

# Allergic rhinitis: What is its remedy?

MOUMITA MOAZZEM

According to the air quality index (AQI), Bangladesh has the most air pollution globally. Hence allergic rhinitis is one of the most alarming and common problems related to environmental pollution. Several foreign matters can act as a potential allergen from the dust of construction areas, humid weather, pollen, animal hair, exposure to hay by farmers, etc. So how do we know if we have allergic rhinitis?

The symptoms can start with nasal obstruction, coughing, bouts of sneezing perhaps at more frequency in the morning, nasal drip, irritation in the eyes, and anosmia (which may overlap with COVID symptoms as well).

It may hamper a person's outlook by producing a black transverse line over the nose. Such condition should not be left untreated because if done so, it can give rise to complications like asthma, ethmoidal polyp in older adults, sinusitis requiring surgical measures like functional endoscopic sinus surgery (FESS) or polypectomy, in the long run, otitis media with effusion which is characterised by hearing impairment and tinnitus.



The causes are the important factors when it comes to prevention. Allergic rhinitis is type 1 hypersensitivity. There is a misconception that an allergic person is hypersensitive all year round. Some may have seasonal rhinitis instead of perennial (chronic). Furthermore, there is

a hereditary factor at play here too. If both parents have allergic rhinitis, there is a 40% chance that their child may also have the condition, whereas a single affected parent can lower the possibility to 20%.

So the question is, is there any way that a person can

prevent allergic rhinitis? The answer is yes, simply identifying what causes their allergy and avoiding that particular allergen.

For example, avoidance of dusting and mopping is the most suitable remedy. If a person is allergic to the pollen

of the spring season, avoid hand pollination during gardening.

If a person is allergic to cats/dogs, avoid furry animals and birds. Some allergies can occur in a particular season, so it is best to be extra careful during that time frame.

Some occupations like that of a painter and hay worker are common examples where allergies might develop. However, if things go out of hand, one should opt for professional advice and visit the doctor for the best treatment.

To confirm allergic rhinitis, a skin examination called prick test is usually done, which is said to have a positive inference if a congested wheel appears within 10-15 minutes. Furthermore, since it is an IgE (immunoglobulin) mediated response, a rise in IgE level in a blood test is suggestive of allergic rhinitis. Therefore, understanding its pathology is vital in terms of treatment basis.

From the perspective of Bangladesh, allergic rhinitis is a common detrimental condition. However, there are several remedies. By being careful and avoiding such allergen, one can protect themselves. As the old saying goes, "Prevention is better than cure."

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## OMICRON



### Scientists' opinions on new Corona virus variant Omicron

DR OPURBO CHOWDHURY

The latest new variant of SARS-CoV-2 is called Omicron. Omicron is the thirteenth variant. The new variant Omicron first emerged in South Africa. On November 11, this latest variant was discovered.

According to the latest tests, the new variant Omicron is twice as invasive as the earlier latest variant Delta. Omicron is so dominant and contentious because the new variant has so many mutations or changes at once. The investigation shows Omicron has 34 changes in spike protein. Scientists speculate this change can lead to three outcomes:

1. Omicron can spread faster than any previous variant.

2. Omicron can quickly assemble resistance against current vaccines

3. Omicron can damage the victim's body more than before

However, scientists are not sure about anything yet. From 2020 to 2021, more than 25 million people worldwide have been infected with the virus in two years. One out of every 30 people has been infected with the Coronavirus. More than 50 lakhs have died so far. One in every hundred and a half has died of COVID-19. Most of the others have recovered.

So far, a study shows two doses of AstraZeneca or Pfizer vaccine can protect against Omicron in 6 months 20%-40%. Three doses or boosters can give 70% protection from Omicron.

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## HEALTH bulletin



### Experts set out future of autism care and treatment with focus on personalised approaches

A new, comprehensive model of autism care and treatment that prioritises personalised, stepped care approaches is urgently needed, according to a new international report published in The Lancet.

Autism affects at least 78 million people worldwide, most of whom lack adequate support or care, especially those living in low- and middle-income countries or other resource-limited settings. A new personalised stepped care approach is urgently needed given autism's heterogeneity. People and their families benefit from personalised support based on their unique needs, characteristics, and circumstances that can be adjusted over time. This stepped care approach necessitates global coordination between governments, social sectors, healthcare providers, education and finance institutions, and individuals with autism.

To improve outcomes, national and international infrastructures should be developed to help prioritise research that goes beyond biology and studies of single interventions. Some psychosocial interventions have been shown in recent high-quality trials among young autistic children to reduce the impact of autism on development. It is imperative to find out what makes people with autism happy, what makes effective interventions for children and adults, and what keeps people with autism from changing their environment. The governments and health systems are accountable for providing life-altering support that benefits society.

## Community paramedics training creating skilled workforce in rural primary healthcare

BIPASHA HOSSAIN and NOWSHEEN SHARMILA

The Bangladeshi education system struggles to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills like critical thinking and problem-solving. Despite the annual influx of 2.5 million new entrants, up to 30% of youth are "not in education, employment, or training" (youth NEET) (IFC, 2021). Without academic and cognitive stimulation, these young students become more prone to frustration, anxiety, and depression and engage in anti-social behaviours like stealing, drug dealing, and abuse.

To engage the youth in the nation's economic activities, students must be skill-based. According to the Centre for Education Research, technical education participation rates range from 48-66% in developed countries, but only 14% in Bangladesh. The education minister has also called for half the country's students to take technical and vocational education.

Unemployment apart, Bangladesh's skilled labour shortage causes numerous other issues, including healthcare. The shortage of skilled medical personnel is a major public health issue. Bangladesh has made significant progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) despite limited resources. However, there is still a shortage of skilled healthcare professionals in suburban and rural areas, making quality healthcare challenging to come by.

Currently, unqualified providers, such as shamans, quacks, and



pharmacists, are filling the shortage gap, affecting public health in general. These unqualified service providers are especially prevalent in rural areas. According to national statistics, Bangladesh has only 8.3 professional skilled health workers per 10,000 population, while the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommended statistic is 44.5 health professionals for every 10,000 people. With more than 100 million people living in rural areas, we need more than four and a half million skilled health workers to meet the nation's healthcare needs.

The Bangladesh government established the Community Paramedic Training Programme to address this issue. In addition to providing quality primary healthcare services, this two-year program focuses on maternal and child health.

The case of Shampa (a fictitious name for anonymity), a girl from a remote village in Gangachara Upazila, Rangpur district, illustrates the many benefits of this national

training. The training equipped Shampa with medical knowledge, customer service skills, and entrepreneurial abilities. Along with a new curriculum, Shampa and her peers used 3D modelling and Virtual Reality tools to learn. They could learn subjects like anatomy with precision thanks to advanced technology. This prepared Shampa as a qualified healthcare professional.

Community Paramedics training is the need of the time. With policy support from the appropriate authorities, young Bangladeshis will be inspired to take up this noble profession creating a pool of skilled professionals and paving the way to improved rural healthcare while generating the much sought-after employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the bulging youth population of our country.

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### What should you know about your medicines?

MD EKHTEAR MAHMUD

Knowing better about the medicines you are taking will help you reduce the risks and maximise the benefit of taking medicines. Follow these tips to maximise the benefit of your medication intake:

- The active ingredient name identifies the chemical in the medicine that produces the effect when taken. But, most medicines are sold under different brand names with different packaging by the manufacturer. So, you need to know that even if they are sold under different brand names and different packaging, medicines with the same active ingredients will work in the same way to produce the same effect.

- Make sure you take your medicine according to your doctor's instructions. Some medicines need to be taken simultaneously every day to keep a consistent dosage. Some medications are not permitted during pregnancy or lactation. In addition, some medicines should not be given to children or infants due to safety concerns. Medication instructions should be carefully followed. Store medications in a cool, dry location away from sunlight. Keep drugs out of your children's reach to prevent serious consequences.

- It is important to know the nature of medicines as many may interact with the food we consume. Therefore, always follow the doctor's advice before you take them.

- Always verify the expiry dates of your medicines when buying or taking them. You should not take expired or improperly maintained medications. Like most foods, drugs degrade over time, becoming less effective or unsafe to consume.

If you want to get better quickly, choose take your medicines cautiously.

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