

Donate blood, save life

DR TRISITA SAHA BISWAS

Any healthy person aged 18 to 60 years, weighing more than 50 kg and free from infections, are eligible to donate blood about three times a year. Sad to say, the citizens of our country only donate blood when their relatives or friends are in crisis.

According to the American Red Cross, donating one unit of blood may save the lives of up to three people. Clinical conditions that require blood supply are predominantly surgeries, accidents, severe anaemia, chronic illness, several blood disorders, like thalassemia, blood cancers, etc. Therefore, the need for blood is constant. But unfortunately, scientists could not still manage to find a way of manufacturing safe blood or a substitute in the laboratory, leaving humans as the only source of safe blood. Donating blood is, therefore, a life-saving action. Moreover, it is considered the best gift one person can give to others – the gift of life, for sure.

Any healthy person aged 18 to 60 years, weighing more than 50 kg and free from infections, are eligible to donate blood about three times a year. Sad to say, the citizens of our country only donate blood when their relatives or friends are in crisis. Only 0.02 to 0.04% of the total population donate blood in our country, whereas the figure should rise to 2% to meet the desired requirement. To achieve this goal, healthy adults should come forward to donate blood to save lives.

The main component of our blood is red blood cells which can live up to 120 days in our body and then die, the maximum life span among other blood cells. Therefore, to compensate for the loss, our bone marrow continuously produces the same amount of blood cells in our body. This denotes that if someone donates blood, the body will recover it within a normal physiological process and thus, allow a person to donate



blood at a four-month interval.

Donating blood not only helps the recipients but also the donors are highly benefited, such as,

- Being part of such a noble act of saving lives will provide you with a sense of pride and belonging.
- In order to donate blood, you will be required to undergo a free mini-health checkup (as such, weight, pulse, blood pressure) which can offer an insight into your overall health condition.
- Your blood will also be screened against potential health infections, like, HIV, Hepatitis B & C, Syphilis and Malaria for free, which you may be unaware of.
- Donating blood helps keep your cholesterol level in control, thus minimising the risk of cardiovascular disease.

- It helps to keep your liver healthy.
- Donating blood helps your bone marrow to stay active.

- Last but not least, you will be given a donor card through which you can receive blood whenever you are in need.

After all, the benefits of blood donation are considerable, but the most essential part of this rewarding activity is helping to save lives. Therefore, we, the citizens of our country, should uphold the slogan, "Donate Blood, Save Life", in our hearts and encourage ourselves and the people to come forward so that not even a single human dies due to scarcity of blood.

The writer works as a Research and Policy Assistant in Centre for Research, Innovation and Development Action (CRIDA).

People at risk of future heart disease and stroke may be at greater risk for severe COVID-19

According to new research presented at the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID), people at high risk of having a stroke or heart attack in the next decade who contract COVID-19 are nearly three times more likely to be hospitalised, six times more likely to die from COVID-19.

For this study, researchers used the electronic medical records of 949,973 adults (aged 40-84 years) registered at GP practices across England. Of the 949,973 adults included in the study, 12% had existing cardiovascular disease (CVD), 32% were classed as being at raised risk of

CVD and 56% at low risk. A total of 4,017 of these participants (average age 58 years, 50% male) were diagnosed with COVID-19 between 12 March and 29 September, 2020. Among those with COVID-19 (4,017 people), the overall death rate was 219 per 1,000 (576 people), ICU admission was 60 per 1,000 (159) and hospitalisation was 414 per 1,000 (1,091).

The researchers found that the likelihood of COVID-19 infection was similar among individuals with raised and low cardiovascular risk (4.9 cases per 1,000 vs 4.5 cases per 1,000, respectively).



The threat of untreatable gonorrhoea could be tackled using an existing meningitis vaccine

According to findings from a study published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal, meningitis vaccines could help improve protection against gonorrhoea amid rising cases globally and increase bacterial resistance to drugs used to treat the infection.



Gonorrhoea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that, if untreated, can lead to serious health conditions, including infertility in women, transmission to new-born babies, and increased risk of HIV. More than 80 million new cases of gonorrhoea were recorded worldwide in 2020.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) used health records to identify laboratory-confirmed cases of gonorrhoea and chlamydia (another common STI) among 16-23-year-olds in New York City and Philadelphia from 2016 to 2018. These cases were compared to immunisation records to determine people's vaccination status with 4CMenB (a meningitis vaccine).

There were more than 167,000 infections (18,099 gonorrhoea, 124,876 chlamydia, and 24,731 co-infections) among almost 110,000 people. A total of 7,692 people had received the 4CMenB vaccine, with 4,032 (52%) receiving one dose, 3,596 (47%) two doses, and 64 (less than 1%) more than two doses. Full 4CMenB vaccination – receiving two doses – was estimated to provide 40% protection against gonorrhoea. One vaccine dose provided 26% protection.



Mental illness associated with increased death from cardiovascular disease

According to a new study published in PLOS Medicine, people with severe mental illnesses, including schizophrenia, have higher cardiovascular mortality rates than the general population. The new study included a meta-analysis of 108 previous studies with over 30 million participants aged 16 to 65 at the onset of psychiatric disorder.

Overall, the study found that the cardiovascular-related mortality rate for people with severe mental illness is about twice that of the general population. People with schizophrenia are at greater risk than those with bipolar disorder, but the disparity exists across all severe mental illness types and cerebrovascular and cardiac mortality.

For people with schizophrenia, the pooled hazard ratio/rate ratio for coronary heart disease was 1.8 compared to controls, and the pooled standardised mortality ratio for cerebrovascular accidents was 1.93. For both schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, the association with cardiovascular-related mortality grew stronger between the 1970s and the 2000s. For instance, the hazard ratio/rate ratio for mortality from coronary heart disease in people with schizophrenia in the 1990s compared with the 1980s was 1.61.

Printed or used paper for serving food: A slow poisoning

TAWHID ISLAM, DR MUHAMMAD TOREQUL ISLAM

From village to town, printed and used paper is widely used in Bangladesh to serve food, especially street food. But the real question is how safe it is for our health. The Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA) has also warned about using printed paper and polythene for serving oily and warm food, but the implementation of the decision is not properly regulated.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has banned printed paper for serving food. According to them, the food absorbs chemicals from paper and acts as a slow poison over time, causing serious health issues such as cancer.

While we all know that paper is made from plant or recycled pulp, the process involves 43 chemicals, including chlorine, dolomite, hypochlorous acid (calcium oxide), sodium sulphate salts, and sodium thiosulfate, and many other preservatives and chemicals, none of which are safe for health.

There are no safety rules for making paper intended for direct contact with food. Those are only for printing, and most of the paper is recycled.

The ink used to print the paper is not edible. Heavy metals and other hazardous chemicals may be present. Most paper printed with Soy ink

contains chemical extraction and solvents such as di-isobutyl phthalate, ethanol, dimethyl sulfoxide or DMSO, di-n-butyl phthalate, and propanol, which are not safe to consume. A study found that all paper-based food packaging migrated heavy metals such as Pb, Cd, Cu, Zn, Cr, and Ni.

In most cases, printed paper sits on the shelf for years before being sold to the local market at a lower per-Kg price. It is unknown how it was stored and transported to the food market, and the possibility of dust contamination with pathogens like bacteria and viruses cannot be ruled out.

Why do restaurant owners serve their food on such used paper?

The answer is its ease of use and low cost. So, a low-cost alternative serving paper is required. Using non-paper serving plates and an aluminium foil-wrapped hard-paper packet for the parcel would be safer. The food authorities should not ignore this issue. This toxic tradition's effects on human health may not be immediate, but they are devastating!



Tawhid Islam is a student at Department of Pharmacy, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University, Gopalganj. Email: tawhidislam2021@yahoo.com

Dr Muhammad Torequl Islam is an Assistant Professor at Department of Pharmacy at the same University. E-mail: dmt.islam@bsmrstu.edu.bd

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