

Recognising and preventing low blood sugar

DR SHAHJADA SELIM

Blood glucose goes up and down in a small range throughout the day. In people with diabetes, the range can be much wider. It is important to understand the fine balance between treating the high sugars and avoiding the low sugars.

If you have diabetes and take certain diabetes drugs like insulin, you may experience low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) sometimes. Hypoglycemia is blood sugar less than 70 mg/dL. However, some people have symptoms of low blood sugar even at higher blood sugar levels. This can happen when blood sugar is dropping too quickly or if the person has had very high blood sugar for a long time.

Even mild hypoglycemia symptoms are difficult on your body and emotions. By learning more about the signs and causes of low blood sugar, you can take steps to keep it from happening again. Frequent low blood sugars are serious, because the body becomes less able to show the warning signals of low blood sugar.

Causes and symptoms of low blood sugar

Low blood sugar is usually caused by eating less or later than usual, changing your physical



activity or taking a diabetes medicine that is not right for your needs. Even mistakes in dosing can lead to hypoglycemia. For example, you could mistake one insulin for another or forget that you had already taken your diabetes pills. Common symptoms of low blood sugar are:

- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Feeling nervous, anxious or irritated
- Having a fast heart beat
- Sweating or having clammy skin
- Feeling tired or confused
- Having a headache

What to do to prevent low blood sugar

If you think you have any low blood sugar symptoms, check your blood sugar right away. If your blood sugar is less than 3.0 mmol/L (or below the level set by your doctor) take one of the following right away (15 grams of carbohydrates).

- 3-4 glucose tablets (4-5 grams of glucose each)
- Half cup of fruit juice
- One tablespoon of sugar, jam or honey
- 7-8 candies

If you feel your blood sugar is low and you cannot test it, take one of the above anyway. It is better to be safe than sorry. After treating your low blood sugar, wait for 15 minutes then test your blood sugar again. If it is still low, eat or drink another 15 grams of carbohydrates. Waiting to treat low blood sugar is not safe. Not treating symptoms quickly can cause you to faint and lose consciousness, which would then require emergency treatment.

How to avoid low blood sugar

- Stay close to your schedule of

eating, activity and medication

- Don't skip meals
- Carry snacks and carbohydrates that have sugar so you can treat low blood sugar levels any time
- Test your blood sugar on schedule and anytime you feel different
- Carry identification: a bracelet, necklace, or ankle bracelet that has a medical alert message stating that you are taking diabetes medication

Why worry about hypoglycemia?

Clearly the symptoms of hypoglycemia are unpleasant and can continue for hours even after the low blood sugar returns to normal levels. If severely low blood sugar is untreated, seizures, coma or even death can occur. New evidence shows that hypoglycemia can include changes in heart rhythm and electrical problems in the heart. Heart attacks can occur later in life in people with diabetes-associated nerve function loss. Should you then give up on controlling your blood sugar? No, but discuss your blood sugar goals with your doctor to decide what blood sugar targets are the best and safest for you.

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CANCER CARE

Early diagnosis of cancer saves lives, cuts treatment costs

New guidance from the World Health Organisation (WHO), launched ahead of World Cancer Day (4 February), aims to improve the chances of survival for people living with cancer by ensuring that health services can focus on diagnosing and treating the disease earlier.

New WHO figures released indicate that each year 8.8 million people die from cancer, mostly in low- and middle-income countries. One problem is that many cancer cases are diagnosed too late. Even in countries with optimal health systems and services, many cancer cases are diagnosed at an advanced stage, when they are harder to treat successfully.

All countries can take steps to improve early diagnosis of cancer, according to WHO's new Guide to cancer early diagnosis. The three steps to early diagnosis are:

1. Improve public awareness of different cancer symptoms and encourage people to seek care when these arise.
2. Invest in strengthening and equipping health services and training health workers so they can conduct accurate and timely diagnostics.
3. Ensure people living with cancer can access safe and effective treatment, including pain relief, without incurring prohibitive personal or financial hardship.

Challenges are clearly greater in low- and middle-income countries, which have lower abilities to provide access to effective diagnostic services, including imaging, laboratory tests, and pathology – all key to helping detect cancers and plan treatment. WHO encourages these countries to prioritise basic, high-impact and low-cost cancer diagnosis and treatment services. The Organisation also recommends reducing the need for people to pay for care out of their own pockets, which prevents many from seeking help in the first place.

HEALTH bulletin

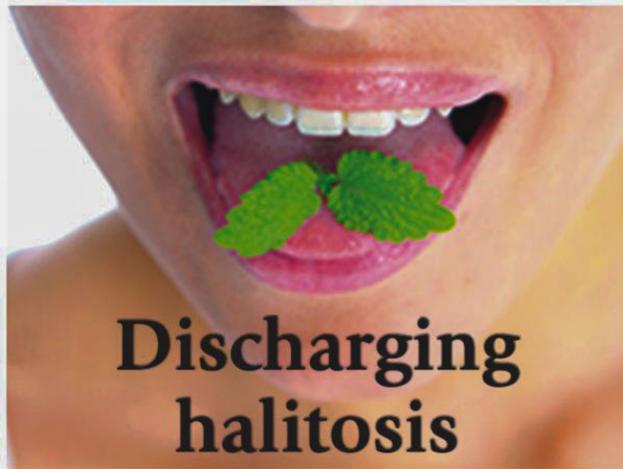
Low socioeconomic status reduces life expectancy

Low socioeconomic status is linked to significant reduction in life expectancy and should be considered a major risk factor for ill health and early death in national and global health policies, according to a study of 1.7 million people published in The Lancet.

The study, using data from the UK, France, Switzerland, Portugal, Italy, USA and Australia, is the first to compare the impact of low socioeconomic status with other major risk factors on health, such as physical inactivity, smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and high alcohol intake.

Although socioeconomic status is one of the strongest predictors of illness and early death worldwide, it is often overlooked in health policies.

In the study, researchers compared socioeconomic status against six of the main risk factors defined by the World Health Organisation in its Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases. The plan aims to reduce non-communicable diseases by 25% by 2025, but omits socioeconomic status as a risk factor for these diseases.



Discharging halitosis

DR SYED AHMED MORTADA

Halitosis, bad breath, fetor ex ore or smelly mouth all are related synonyms. As the mouth is worse than the anus, it is no wonder that the teeming millions experience this embarrassing but often unrecognised offensive holocaust by our own systems.

Hollywood heartthrob, Oscar winning actor, Clark Gable of the immortal film, 'Gone with the Wind', was notorious for halitosis. In the west, divorce is legalised for bad breath. Let alone human beings, animals particularly lions and bears share this obnoxious trailblazer on equal footing with homo sapiens. Hippocrates in his treatise penned on halitosis.

It is paradoxical that this abhorrent diaphora regurgitates in bizarre and varied modalities. Sometimes the partner feels the nausea and

incumbent romps scot free when other times the companion is unaware while the harbinger bears the brunt (parosmia). Then it happens that the predator and the prey are equally exposed which does called perceived halitosis comprise about 80-90% of cases.

The causative factors are so abundant that it may be difficult to put them in order within the post of this page but a clarion call must be made at this juncture that the most outstanding and outlandish account is attributed to the greatest enemy of mankind — the microorganisms. Any part of the oral cavity — back of the tongue, gum, teeth on being infected — the metabolites of the organisms make sulfur compounds emitting noxious gas which is the primary halitosis.

On the other end of the spectrum is a long list of significant conditions — loose dental outfits, anaemia,

mia, cancer, liver disease, sinusitis, Vincent's angina, salivary tumour, lung abscess, purulent bronchitis, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and many more.

Secondary to some other diseases — diabetic ketoacidosis, renal failure, gastrointestinal system disorders may also give rise to halitosis. Onion and garlic are known culprits. Though there are kits like Haliometre, Gas Chromatometre, BANA test to measure the degree of smell but more often than not the aroma of halitosis is self-evident.

The nagging question is how to address this nuisance? It is easy to say to remove the cause. But on the ground, especially dealing with the primary cause, disinfecting the mouth is not possible, nor permissible. In the majority of cases, medical science particularly dentists have surrendered to this social menace.

Brushing the teeth three times a day meticulously comes first. Flossing, tongue brushing, gurgling, mouth washing with antiseptic, proper hydration has a role to play. Nowadays some deodorant inhalers provide a temporary respite. Avoidance of alcohol, smoking has been credited with permanent relief occasionally.

Treating the infection is of paramount importance. Food menu should be kept in focus. Caries, gingivitis, loose dentures, plaques are combated by the dentist.

For secondary halitosis, the incumbent is taken over by the concerned specialist. Though difficult, some wonderful results have been achieved by addressing the root cause of the dilemma.

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Cancer Awareness March for Mothers



'March for Mothers', a rally for creating awareness about cervical cancer took place in Dhaka recently. Participants in the rally urged the government and different organisations to take necessary steps to create awareness on cervical cancer nationwide to save thousands of lives in Bangladesh.

Community Voice Meet



United Hospital observed the World Cancer Day by organising various events like rally, Community Voice Meet, scientific seminar etc. with a view to raise awareness on this issue.



Cancer is a condition where cells in a specific part of the body grow and reproduce uncontrollably. The cancerous cells can invade and destroy surrounding healthy tissue, including organs.

Bangladesh, at 142 million people, is the ninth most populous country in the world. There are 13 to 15 lakh cancer patients in Bangladesh, with about two lakh patients newly diagnosed with cancer each year.

Spotting signs of cancer

Changes to your body's normal processes or unusual, unexplained symptoms can sometimes be an early sign of cancer.

Symptoms that need to be checked by a doctor include:

- A lump that suddenly appears on your body
- Unexplained bleeding
- Changes to your bowel habits

But in many cases your symptoms won't be related to cancer and will be caused by other, non-cancerous health conditions

Cancer prevention: 7 tips to reduce your risk

1. Don't use tobacco
2. Eat a healthy diet
Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.
Avoid obesity.
3. Maintain a healthy weight and be physically active
4. Protect yourself from the sun
5. Get immunized
6. Avoid risky behaviors
7. Get regular medical care

