

Breaking the silence on hepatitis!

On 28 July 2025, the world observed World Hepatitis Day, with the World Health Organisation (WHO) calling on governments and partners to accelerate efforts to eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health threat. The theme for this year, “Hepatitis: Let’s break it down,” urged action to dismantle barriers to prevention, testing, and treatment—from stigma to funding gaps.

“Every 30 seconds, someone dies from a hepatitis-related liver disease or liver cancer. Yet we have the tools to stop hepatitis,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

Viral hepatitis types A through E are major causes of liver infection, but only B, C, and D can lead to chronic illness and raise the risk of cirrhosis and liver cancer. These three types affected over 300 million people globally and caused more than 1.3 million deaths annually.

Hepatitis D was recently classified as carcinogenic to humans, like hepatitis B and C. WHO published updated testing guidelines for hepatitis B and D in 2024 and continued monitoring clinical outcomes from new treatments.

Hepatitis C remained curable with oral medication in 2–3 months, while hepatitis B could be controlled with lifelong therapy. Treatment options for hepatitis D were still evolving. WHO stressed that expanding services—vaccination, testing, harm reduction, and treatment—within national health systems was essential.

WHO also partnered with Rotary International and the World Hepatitis Alliance to amplify global advocacy and emphasise the critical role of community leadership in eliminating hepatitis and reducing liver cancer deaths by 2030.

Source: World Health Organisation



NATURE’S FIRST NUTRITION

Prioritising breastfeeding for a healthier future

DR AHAD ADNAN

World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) is a powerful reminder of the vital importance of breastfeeding, both for child development and societal well-being. First commemorated in 1992 by the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), this global event—now supported by WHO and UNICEF—aims to promote exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life. World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) 2025 is observed globally from 1 to 7 August 2025. Breast milk provides essential nutrients, prevents life-threatening diseases, and supports optimal physical and cognitive development. The official theme for WBW 2025 is “Prioritise breastfeeding: create sustainable support systems.”

Every mother must be informed of the optimal feeding practices. The national guidelines recommend initiating breastfeeding within one hour of birth, providing only breast milk for the first six months, and introducing nutritious, hygienically prepared complementary foods from the seventh month up to two years. Antenatal counselling should emphasise the advantages of breast milk, the dangers of formula, correct feeding techniques, milk storage methods, and the importance of maternity leave.

Breast milk alone meets all a baby’s energy and nutritional needs for the first six months. It reduces the risk of diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and many other non-communicable diseases. For mothers, breastfeeding not only helps reduce post-delivery complications but also lowers the risk of osteoporosis and cancers of the breast, ovaries, and uterus.

Formula feeding, on the other hand, is expensive, contributes to illness and malnutrition, undermines mother–child bonding, and contradicts nature’s intent. By discouraging unnecessary formula use and supporting proper complementary feeding, we can help prevent undernutrition, obesity, frequent infections, and developmental delays.

So why would a mother choose otherwise? Often, it comes down to incorrect latching, poor positioning, or a lack of understanding of how breast milk is produced and released. Health professionals must take responsibility for addressing these issues through early support and education.

Workplace conditions also play a critical role. Many working mothers struggle due to a lack of maternity leave, privacy, or facilities for expressing and storing milk. Supportive, family-friendly workplace policies—such as paid

parental leave, breastfeeding breaks, safe and clean lactation spaces, and accessible childcare—are essential. These not only help mothers continue breastfeeding but also promote workforce participation, employee satisfaction, and long-term economic gain.

Fathers should also be encouraged to take paternity leave, fostering shared responsibilities in child-rearing and promoting gender equality.

Though maternity leave in Bangladesh lasts six months, many other countries fall short. Even in nations with resources, emotional and societal support for breastfeeding remains insufficient. The situation is even more fragile in developing countries, where working mothers receive minimal help.

No discussion of breastfeeding in Bangladesh would be complete without honouring Professor Dr M Q K Talukder, a pioneer of the breastfeeding movement. His advocacy continues to inspire the fight against artificial feeding and empowers mothers nationwide. In this World Breastfeeding Week, his legacy serves as a guiding light for a healthier, more natural future.

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RSV

The winter virus that can break more than just your breath

Most people think of Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) as a common winter illness that causes coughs, colds, or breathing problems—especially in older adults. But a recent study published in the Clinical Infectious Diseases suggests that RSV may pose a far more serious risk to the heart than previously believed.

Researchers looking at adults hospitalised with RSV found that a large number experienced heart-related problems, not just during their illness but especially in the first month after getting infected. These heart complications included heart failure, irregular heartbeats like atrial fibrillation, and even heart attacks. Shockingly, many of these patients had no previous history of heart disease.

In fact, the risk of having a heart problem during RSV infection was much higher than in the six months before getting sick. Most of these complications occurred within the first week of falling ill.

What is more worrying is that more than half of the cases were first-time heart events, meaning RSV may actually trigger these conditions, not just worsen existing ones.

This new research sends a clear message: RSV is not just a lung infection—it can seriously affect your heart too. With colder months approaching and RSV season returning, older adults and people with underlying health conditions should stay alert.

Prevention, early diagnosis, and proper care during RSV illness may help lower the risk of these hidden and dangerous complications. As science learns more, it is clear that RSV deserves just as much attention as the flu or COVID when it comes to heart health.



The fundamentals of fat loss: A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH

RAISA MEHZABEEN

In an era dominated by fad diets and quick-fix solutions, sustainable fat loss remains a topic riddled with misconceptions. Many individuals embark on extreme diets or punishing workout regimens, only to find themselves frustrated with little to no long-term results. However, evidence-based strategies highlight a more practical and sustainable approach to fat loss—one that prioritises lifestyle changes over drastic restrictions.

At the core of fat loss lies a calorie deficit—consuming fewer calories than the body expends. However, this does not imply starvation; rather, it emphasises mindful eating, where protein intake plays a crucial role.

Including protein in every meal aids in satiety, muscle preservation, and overall metabolic health. Complementing this with regular movement, such as getting sufficient steps daily, ensures that energy

expenditure remains consistent.

Beyond diet and movement, hydration and sleep serve as foundational pillars for effective fat loss. Water intake not only supports digestion and metabolism but also helps regulate hunger cues.



Meanwhile, quality sleep is essential for hormone balance, recovery, and overall energy regulation.

Strength training, ideally two to three times a week, is another key aspect. Unlike excessive cardio, which may lead to muscle loss, strength training helps build lean

muscle mass, improving metabolic rate and body composition. Minimising alcohol consumption also aids in fat loss, as alcoholic beverages often contribute empty calories while impairing metabolism and recovery.

Perhaps one of the most overlooked yet essential aspects of fat loss is the mental approach. The pressure to adhere to a “perfect” routine often leads to guilt and burnout. Instead, adopting a flexible mindset—where progress is prioritised over perfection—fosters consistency and long-term success.

In essence, fat loss is not about deprivation but about making sustainable choices that support overall well-being. By focusing on these fundamental principles, individuals can achieve not just weight loss but a healthier and more balanced lifestyle.

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Bridge Gaps, Deliver Nutrition to All

The Daily Star (IDS): How has Care Nutrition Ltd’s (CNL) fortified complementary foods and micronutrient supplements improved nutritional outcomes for mothers and children in underserved communities, and what evidence supports these impacts?

Ali Amjad Hussain (AAH): There is significant clinical evidence supporting the efficacy of the humanitarian products we produce, including Small Quantity Lipid Based Nutritional Supplements (LNS SQ), Ready to Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF), Ready to Use Supplemental Foods (RUSF), Microbiota Directed Food (MDF), and Lipid Based Nutritional Supplements for Pregnant and Lactating Women (LNS-PLW). The specific evidence varies based on the product, target population, and study design, but generally these products have been shown to improve nutritional status and health outcomes. We are happy to share more specific details with anyone interested in learning more about the specific products and clinical trials.

Our commercial products borrow from this clinical evidence, though we have not conducted randomised control trials of their efficacy as these products are meant to be consumed by the general population and not distributed through humanitarian, government, or public health channels. When we develop any of our commercial products, we aim to include many of the same macro and micronutrients as are in our humanitarian products in order to create significantly more nutritious alternatives to the most popular imported brands, and to make them available at prices all families in Bangladesh can afford.

TDS: How does CNL ensure that its

nutrition products are accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate for low-income and rural populations, particularly in addressing specific dietary needs and preferences?

AAH: When we develop our commercial products, we focus on identifying the product categories and formats that are most popular with consumers already and that can be formulated to incorporate key macro and micronutrients without negatively impacting



TDS: How does CNL monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its interventions in diverse settings, and what key lessons from past efforts are informing future strategies for scaling impact in low-resource regions?

AAH: For clinical and humanitarian products, we partner with teams of physician scientists to conduct clinical trials and evaluate efficacy. Some of our clinical research partners include Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, Washington University in St. Louis, icddr,b, Medecin Sans Frontieres, and The

Ali Amjad Hussain
Managing Director at Care Nutrition Ltd.

Gates Foundation.

TDS: In what ways have development partners like iDE supported CNL’s mission, and how can such collaborations be leveraged further for community education, co-funded initiatives, local capacity building, and sustained knowledge sharing?

AAH: iDE is a key development partner of Care Nutrition Ltd. (CNL), advancing a market-led approach to nutrition access in remote, low-income areas of Bangladesh. Through community education and retailer engagement, iDE raises awareness of good nutrition and CNL’s products. Expanding this partnership by co-funding pilots, building local capacity, and sharing lessons will help more vulnerable families access affordable, nutritious foods in hard-to-reach communities.

This content has been published under ‘Catalyzing Markets’ – a media campaign jointly initiated by iDE and The Daily Star. This interview is conducted by Zahidur Rabbi

Why friendships are your life’s quiet superpower

We often underestimate just how powerful friendship really is. While careers, routines, and to-do lists fill up our days, it is often the people we share laughter, stories, and silence with who leave the biggest impact on our lives.

Real friends do more than fill up your contact list—they uplift your mood, support your goals, and remind you who you are when you forget. Whether it is a shoulder to cry on or someone to split dessert with, meaningful connections can improve your mental and even physical health. In fact, strong

friendships have been linked to lower stress, better heart health, and even longer lifespans.

Still, meaningful friendships do not happen overnight. They take time, honesty, and effort from both sides. You do not need dozens of friends—just a few good ones who truly get you.

Looking to meet new people? Try joining a hobby group, volunteering, attending local events, or taking up a new class. Even reconnecting with an old acquaintance could lead to something deeper. The key?

Be open, approachable, and interested.

And remember, while friends can be amazing emotional support, they are not a substitute for mental health care. If you are feeling overwhelmed or stuck, do not hesitate to seek professional guidance.

Not every conversation will turn into a lifelong bond—and that is fine. Keep showing up with kindness and authenticity, and the right people will find you. Because in a world that often feels noisy, a true friend is pure gold.

