

Ways to keep your heart healthy



'Use heart to connect' — this year's theme that encapsulates the values of World Heart Day this year. The World Heart Federation

organises World Heart Day on September 29 every year to emphasise the importance of being active and staying informed about cardiovascular health and diseases.

Worldwide, World Heart Day educates people about avoiding and controlling cardiovascular disease (CVD), which kills 18.6 million people every year. Preventing heart disease and stroke mortality is the goal of the campaign, at least 80% of premature deaths from heart disease and stroke could be avoided.

COVID-19 poses a double-edged hazard to CVD patients. They are more prone to serious viral infections but may be reluctant to seek ongoing heart care.

Cardiovascular diseases include blood clots, cardiomyopathies, cardiac arrest, high blood pressure, stroke etc. The risk factors that lead to cardiovascular diseases include a sedentary lifestyle, obesity, smoking, alcohol intake, bad cholesterol, high blood pressure etc.

If you have an underlying health condition, such as heart disease, heart failure, diabetes, high blood pressure or obesity,



do not let COVID-19 stop you from attending your regular check-ups.

World Heart Day has decided to bring to mind how one can take care of the heart with one's own heart:

Know your heart

Here we like to emphasize how knowing one's heart is essential and requires understanding the risks you are prone to. This would involve getting back on track, visiting the doctor and knowing where you stand.

Fuel your heart

Eating healthy is one of the most important steps towards ensuring that the heart is fueled with clean energy. Omega-3 rich fish, nuts, berries, oats and legumes are some of the easily available foods that one can consume to ensure the heart's good health.

Move your heart

This is another key measure

required to ensure that the heart stays healthy and hale. Remaining active, breaking a sweat and staying fit through exercises and yoga is another way one can ensure good health.

Love your heart

While it is next to impossible to stay away from fast food, mostly because of the erratic work timings and schedules one follow, it is important to:

- Eat a healthy diet, which emphasises fruits, vegetables, whole grains, poultry, fish and low-fat dairy food. It is essential to take plenty of potassium, which can help prevent and control high blood pressure. In addition, eat less saturated fat to prevent the development of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease.
- Decrease the salt in diet. A lower sodium level — 1,500 mg a day — is appropriate for people 51 years of age or older

and individuals of any age who are black or have hypertension, diabetes or chronic kidney disease. Otherwise, healthy people can aim for 2,300 mg a day or less.

• Maintain a healthy weight. Keeping a healthy weight or losing weight can help to control high blood pressure, lower your risk of related health problems, and keep the heart healthy.

• Increase physical activity. Regular physical activity can help lower blood pressure, manage stress, reduce the risk of several health problems and keep weight under control. For most healthy adults, it is recommended that you get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes a week of vigorous aerobic activity, or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity.

- Stop alcohol intake.
- Do not smoke. Tobacco injures blood vessel walls

and speeds up the process of hardening of the arteries.

• Manage stress. Reduce stress as much as possible. Practice healthy coping techniques such as muscle relaxation, deep breathing or meditation. Getting regular physical activity and plenty of sleep can help, too.

Hence, the World Heart Day celebration plays a very important role in changing all of this. It is a crucial global platform that people can use to raise awareness and encourage individuals, families, communities and governments to take action.

Together everybody has the power to reduce the premature deaths from, and burden of, cardiovascular diseases, helping people everywhere to live longer.

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WEBINAR

Reminding the health-related commitments of Election 2019

STAR HEALTH REPORT

All should work together to realise the health-related commitments of Election 2019 - discussants pointed out at a dialogue organised by Bangladesh Health Watch and Unnayan Shamannay, says a press release.

The commitments related to development of health sector made by the political parties prior to the National Elections of 2018 have become even more relevant because of the pandemic. Over the course of three National Budgets, significant amount of resources have been allocated to attain these goals. Yet there remains a long way to go. All stakeholders must work together to fulfill these commitments.

Speakers at an online National Dialogue organised jointly by Bangladesh Health Watch, BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health and Unnayan Shamannay said these yesterday. The title of the event was "Assessing progress towards realization of health-related commitments of Election 2018."

While presenting the keynote, Dr Atiur Rahman pointed out that just analysing the budgetary allocations would not suffice to understand the extent of realisation of the election manifesto commitments related to healthcare. Rather, he added, stakeholders ought to the check for what goals the administration intends to attain with those allocations.

Ruhul Haque, MP said that ensuring adequate human resources for the healthcare sector should be considered as the topmost priority. The need for decentralisation of public health administration was emphasised by Shamim Haider, MP.

Dhaka University Professor and Working Group Member of Bangladesh Health Watch Dr Ruamana Haque delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of the organisers.

HEALTH bulletin

Why am I still awake?



TAHSIN BINTE MAKSUD

According to the experts, 7-9 hours of sleep at night is ideal for humans between 18-64 years of ages. It is the time when the body repairs and restores itself. Insufficient sleep may lead to obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and a weak immune system, of course.

The retina detects dimming light, and melatonin levels gradually rise until midnight. Melatonin shortens the time it takes to fall asleep and improves sleep quantity and quality. Electronic devices emit a light that the brain interprets as daylight, causing a melatonin delay. Insomnia is caused by a decrease in melatonin levels. Melatonin is derived from serotonin. Low serotonin leads to low melatonin. A normal serotonin level is critical for good sleep. Sunlight on the skin promotes vitamin D3 production, which promotes serotonin production.

GABA, another inhibitory neurotransmitter, influences sleep. Glutamate and vitamin B6 both help make GABA. Insomniacs have almost 30% less GABA than normal. Insomnia is caused by an excess of histamine, while somnolence is caused by a lack of it (excessive sleepiness). A high level of stress may also result in an increase in cortisol, the stress hormone produced by the adrenal gland. High cortisol levels at night can disrupt sleep. So reducing stress is essential for a good night's sleep.

The steps to maintain a normal level of sleep include getting up earlier and keeping a sleep schedule; turning off all electronics and create a melatonin-friendly environment in your bedroom; maintaining sufficient inhibitory neurotransmitter levels through a healthy diet, exercise, yoga, and meditation. You will win.

The writer is a medical student at Cumilla Medical College.

Arpita's journey ignite the fire in us that nothing is impossible

DR BIMALANGSHU DEY

It was a typical day in Bogra in Bangladesh. But not for Arpita, a three year old child. She was excited to meet her new baby brother. "My brother is the loveliest, and he is so adorable," Arpita declared to the world, ignoring her "little one's" looks. But tragically her mother died just two hours after the delivery of her son. Arpita sat silently next to her brother!

Their grandmother reared Arpita and her brother. Their father is an elementary school teacher. Now, Arpita is 11 years old and she has aspirations and desire like any other young girl. But something in her right eye has been bothering her for weeks. One day, she noticed a bulge in her eye while looking in the mirror that made her right vision hazy. She needed a good ophthalmologist to treat her, but they did not have the required considerable amount of money.

Her fathers' teacher, Ms Sunanda Sinha, who was living in New York, came to know about this and spread the news all over the world with the help of their colleagues. They collected 100,000 BDT in no time. The journey gained a little hope.

Arpita accompanied her father to Dhaka to meet Dr Moinul Hoque, a famous ophthalmologist at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), the country's most prestigious post-graduate medical institute. He did a biopsy on her right eye.

The pathologist revealed lacrimal gland adenoid cystic cancer (LGACC), a tear-producing gland in the eye. LGACC is an uncommon kind of eye cancer with a terrible



Arpita, a young girl from Bangladesh, suffering from Lacrimal Gland Adenoid Cystic Cancer (LGACC) is now in the USA for her treatment.

prognosis due to the invasion of the surrounding bone and neurological system. It usually leaves patients with a 15-year survival rate of only 20%.

No doubt that Arpita has a difficult journey ahead of her. Experts and caretakers in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Hyderabad, India, and Boston, USA, have been working to save Arpita's sight.

Following the chemotherapy to treat and downstage the tumour before undergoing a surgery, radiotherapy specialists at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and Massachusetts Eye & Ear Infirmary (MEEI) in Boston found second-stage eye cancer. The super specialists have indicated their serious desire to heal Arpita's

LGACC while saving her eye. We are pleased to learn that the bKash, GrameenPhone, and Ayat Education Leadership in Bangladesh are supporting Arpita.

Arpita arrived USA this week. I have seen the potential in this young Bangladeshi. I am confident that if we all stand together, Arpita will not only be treated and lead a productive life, but her narrative will touch millions of people and ignite the fire in us that nothing is impossible.

Arpita's journey, however lengthy and arduous, will be a success story, paving the way for many Arpitas to come with similar unmet needs.

The writer works at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in Boston, USA as a Bone Marrow Transplant Physician. E-mail: BDEY@mgh.harvard.edu

The cancer misery for the women

UMMAY FARIHIN SULTANA

Every morning, when the convoluted ray of sun mildly reaches my heart, I (52) reminiscence the fine days of my life. It has been nearly two months since my happiness started dying one after another, combating blood cancer. Until my diagnosis, my family history involved no cancer.

My elder son appointed a caregiver to look after me, and my gloomy time rests mainly under the shadow of her company. Whenever my children or other relatives visit me, they only talk about the high expense of my treatment and how it influences our household economy. Most of the money earned by my husband has already been spent after me.

I have worked for years as a nurse in a government hospital, and throughout my working period, I noticed that the healthcare situation for a female is disappointing. Gender biases create menaces inside the healthcare system, and Bangladesh has an extreme form of it. When gender parity is not ensured for quality treatment and care for a common health issue, patient outcomes are expected to worsen.

In recent years, gender bias approaches in healthcare have become more prevalent. Women are usually brought to a hospital after suffering the torments of middle or last stages of diseases than men in the same situation.

The overwhelming expenses, scarcity of professionals and unavailability of equipment have made cancer treatment inaccessible to hundreds of its sufferers in Bangladesh. Low- and middle-income people seek healthcare from 36 government medical college hospitals; only 14 have oncology departments that are understaffed and under-equipped.

Bangladesh is bearing a double burden of both communicable and non-communicable diseases; thus, improving the scenario of cancer treatment and control overnight would be a fancy thought. Yet, it has become obvious to recognise the misery that cancer would add to people and the poorly regulated healthcare system. Moreover, increasing cancer inside the mind of the society must be put under the sword.

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WORLD HEART DAY 29 September 2021

* upto 20 September 2021