

Promoting health and wellness in Bangladesh

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As Bangladesh commemorates World Health Day today on April 7th, it is crucial to reflect on the prevailing health challenges facing the nation. Among these challenges, diabetes and heart conditions stand out as significant contributors to the country's healthcare burden. With increasing urbanisation, sedentary lifestyles, and dietary shifts, these non-communicable diseases have become alarmingly prevalent.

Diabetes has reached epidemic proportions as have heart conditions, including hypertension and cardiovascular diseases. Unhealthy diets high in salt and saturated fats, and lack of regular exercise contribute to the high prevalence of both.

In the face of these health challenges, initiatives like Dhaka Flow have emerged as beacon of hope, advocating for healthier lifestyles and preventive healthcare measures. Dhaka Flow encourages individuals to adopt simple yet impactful habits that promote overall well-being and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.

Here are five habit changes recommended by Dhaka Flow:

Walk in nature: A brisk walk in a park on the roof not only boosts physical fitness but also invigorates the mind. Walking in the morning in particular helps improve circulation, enhances metabolism, and sets a positive tone for the day ahead.

Balanced diet: Adopting a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins is essential for managing diabetes and heart health. Avoiding processed foods, sugary beverages, and excessive salt can help regulate blood sugar levels and reduce the risk of heart disease.

Yoga: Incorporating regular exercise into daily routines is paramount for maintaining optimal health. Yoga not only improves strength, stamina and flexibility, it also includes breathwork and meditation, which promote overall fitness at any given age.

Hydration: Drinking an adequate amount of water throughout the day is crucial for proper bodily functions. Staying hydrated helps regulate blood pressure, supports kidney function, and aids in digestion. Opting for water over sugary drinks is a simple yet effective way to promote better health.

Stress release: Avoiding stress is impossible, hence it is important to learn methods to regulate and release tension. Sharing problems with support group networks and friends, seeking therapy for help in times of chronic stress and to trauma-healing, learning how to turn on the parasympathetic nervous system through yoga and meditation can be life-saving.

By embracing these lifestyle changes, individuals can take proactive steps towards safeguarding their health and reducing the burden of chronic diseases in Bangladesh. As we observe the World Health Day today, let us reaffirm our commitment to prioritising health and wellness, not just for ourselves but for the collective well-being of our nation. Together, we can build a healthier, happier Bangladesh for generations to come.



WORLD HEALTH DAY 2024

My health, my right

STAR HEALTH DESK

Around the world, the right to health of millions is increasingly under threat. Diseases and disasters loom large as causes of death and disability.

Conflicts are devastating, causing death, pain, hunger, and psychological distress.

The burning of fossil fuels is simultaneously driving the climate crisis and taking away our right to breathe clean air, with indoor and outdoor air pollution claiming a life every 5 seconds.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Council on the Economics of Health for All has found that at least 140 countries recognise health as a human right in their constitutions. However, countries are failing to enact and implement laws that guarantee their populations' access to health services. This underpins the fact that at least 4.5 billion people—more than half of the world's population—were not

fully covered by essential health services in 2021.

To address these types of challenges, the theme for World Health Day 2024 is 'My health, my right'. This year's theme was chosen to champion the right of everyone, everywhere, to have access to quality health services, education, and information, as well as safe drinking water, clean air, good nutrition, quality housing, decent working and environmental conditions, and freedom from discrimination.

Understanding your health rights is crucial. You have the right to safe and quality care without discrimination, privacy and confidentiality of your health information, informed consent for treatment, and bodily autonomy.

Taking action to protect your right to health is essential. Advocating for policy changes, organising communities, and promoting health as a priority are impactful ways to drive change.

For governments, enacting legislation to realise the right to health across various sectors is vital. This includes implementing policies to tax

harmful substances like tobacco and alcohol, promoting healthy environments by reducing fossil fuel subsidies, and ensuring fair and equal working conditions for health and care workers.

Investing in health is not just a moral imperative but also makes economic sense. Globally, we need additional funding to scale up primary health care, which is essential for delivering accessible, acceptable, and high-quality health services to all.

Building strong health systems centered on primary health care, fostering transparency and accountability, and engaging the public in decision-making processes are critical steps toward achieving health equity.

It is also crucial to address the health needs of marginalised populations and safeguard access to health care during conflicts and humanitarian crises, in line with international humanitarian and human rights laws.

Ultimately, recognising and upholding the right to health is fundamental to creating a healthier, more equitable world for all.



HAVE A NICE DAY Less is more

DR RUBA UL MURSHED

The common saying 'Less is more' rings true with endless significance. Embracing this timeless wisdom, today's researchers discovered 'The joy of simplicity' and the reality behind the above phrase. In a rapidly modernising society, scholars have long sought the answers to a fulfilling life.

The modernism movement in architecture gave rise to a concept that has applications in various sectors, such as literature and lifestyle. This architectural principle emerged from the idea that simplicity and clarity lead to good design. The Simplicity Institute conducted a pioneering poll across several countries and discovered that 87% of respondents were happier now than when they had more items.

Today, when the world suffers from an epidemic of loneliness and selfishness, having a deep and meaningful relationship is more valuable than winning a striking lottery. Other researchers discovered that people are happier when they spend money on experiences rather than items, because experiences can prolong happy emotions.

Developing a sound mind is about compassion and spending quality time with loved ones, not just wandering at bazaars. Studies also suggest that those with fewer possessions are often more grateful and happier than those with abundance. Expressing appreciation not only boosts mood, but it also reduces stress and anxiety and improves sleep.

Cultivating a forgiving spirit and practicing small acts of kindness are essential for emotional and personal happiness, provided that the intentions are pure. It enables people to be mentally healthy, have inner peace, and be purposeful. The search for a simple way of life forces people to be clear about their beliefs, passions, and goals for a life of contentment.

Before going to sleep, I would like to remind myself and others to consider at least two things we can appreciate about each day. However, this idea seems simple to the humble-minded.

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Study reveals TB-cancer connection: Urgent call for screening

The European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases will host a groundbreaking study that reveals a concerning association between tuberculosis (TB) and various types of cancer. Led by Dr Jiwon Kim and Dr Jinnam Kim from South Korea, the study sheds light on the heightened cancer risk faced by individuals with current or previous TB infections.

Treatment for tuberculosis (TB) can be successful, but it may leave behind complications that increase susceptibility to cancer. The study, based on data from South Korea's National Health Insurance Service, examined records from 2010 to 2017. Comparing TB patients to a matched control group, researchers found a stark difference in cancer incidence.

In the study, TB patients significantly increased their risk of developing multiple types of cancer. Lung cancer risk was amplified by 3.6 times, while blood, gynaecological, and colorectal cancers were also notably higher. Even thyroid and oesophagus stomach cancers showed increased prevalence.

Beyond tuberculosis (TB), researchers identified lifestyle factors such as smoking, heavy alcohol consumption, chronic liver disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) as independent risk factors for cancer.

Dr Kim emphasises the importance of this finding, stating that TB is not just a respiratory issue but also an independent risk factor for cancer. The study underscores the necessity for comprehensive screening and management of cancer in TB patients.

These findings underscore the urgency for healthcare providers to prioritise cancer screening for individuals with a history of TB, potentially saving lives through early detection and intervention.

Bariatric surgery's impact on type 2 diabetes

Researchers recently published an article in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), following the journeys of individuals battling type 2 diabetes over an impressive 11-year period. The study focused on comparing the outcomes of two treatment approaches: bariatric surgery versus medical management.

Among the 262 patients involved, with an average age of 50 and a mean body mass index (BMI) of 36 kg/m², the findings were striking.

Firstly, after 7 years, those who underwent bariatric surgery experienced a remarkable reduction in their average glycosylated haemoglobin (HbA1c) levels compared to their counterparts undergoing medical management. This decline signified better blood sugar control among those who opted for surgery.

Interestingly, both Roux-en-Y gastric bypass and sleeve gastrectomy emerged as equally effective procedures, outperforming gastric banding in terms of weight loss over the 12-year period.

Moreover, the study revealed that while bariatric surgery initially led to higher rates of diabetes remission, the gap gradually

narrowed over time. By the 12-year mark, fewer patients maintained remission, suggesting a need for ongoing monitoring and support.

One of the most striking revelations was the impact on medication use: a significant proportion of patients who underwent surgery were able to discontinue their diabetes medications, contrasting sharply with the persistent need for medication among those receiving medical management.

Importantly, both treatment groups experienced low rates of major adverse cardiovascular events. However, patients who underwent surgery were more susceptible to gastrointestinal symptoms and nutritional deficiencies, highlighting the importance of comprehensive post-operative care.

Overall, this study underscores the potential of bariatric surgery as a long-term solution for individuals grappling with type 2 diabetes, offering sustained weight loss and improved glycemic control. Yet, it also underscores the need for informed decision-making, thorough patient education, and vigilant post-operative care to mitigate potential risks and ensure optimal outcomes.

The toll of nonstandard work schedules

Wen-Jui Han from New York University recently published a study in the open-access journal PLOS ONE, suggesting that our early work hours may have an impact on our health later in life. Wen-Jui Han from New York University conducted the study, analyzing data from over 7,000 individuals in the US over a 30-year period to understand the impact of different work schedules on health outcomes.

The findings revealed that individuals with nonstandard work schedules, such as evening, night, or variable hours, tended to experience poorer sleep, physical health issues, and higher levels of depressive symptoms by the time they reached age 50 compared to those who worked traditional nine-to-five hours throughout their careers.




Interestingly, the study noted that

those who started with stable work hours in their 20s but later shifted to volatile schedules in their 30s faced particularly significant health challenges.

Han, the lead researcher, suggests that unstable work schedules can lead to poor sleep, physical fatigue, and emotional exhaustion, ultimately impacting overall health. This study underscores how work patterns can contribute to health inequities, particularly for

vulnerable groups such as women, black individuals, and those with lower levels of education. In today's society, where work arrangements are increasingly precarious, the study emphasises the importance of considering the long-term health implications of different work schedules and the need for policies to address these disparities.







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