-emptive vaccination campaigns that could not be filled because of the global shortage.

The vaccine producer, a South Korean company, is the latest oral cholera vaccine (OCV) manufacturer to be approved under the WHO's pre-qualification programme, which ensures that drugs and vaccines bought by countries and international procurement agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) meet acceptable standards of quality, safety and efficacy.

The addition of an additional pre-qualified vaccine producer is expected to double global supply to 6 million doses for 2016, with the potential for further increased production in the future. This additional capacity will contribute to reversing a vicious cycle of low demand, low production, high price and inequitable distribution, to a virtuous cycle of increased demand, increased production, reduced price and greater equity of access.

Cholera is an acute diarrhoeal disease that can kill within hours if left untreated. There are between 1.4 million and 4.3 million cases a year, and as many as 1,42,000 deaths. Cholera is endemic in more than 50 countries. Climate change and El Niño may also be contributing to more frequent cholera outbreaks.

In 2013 the WHO created the world's first OCV stockpile, undertaking to buy and use 2 million doses a year in order to stabilise and create demand for the vaccines.

## HEALTH bulletin

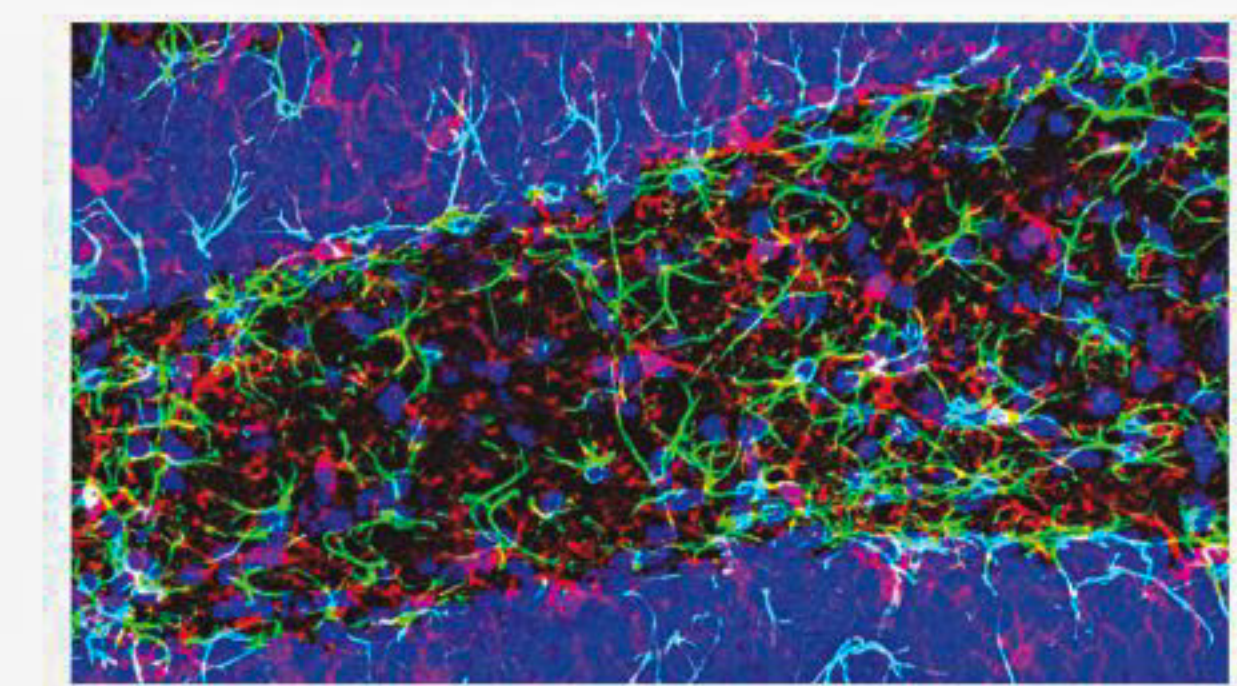


PHOTO: BBC

Immune cells called microglia in the brain were targeted to reduce memory problems.

### Blocking brain inflammation halts Alzheimer's disease

Blocking the production of new immune cells in the brain could reduce memory problems seen in Alzheimer's disease, a study suggests.

University of Southampton researchers said their findings added weight to evidence that inflammation in the brain is what drives the disease. A drug used to block the production of these microglia cells in the brains of mice had a positive effect. Experts said the results were exciting and could lead to new treatments.

Up until now, most drugs used to treat dementia have targeted amyloid plaques in the brain which are a characteristic of people with the Alzheimer's disease. But this latest study, published in the journal *Brain*, suggests that in fact targeting inflammation in the brain, caused by a build-up of immune cells called microglia, could halt progression of the disease.

Researchers found increased numbers of microglia in the post-mortem brains of people with Alzheimer's disease. Previous studies have also suggested that these cells could play an important role.

## Tips to avoid Diabetes complications

DR SHAHJADA SELIM

Diabetes, often referred to by doctors as diabetes mellitus, describes a group of metabolic diseases in which the person has high blood glucose (blood sugar), either because insulin production is inadequate or because the body's cells do not respond properly to insulin, or both.

Diabetes brings many complications to the patients. Below is a list of tips that can be practiced to avoid the complications of diabetes.

**Choose carbs carefully:** Diabetes does not mean you have to cut carbs completely. Choose carbohydrates that break down in the body slowly, providing steady energy. Reach for whole grains, beans, nuts, fresh vegetables and fruits. Yes, you can eat fruit even though it is sweet. It is about eating the right amounts of carbohydrates at each meal. A registered dietician can help you learn how much is right for you.

**Lose weight if you need to:** Start small. If you are overweight, shedding just a few pounds can improve the body's ability to use insulin. It will help lower your blood sugar and improve your blood pressure and blood fats. You will also have more energy. Aim to burn more calories than you eat.

**Get enough sleep:** Getting too much or too little sleep can increase your appetite and cravings for high-carb foods. That can lead to weight gain, increasing your risk for complications such as heart disease. So

shoot for seven or eight hours of sleep a night.

**Be active:** Pick something you like — walking, dancing, biking or just marching in place while you are on the phone. Do it a half-hour a day. Exercise can help you lower your cardiovascular risks, cholesterol and blood pressure levels and keep your weight down. It also relieves stress and may help you cut back on diabetes medication.

**Monitor your blood sugar daily:** Checking your blood glucose levels can help you avoid diabetes complications, like nerve pain or keep them from getting worse. Checking it can also help you see how foods and activities affect you and if your treatment plan is working.

**Manage stress:** When you have

diabetes, stress can cause your blood glucose levels to rise. Get rid of whatever physical or mental stresses you can. Learn coping techniques to deal with others.

Relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises, yoga and meditation may be especially effective if you have type 2 diabetes.

**Say no to salt:** Reduce the salt in your diet. It may help lower blood pressure and protect your kidneys. Not salting the food on your plate may not be enough. Avoid convenience foods and use fresh ingredients when you can. Season with herbs and spices instead of salt when you cook.

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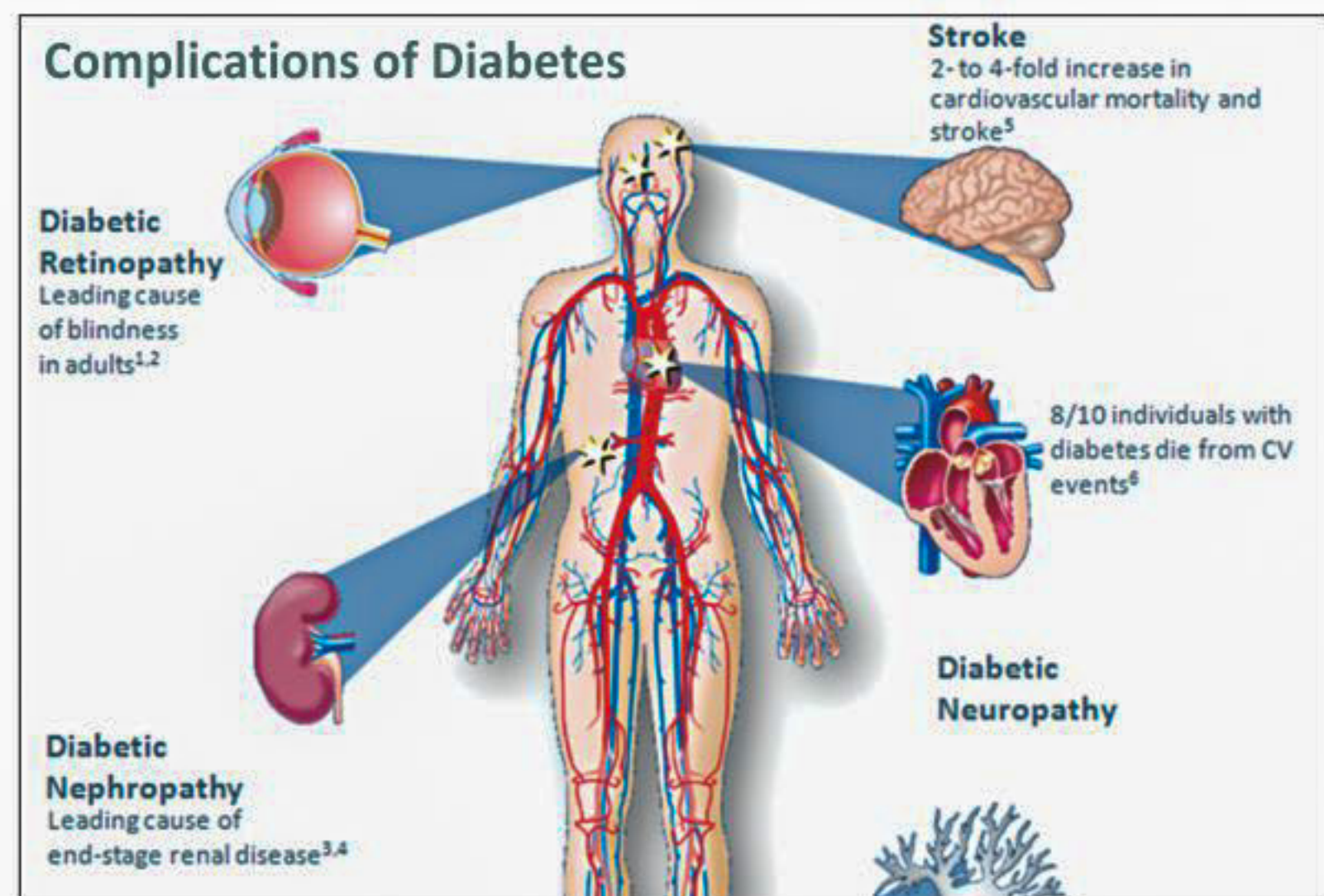


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### A compassionate approach to save life of a construction worker

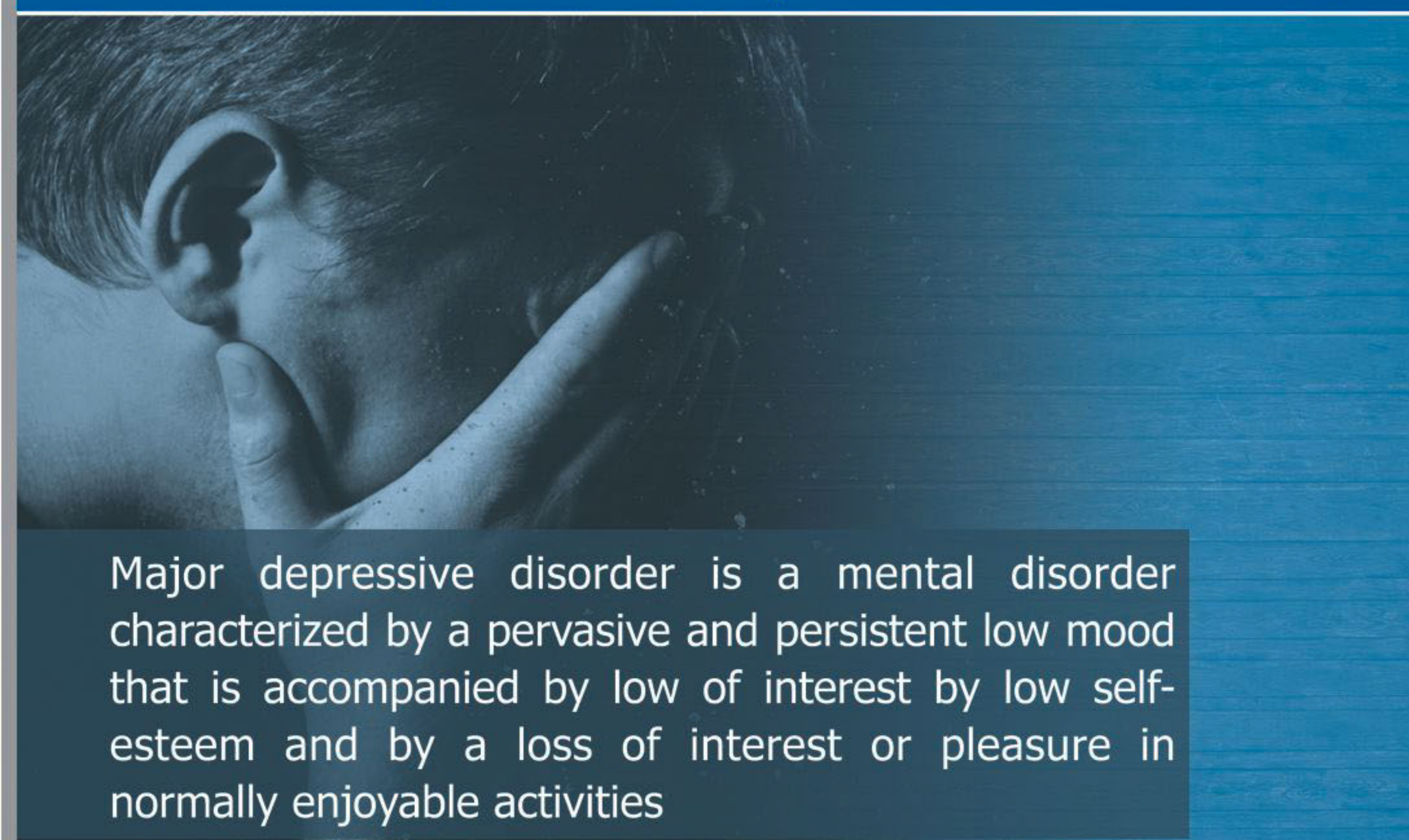
Mr Mizanur Rahman (22) is a young construction labourer. On the evening of January 3, 2016, while Mizanur was working for a building inside Bashundhara Residential Area, he fell from height followed by an electric shock. He was brought to Apollo Hospitals Dhaka by his fellow workers. The poor patient got a deep injury all over his limbs with profuse bleeding. There was superficial burn over his right lower limb and left lower limb also.

After he was reported, the accident and emergency department immediately assessed the patient and the patient was rushed to the operation theater without delay. A specialised trauma team operated him.

The co-worker from the construction site brought Mizanur to the nearest hospital, which was Apollo Hospitals Dhaka; even though they knew that the treatment would not be affordable to them. Recovery of the patient has particularly brought a sense of pride and satisfaction to the entire team of Apollo. When it came to life saving situation, the hospital responded compassionately not looking at the affordability of the patient. Timely intervention by Apollo Hospitals Dhaka saved the life of this young poor patient.



Over a lifetime you have a **20 per cent** or one in five, chance of having an episode of **Depression**



Major depressive disorder is a mental disorder characterized by a pervasive and persistent low mood that is accompanied by low of interest by low self-esteem and by a loss of interest or pleasure in normally enjoyable activities

- Persistent sad, anxious, or empty mood
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or hopelessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed, including sex
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Insomnia, early morning awakening or over-sleeping
- Appetite and/or weight loss, or overeating & weight gain
- Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts
- Restlessness, irritability

