



Anaemia rates among adolescent women on the rise: urgent action needed

STAR HEALTH REPORT

A recent study published in PLOS Global Public Health sheds light on the alarming increase in anaemia among adolescent women in India from 2015 to 2021. Anaemia, a condition characterised by a lack of healthy red blood cells, can have severe health consequences, and it disproportionately affects women in India. Almost 6 in 10 female adolescents in India are anaemic, with 21 of 28 states reporting increased prevalence since 2015, per national surveys.

The study analysed data from the fourth and fifth rounds of the National Family Health Survey, covering over 100,000 adolescent women aged 15 to 19. Shockingly, the prevalence of anaemia surged from 54.2% to 58.9% during this period.

The study also found various factors associated with anaemia, including having more than one child, lacking education, belonging to Scheduled Tribes, being in the lowest wealth quintile, and being underweight.

This rise in anaemia rates is a cause for concern, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address this public health issue. Anaemia can lead to fatigue, weakness, and a range of health complications, especially during pregnancy. As such, it is essential that efforts are made to improve the overall health and well-being of adolescent women and reduce the burden of anaemia they face.



Raising awareness and taking action: International Overdose Awareness Day 2023

STAR HEALTH DESK

August 31 is International Overdose Awareness Day. In 2019, around 600,000 deaths were attributed to drug use, with 25% related to opioids. Opioids have analgesic and sedative effects and are commonly used for the management of pain.

Opioids are a class of compounds that include natural, semi-synthetic, and synthetic substances with properties that interact with opioid receptors in the brain. They are known for their analgesic and sedative effects and are commonly used for pain management. Opioid medications like morphine, codeine, and fentanyl are widely used for this purpose, while methadone and buprenorphine are used for treating opioid dependence. However, the misuse of opioids for non-medical reasons can lead to dependence and various health issues.

Globally, approximately 5.8% of the population aged 15-64 used drugs in 2021, with around 60 million people using opioids. Drug use disorders affected about 39.5 million individuals that year, and the proportion of those using prescription opioids is increasing.

Opioid use can result in fatal opioid overdoses due to their impact on the brain's respiratory regulation center. Signs of opioid overdose include pinpoint pupils, unconsciousness, and breathing difficulties. In 2019, approximately 600,000 drug-related deaths occurred worldwide, with opioids contributing to nearly 80% of these deaths and around 25% of opioid-related deaths attributed to overdose, causing approximately 125,000 fatalities.

The number of opioid overdoses has been on the rise, partly due to the increased availability of prescription opioids for chronic pain management and the presence of potent opioids in the illicit drug market. In the United States, opioid



overdose deaths surged, particularly involving synthetic opioids, from 2013 to 2019.

Fentanyl, a potent synthetic opioid, is about 50-100 times more potent than morphine. While it is included on the World Health Organisation's (WHO) model list of essential medicines for its pain-relieving properties, it has also contributed to a spike in opioid overdose deaths. Drug dealers often mix fentanyl with other substances, including heroin, increasing its potency and making it challenging for users to detect.

Several risk factors increase the likelihood of opioid overdose, including opioid use disorder, injection drug use, resumption of opioid use after abstinence, unsupervised use of prescription opioids, high prescribed opioid dosages, combined use with other substances, and underlying medical conditions.

Efforts to prevent opioid overdose include increasing access to opioid dependence treatment, rationalising opioid prescribing practices, monitoring opioid dispensing, and restricting over-the-counter sales of opioids. However, there is a significant gap between recommended actions and their actual implementation.

Naloxone, an opioid antidote, can reverse opioid overdose

effects if administered promptly. It is currently limited to health professionals in many places, but some countries have made it available without a prescription. Programmes providing naloxone to individuals likely to witness an opioid overdose, along with training on its use and resuscitation, have been successful in reducing overdose deaths.

Prevention strategies also involve improving access to opioid dependence treatment, reducing inappropriate opioid prescribing, and monitoring opioid use trends and related harm. WHO recommends a range of treatment options for opioid dependence, including opioid agonist maintenance treatment (e.g., methadone and buprenorphine), psychosocial support, and pharmacological treatment with opioid antagonists (e.g., naltrexone).

In conclusion, opioids have significant medical benefits but also pose risks, particularly regarding dependence and overdose. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach, including prevention, harm reduction, and access to appropriate treatment and overdose response measures. If you suspect someone is having an overdose, contact an emergency healthcare provider immediately.

Source: World Health Organisation

HAVE A NICE DAY

How much is too much? - Part III

DR RUBAUL MURSHED

Many factors affect how much money you need to live comfortably, such as location, lifestyle, age, and health. It also varies from culture to culture and between Western and Eastern philosophies. That is why the definition of happiness varies from culture to culture.

Health is one of the most crucial things in life that money can not buy. And 'health' does not always come from medicine; it may come from peace of mind and soul. It comes from kindness and gratitude. Even wealthy people can never trade their money for this 'health'. But unfortunately, there are many real-life cases where people sacrifice their health to pursue wealth.

Studies show that money-centric mindsets have developed to focus too much on financial issues. This focus can be so great that they neglect human, intellectual, and social assets in their families. It means that making more does little for their happiness. It does not take a wise scholar to see how misguided this mindset is! It has also been seen that too much wealth creates toxic relationships that can negatively drain someone's energy and impact his or her mental and physical health. The more time someone spends with them, the more euphoric and fantasy world one will live in.

Today, money-driven people generate so much waste because of our consumption-based economy and lifestyle; as a result, an unimaginable number of people suffer. 'Too much money' has become a dreadful master and an evil servant.

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WORLD PHYSIOTHERAPY DAY 2023 Prevention and management of OSTEOARTHRITIS

DR M SAIDUR RAHMAN

September 8 is observed as the World Physiotherapy Day. The day marks the worldwide physiotherapy community's unity and solidarity. It is an opportunity to appreciate the work physiotherapists do for their patients and society. The focus of this year's World Physiotherapy Day was the prevention and management of osteoarthritis.

Arthritis is a disease that affects your joints. Arthritis usually involves inflammation or degeneration (breakdown) of your joints. These changes can cause pain when you use the joint. Arthritis is most common in the following areas of the body: feet, hands, hips, knees, and lower back.

Experts have identified some genes that might cause arthritis, including arthritis of the knee. They predict that there are more genes not yet discovered. You could have a gene linked to arthritis without knowing it, and a virus or injury could trigger arthritis of the knee.

Though the cause is unknown, some risk factors increase the possibility of arthritis of the knee. Risk factors for osteoarthritis, specifically, include:

Age: Osteoarthritis happens to older adults more often than younger adults and children.

Bone anomalies: You are at a higher risk for osteoarthritis if your bones or joints are naturally crooked.

Gout: Gout, also a type of inflammatory arthritis, might lead to osteoarthritis.

Injuries: Knee injuries can

cause arthritis of the knee.

Stress: A lot of stress on your knees from jogging, playing sports, or working an active job can lead to osteoarthritis of the knee.

Weight: Extra weight puts more pressure on your knees.

There are many signs and symptoms of arthritis of the knee: creaking, clicking, grinding, or snapping noises (crepitus); difficulty walking; joint pain that changes (gets better or worse) depending on the weather; joint stiffness; knee buckling; knee joint pain that progresses slowly or pain that happens suddenly; skin redness or swelling.

Healthcare providers cannot cure knee arthritis.

But they have some tips that might reduce the severity of your symptoms and possibly stop the arthritis from getting worse, including maintaining a healthy weight and exercising using low-impact activities (swimming, cycling) instead of high-impact activities (jogging, tennis). Aim for about 150 minutes of exercise per week; wear shock-absorbing inserts in your shoes; apply heat or ice to the area; wear a knee sleeve or brace; do physical therapy exercises that help with flexibility, strength, and motion; use a cane; receive acupuncture and platelet-rich plasma.

Check with your healthcare provider before you try any of these tips.

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Sugar substitute scrutiny: aspartame's carcinogenic concerns

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) have jointly released assessments on the health impacts of the artificial sweetener aspartame. These assessments come amid concerns about the potential carcinogenicity of aspartame and its widespread use in various food and beverage products since the 1980s.

IARC has classified aspartame as "possibly carcinogenic to humans" (Group 2B), citing limited evidence for its carcinogenicity, specifically in relation to hepatocellular carcinoma, a form of liver cancer. This classification is based on limited evidence in both humans and experimental animals and limited understanding of the mechanisms that may lead to cancer.

On the other hand, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) reaffirmed the acceptable daily intake (ADI) of aspartame at 40 mg/kg body weight. JECFA concluded that the available data did not provide sufficient reason to change this established limit, indicating that aspartame consumption within this range is safe.

Both assessments noted limitations in the available evidence for cancer and other health effects associated with aspartame consumption. Notably, JECFA factored in IARC's classifications but found the evidence on cancer risk in humans not convincing.

Both IARC and WHO stressed the need for more research to refine our understanding of whether aspartame poses a carcinogenic hazard. They will continue monitoring new evidence and encourage independent research groups to conduct further studies on the potential health effects of aspartame exposure.

The assessments aim to provide clarity on aspartame's safety and its potential implications for consumer health, particularly regarding cancer risk.

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