

Do you know Alzheimer's?

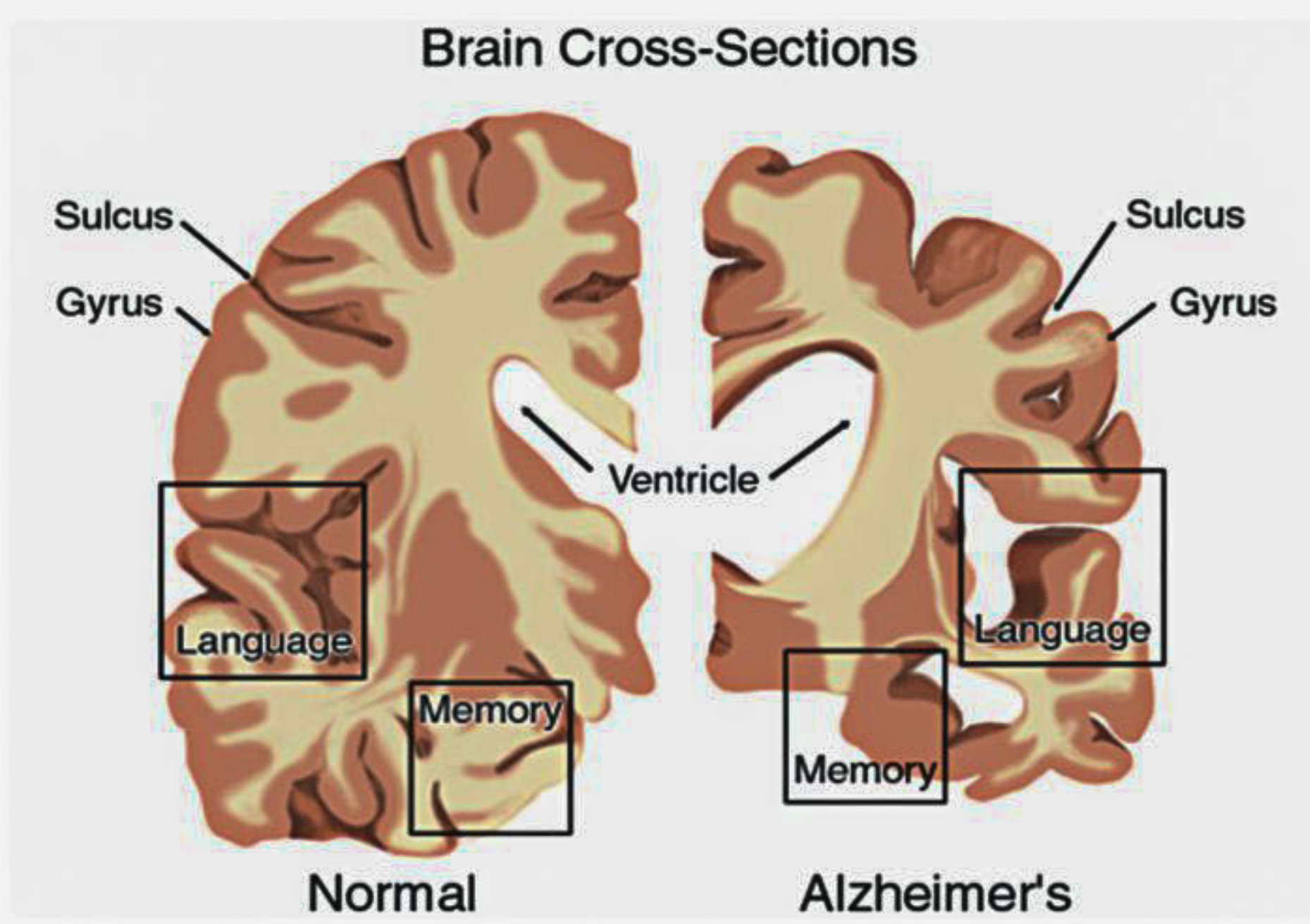
It is normal for people to become a bit forgetful as they age. So how can you differentiate a harmless memory problems from Alzheimer's disease? One in eight people 65 and older (in western country) have this devastating condition form of dementia. In its first stage, Alzheimer's may not be obvious to friends and family. But there are some early warning signs to watch for.

Warning signs

Memory and speech: In early Alzheimer's, long-term memories usually remain intact while short-term memories become sketchy. Affected person may forget conversations you had. S/he may repeat questions that were already answered, s/he cannot recall what s/he has taken at last night meal or to whom s/he has talked this morning. The disease also disrupts speech, so s/he might struggle to remember common words.

Behaviour: In addition to memory loss, Alzheimer's can cause confusion and behaviour changes. One may get lost in familiar places, in the morning s/he use to go to do bazaar but now s/he faces difficulty to find way back to own house. Mood swings and lapses in judgment are also common, sometimes for no reason s/he gets angry or s/he starts smiling for nothing. S/he may have poor hygiene, coming out of toilets s/he forgets washing hands or clothes may be soiled. People who were once stylish may start wearing stained clothes and forget to wash their hair, his/her clothes might be torn or dirty, s/he forgets to comb hair.

Lack of concentration: Alzheimer's affects concentration, so your loved one may not be able to do ordinary tasks like cooking or paying the bills. Trouble balancing the



checkbook is often one of the first signs of the disease, s/he may not remember to whom s/he has given the last check or what was the amount. As symptoms worsen, s/he may not recognise familiar people or places, to get confuse to recognise own family members. S/he may get lost easily or use utensils improperly, like combing hair with a fork. Incontinence, balance problems, and loss of language are common in advanced stages.

How is it diagnosed?

There is no simple test for Alzheimer's, so the doctor will rely on you to describe the changes in your affected family member. A mental status test, sometimes called a "mini-mental test," or other screening tests can measure mental skills and short-term

memory. Neurological exams and brain scans may be used to rule out other problems, like a stroke or tumour, and they can provide other information about the affected brain.

What happens to the brain?

Alzheimer's causes nerve cell death and tissue loss throughout the brain. As the disease gets worse, brain tissue shrinks and areas that contain cerebrospinal fluid become larger. The damage harms memory, speech, and comprehension.

How does it progress?

Alzheimer's takes a different path in every person. Sometimes the symptoms get worse quickly and lead to severe memory loss and confusion within a few years. For other people the changes are gradual. It

could take 20 years for the disease to run its course. Most people live 3 to 9 years after diagnosis.

How is it treated?

There is no cure for Alzheimer's and no way to slow the nerve damage it causes to the brain. But there are medications that appear to help maintain mental skills and slow the disease's effects. If your loved one gets treatment early on, s/he may be able to stay independent and do the daily tasks for a longer period of time.

Many people want to stay in their own home as long as possible. That is not easy if they have trouble getting dressed or using the bathroom on their own. A home health aide can help with personal hygiene and other daily tasks.

People with advanced level of Alzheimer's may lose their ability to walk, talk or respond to others. Eventually, the disease can hinder vital functions, like the ability to swallow. This may be the time to switch to hospice care, which provides pain relief and comfort for people with terminal illnesses.

Can you prevent it?

Is there anything you can do to lower your chances of getting this disease? Research in this area is ongoing, but diet and exercise appear to be important. Studies show people who eat a Mediterranean diet rich in vegetables, fish and nuts and get plenty of physical activity are the least likely to get Alzheimer's.

However don't neglect your parents, grandparents who has suffering from these type of problems, talk to a doctor.

The article is compiled by Dr Golam Nabi, Assistant Professor of Medicine at Z H Sikder Women's Medical College & Hospital.

VITAMIN H



Biotin or vitamin H is part of the complex B vitamins. Along with helping the body metabolise fats and carbohydrates, biotin has been linked to improved hair health and maintaining proper function of the nervous system.

1. Strengthen hair and nails: There is strong evidence to support a deficiency will cause hair loss. Similarly, the vitamin may also help thicken nail cuticles and prevents breakage.

2. Improve the health of your skin: A biotin deficiency can lead to a variety of skin problems including rashes, acne, psoriasis, dermatitis and overall itchiness.

3. Supports your metabolism: Biotin plays a pivotal role in supporting metabolic function. Your resting metabolic rate is elevated and food breaks down faster when consuming biotin.

4. Lower cholesterol: Biotin has shown to play a role in lowering cholesterol in animal studies. Preliminary research has shown biotin can help reduce LDL (bad cholesterol) levels.

5. Regulate blood sugar: Pairing biotin with chromium has been show to lower glucose levels.

Biotin is widely available and can be found in many foods such as cooked eggs, egg yolks, soy, walnuts, whole grains, beans and legumes. It can also be found in a multivitamin, B complex or in pure tablet form and is readily available over the counter.

HEALTH bulletin

The price of sitting too much

Virtual therapy helps with depression



A new therapy which involves a patient embodying themselves in a virtual reality avatar of a crying child could help with depression, research has suggested.

The new research tested the technology for the first time on patients with a mental health problem. The project is part of a continuing study at University College London.

The university, which is working in collaboration with ICREA-University of Barcelona, has suspected for several years that virtual therapy could help with mental health conditions.

This latest research — which has been published in the British Journal of Psychiatry Open and was funded by the Medical Research Council — lays the basis for a large-scale clinical trial to be carried out in the future.

The study took some people who were all being treated by the NHS for depression and put them through the avatar experience. Firstly, the patients were asked to put on a headset which projected an adult version of themselves into a virtual reality mirror.

The patient was asked to mentally identify with the adult avatar, which exactly replicated the patient's body movements, in a process known as "embodiment". They then noticed a separate avatar of a small crying child, who was also in the mirror. They were told to say compassionate phrases to the child to try and comfort and console it.

Patients asked the child to think of a time when it was happy and to think of someone who loved them. At this stage of the experiment the roles were then reversed.

Chances are, you are reading this article while perched in a chair. The strangest thing in the world is that people spend all day scrunched in a chair. It is a form of physical entrapment.

Human body is designed to move, but less moving can easily get diseases to the body. Many of us sit for 15 hours a day. Consider how much you sit in a day: driving during your morning commute to an 8-hour-a-day desk job, and then unwinding on the couch in front of the television all evening. What's more, do you depend on email, cell phone, and online shopping etc.? If so, then you may have "sitting disease," a catchy phrase for a sedentary lifestyle that might be putting your health at risk.

Long periods of physical inactivity raise your risk of developing heart diseases, diabetes, cancer, obesity, Alzheimers, joints or muscles pain, arthritis etc. and overall low quality of lifestyle.

Exercise makes your heart and bones strong, relieves stress and improves blood circulation. It also lowers your risk for type 2 diabetes, lose weight, reduce heart disease and stroke by keeping your blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol levels on target.

If you still see exercise as an optional extra, not a health essential, science is finding more reasons to change your mind.

One of the most compelling findings of recent years is that muscles are actually a huge secretory organ and when we exercise them they release hormone-like chemi-



cals that have a major influence on every system of the body.

Some studies have found that extracting blood from exercising humans and adding it to cancer cells in test tubes slows the rate of cell reproduction. This may be one reason why exercise appears to help reduce the risk of some cancers and improve survival in people with cancer. Some types of exercise, including strength training, also produce a surge of the hormone testosterone which helps sharpen thinking and memory.

A complete physical activity routine includes four kinds of activity:

1. Activity — walking, using the stairs, moving around — throughout the day
2. Aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, swimming, or dancing

3. Strength training, like lifting light weights
4. Flexibility exercises, such as stretching

If you want to reduce the risk of inactivity driven diseases, you need a regular dose of exercises all the way from childhood to old age. Get moving well and stay well, but it is very important to follow exercise prescription before starting any form of exercise. A chartered physiotherapist is the right professional who can properly assess your overall fitness and prescribe proper exercises whatever aerobic or strength or endurance as your body demand.

The write-up is compiled by Dollur Rahman, Senior Consultant of Physiotherapy at Bangladesh Physiotherapy Hospital, Gulshan, Dhaka. E-mail: manipsart@gmail.com

Health Project

Achieving sustainability towards healthcare access in Bangladesh

STAR HEALTH DESK

Novartis and Swisscontact initiated the ASTHA project in 2015. ASTHA (meaning "reliance" or "trust" in Bengali) offers health education on disease prevention and treatment, and increases access to quality healthcare by training and working with Community Paramedics (CPs) in three disaster-prone areas of Bangladesh — says a press release.

The four-year project (2015-2018) takes a holistic approach to expanding access to healthcare by involving government agencies (i.e. BNC, DGFP and DGHS), building capacity within institutions to train CPs and informing people about the options regarding quality healthcare services.

The project focuses on the following activities:

- **Referral system:** CPs refer patients to qualified doctors to ensure treatment quality
- **Continuous education:** roundtable discussions and scientific seminars are held on latest developments in therapeutic areas

- **Health camps:** CPs and referral doctors provide primary healthcare services free of charge to underserved communities in health camps

Over the past year, ASTHA has been active in the following three districts — Nilphamari, Patuakhali and Sunamganj.

Overall, 29 scientific seminars on various health topics and 16 healthcamps — where graduate doctors provided free treatment to poor people in rural areas with the assistance of CPs — were organised. A further 66 information sessions were held, thereby improving access to quality healthcare in rural Bangladesh.



Causes

Using a hot tub, whirlpool, or swimming pool that is not properly treated with chlorine

Wearing tight clothes

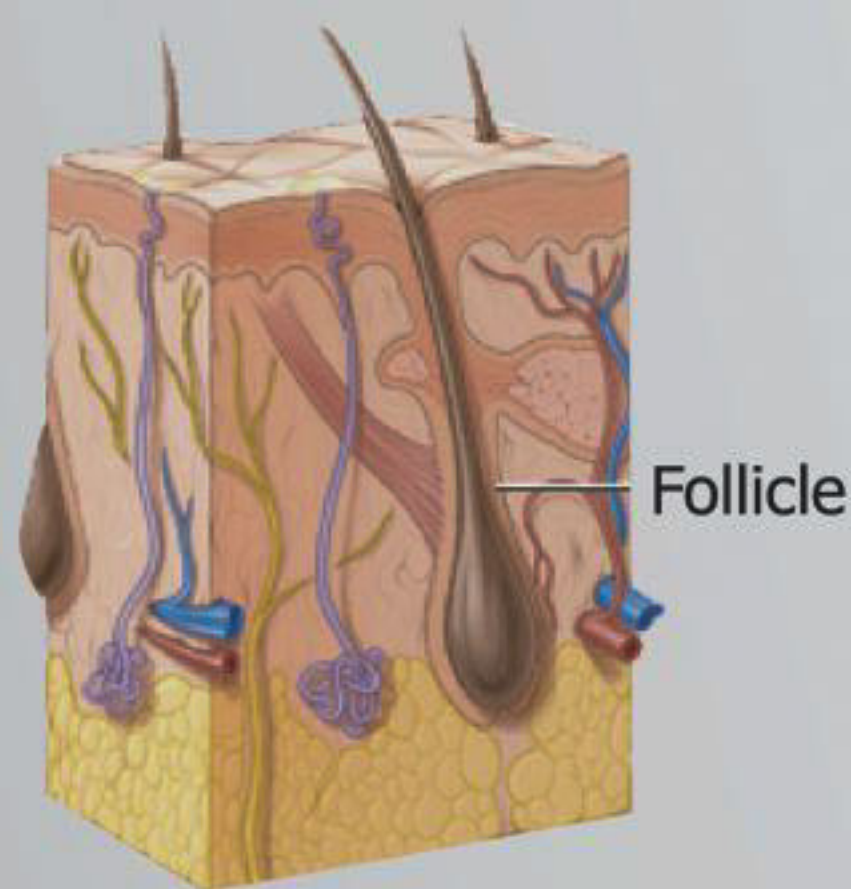
Using or working with substances that can irritate or block the follicles.

Examples include makeup, cocoa butter, motor oil, tar and creosote

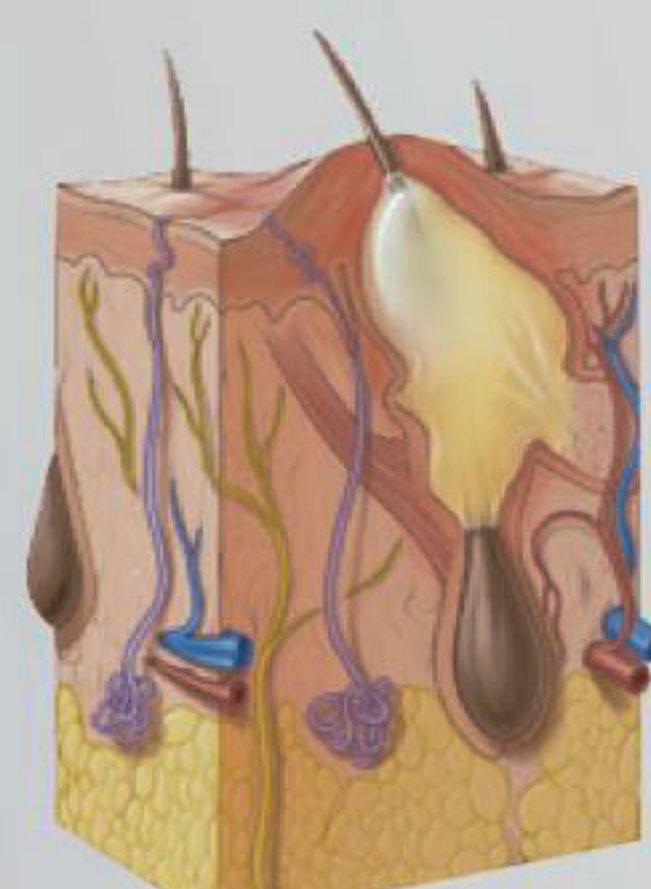
Having an infected cut, scrape, or surgical wound. The bacteria or fungi can spread to nearby hair follicles

Having a disease such as diabetes or HIV that lowers the ability to fight infection

Folliculitis is a common skin condition in which hair follicles become inflamed. It's usually caused by a bacterial or fungal infection



Healthy hair follicle



Infected hair follicle

Symptoms

Clusters of small red bumps or white-headed pimples that develop around hair follicles

Pus-filled blisters that break open and crust over

Red and inflamed skin

Itchy or burning skin

Tenderness or pain

A large swollen bump or mass

Treatment

For mild eosinophilic folliculitis, doctor may suggest to try a steroid cream. If condition is severe, he or she may prescribe oral corticosteroids. Such drugs can have serious side effects and should be used for as brief a time

