

## Cholera kills more people for second consecutive year, while prevention and treatment available

Cholera deaths have surged for the second consecutive year, with the World Health Organisation's (WHO) reporting a 5% rise in cases and a 50% increase in deaths in 2024 compared to 2023. Over 6,000 people died from this preventable and treatable disease, which continues to spread due to factors like conflict, climate change, population displacement, and poor water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure.

Sixty countries reported cholera cases in 2024, up from 45 the previous year, with Africa, the Middle East, and Asia accounting for 98% of cases. Twelve countries saw outbreaks of over 10,000 cases, including several experiencing large outbreaks for the first time. The case fatality rate in Africa rose from 1.4% to 1.9%, highlighting the fragility of health systems and limited access to treatment. A quarter of deaths occurred outside health facilities.

To combat cholera, access to clean water, sanitation, hygiene, accurate information, and rapid treatment are essential. New cholera vaccines, such as Euvichol-S®, have been added to the global stockpile, but high demand has created supply shortages. In 2024, 40 million doses were approved for emergency use, but demand continues to outstrip supply.

The global cholera crisis persists into 2025, with 31 countries reporting outbreaks. WHO assesses the global risk from cholera as very high and is responding with urgency to reduce deaths and contain outbreaks in countries around the world. WHO continues to support countries through strengthened public health surveillance, case management, and prevention measures; provision of essential medical supplies; coordination of field deployments with partners; and support for risk communication and community engagement.

SOURCE: WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION



## Essential health screenings for those over 60: A GUIDE TO HEALTHY AGEING

### STAR HEALTH DESK

Reaching your 60s is a milestone, but it is also a time to focus more on your health. Regular screenings can help detect potential issues early, allowing for better management and prevention of serious conditions. Here is a guide to essential health checkups for those over 60 that can keep you active, independent, and healthy for years to come.

**1. Blood pressure check:** High blood pressure often has no symptoms but can lead to heart disease, stroke, and kidney damage. It is recommended to check your blood pressure annually, or more frequently if readings are elevated or if you have other risk factors like diabetes or a family history of hypertension.

**2. Colorectal cancer screening:** Colorectal cancer is one of the most preventable cancers when detected early. Screening for those over 60 is crucial. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends starting at age 45 and continuing through 75. Common screening methods include colonoscopies every 10 years or annual stool tests.

**3. Prostate cancer (for men):** Prostate cancer is common in older men. Men aged 55 to 69 should discuss

the benefits and risks of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) testing with their doctor. Routine screening is not typically recommended for those over 70 unless there are specific concerns.

**4. Breast cancer (for women):** For women, regular mammograms are essential as breast cancer risk increases with age. The American Cancer Society recommends mammograms every 1-2 years for women between 40 and 50, depending on personal and family history. Your doctor will guide you on when to start and how often to get screened.

**5. Bone health:** Osteoporosis makes bones fragile, increasing fracture risk. Women over 65 should have bone density tests to check for osteoporosis. If you have risk factors such as a family history of fractures, earlier testing may be necessary.

**6. Eye and hearing tests:** Vision issues like cataracts and macular degeneration become more common with age. Regular eye exams help preserve vision and detect problems early. Similarly, hearing loss affects many older adults, often without noticeable symptoms. A hearing test can ensure you do not miss out on important conversations or sounds.

**7. Cholesterol and blood sugar screenings:** High cholesterol and blood sugar are major risk factors for heart disease and diabetes. Regular screenings help detect these conditions early. Cholesterol should be checked at least once every 5 years, while blood sugar levels should be monitored to catch diabetes early, particularly if you have risk factors.

**8. Thyroid function test:** Thyroid problems, such as hypothyroidism, can affect metabolism, mood, and energy levels. A thyroid function test can help identify any issues, especially if you experience symptoms like fatigue or unexplained weight changes.

**9. Hepatitis C screening:** Hepatitis C is a liver infection that can go undiagnosed for years. A simple blood test can detect the virus early, preventing liver damage and other complications.

**Maintaining a healthy lifestyle:** While screenings are essential, maintaining a healthy lifestyle is just as important. Eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, and managing stress help you stay healthy as you age. Avoid smoking and limit alcohol intake, and make sure to get enough sleep.

### BOOSTING WORKPLACE WELLBEING

## Simple steps for a healthier, happier workforce

Creating a healthy and positive work environment is essential for maintaining both productivity and mental health. With nearly 60% of the global population engaged in work, the workplace often becomes a major part of our daily lives. Ensuring that it is a place where individuals feel supported and valued can make all the difference in mental wellbeing.

For employees, small changes can have a big impact. Prioritising self-care is key: take regular breaks to avoid burnout, ensure you're getting enough sleep, and nourish your body with a healthy diet. Learning how to set boundaries—like finishing on time and saying no when your plate is full—can help prevent work from overwhelming personal life. Strengthening relationships with colleagues by building supportive connections at work also fosters a positive atmosphere. Establishing a clear end-of-day routine signals the end of work and helps you mentally switch off.

On the other hand, employers play a crucial role in fostering a mentally healthy workplace. Providing access to mental health resources, offering flexibility, and creating a culture of openness where employees feel comfortable discussing their wellbeing can make all the difference.

By prioritising mental health, both individually and as a team, we can create a workplace where everyone thrives—mentally, emotionally, and professionally.



### PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS

## Timely screening, modern treatment, and a message of hope

### DR ARUNANGSHU DAS

September is prostate cancer awareness month. Every year, this month is observed worldwide to raise awareness about prostate cancer and its treatment. According to the World Health Organisation, around 2,500 men in Bangladesh are newly diagnosed with prostate cancer each year, and approximately 1,500 die from it. The risk increases significantly after the age of 50. In Bangladesh too, cases are being detected more frequently. Importantly, when diagnosed at an early stage, prostate cancer is highly controllable, and patients can continue to live normal lives.

#### WHO ARE AT RISK?

- » Men above the age of 50
- » Those with a family history of prostate cancer
- » Men of African or Asian descent face relatively higher risk
- » Obesity, high-fat diet, and sedentary lifestyle

#### Why screening matters

Prostate cancer often develops silently, showing no symptoms in the early stages, which makes regular screening vital. The two main methods for detecting prostate cancer are the PSA (prostate-specific antigen) blood test and the digital rectal examination (DRE). The PSA test measures the level of a protein that may be elevated in the presence of cancer, while the DRE allows the doctor to physically check for irregularities in the prostate.

In the UK, men should start screening at age 50 if they are at average risk. However, those with a family history of prostate cancer should begin screening earlier, typically at age 45, to ensure early detection. Early diagnosis increases the chances of successful treatment, making these screenings a crucial part of men's health from middle age onwards.

Benefit of screening: It allows

cancer to be detected at an early stage, when treatment is most effective.

#### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

**Early stage – often no symptoms, but may include:**

- » Difficulty starting urination
- » Weak urine stream
- » Frequent urge to urinate, especially at night
- » Interrupted urination
- » Dribbling after urination



## CANCER AWARENESS

**Advanced stage – symptoms may include:**

- » Blood in urine
- » Blood in semen
- » Pain or burning during urination
- » Pain in the pelvis or lower back
- » Bone pain (if cancer spreads to bones)
- » Breathing difficulty (if spread to lungs)
- » Weight loss, loss of appetite
- » Unusual fatigue or weakness

#### HOW PROSTATE CANCER IS DIAGNOSED

Diagnosis usually involves several steps:

- » **Digital Rectal Examination (DRE):** the doctor examines the

prostate through the rectum.

» **PSA blood test:** measures PSA level in blood

» **Imaging tests:** such as transrectal ultrasound (TRUS), MRI, or PSMA PET-CT

» **Prostate biopsy:** TRUS or MRI-guided tissue sampling, which confirms the diagnosis

#### ADVANCES IN TREATMENT

Prostate cancer treatment today is no longer limited to surgery or long-term radiotherapy.

#### Robotic surgery

- » High precision, minimally invasive
- » Faster recovery, fewer complications
- » Early return to normal life
- » SBRT (Stereotactic Body Radiotherapy)
- » Completed in just a few sessions (usually 5)
- » Delivers radiation precisely to cancer cells
- » Shorter duration, fewer side effects, excellent outcomes
- » **Hormone therapy and modern chemotherapy**
- » Effective options for patients with advanced disease

#### WORLD CLASS TREATMENT NOW IN BANGLADESH

Many still believe advanced treatment requires going abroad. In reality, leading cancer centres in Bangladesh now offer modern SBRT radiotherapy, advanced chemotherapy, and immunotherapy. Patients can receive world-class care without leaving the country.

**September, observed globally as Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, reminds us all:**

- » Stay aware and undergo regular health checkups
- » Begin treatment promptly if detected early
- » Remain hopeful—because modern prostate cancer treatment is already available here in Bangladesh.

The writer is a consultant at the Square Cancer Centre.

## Expanding access to safe sanitation

**The Daily Star (TDS):** What strategies does LIXIL use to ensure WASH products reach even the most remote and vulnerable households?

**Rashedul Alam Sarker (RAS):** LIXIL Corporation, a Japanese MNC, present in more than 150 countries, is committed to making affordable WASH products accessible to everyone by working with a wide network of partners. In Bangladesh, its long-standing collaboration with RFL has built a strong retail and supply chain that delivers products even to remote areas. Partnerships with organisations such as iDE Bangladesh have also supported local entrepreneurs, from latrine producers to sales agents, by helping make sanitation businesses profitable. These efforts have created an effective ecosystem for expanding access to WASH products across the country.

**TDS:** Affordability is a big challenge for low-income families. How does LIXIL keep its sanitation and hygiene solutions both affordable and high quality?

**RAS:** SATO products, part of LIXIL's range, are designed to meet the sanitation needs of households in off-grid settings. They use gravity-powered systems, making them simple, durable, water-efficient, practical and affordable. Made from high-quality plastic, they are easy to transport, install and maintain, helping reduce overall costs. Local manufacturing also ensures they remain accessible to low-income families while maintaining quality.

**TDS:** How does LIXIL collaborate with entrepreneurs, service providers, and retailers to improve access, installation, and maintenance of sanitation products?

**RAS:** Through its local partners, LIXIL has built a strong sanitation ecosystem in Bangladesh. Entrepreneurs and retailers, many with over a decade of experience selling these products, are well aware of their benefits and social impact. LIXIL provides training, installation tools and promotional support while also gathering feedback to refine its products and help local businesses grow. In

public health, while introducing new gender-inclusive sanitation solutions.

**TDS:** How does LIXIL's partnership approach and product innovation help address the unique cultural, environmental, and climate challenges in Bangladesh to accelerate progress toward SDG 6?

**RAS:** LIXIL works with partners in Bangladesh to improve sanitation and hygiene while advancing SDG 6. Through collaborations with NGOs such as iDE, it gathers consumer insights to design



#### Rashedul Alam Sarker

Leader-Bangladesh, SATO, LIXIL Corporation

climate resilient, affordable, relevant SATO products for households, schools and workplaces. Supply is supported by global manufacturing hubs and trusted local producers, while demand is built through awareness initiatives with governments and NGOs.

LIXIL also trains masons, plumbers and retailers to strengthen local capacity and ensure long-term product use. Partnering with corporations across sectors, it integrates sanitation into supply chains, supporting ESG objectives and expanding access to safely managed solutions nationwide.

*This content has been published under 'Catalyzing Markets' - a media campaign jointly initiated by iDE and The Daily Star. This interview is conducted by Md. Zahidur Rabbi*

iDE, a global nonprofit organisation in 12 countries since 1984, drives poverty reduction through market-driven solutions in Bangladesh, scaling agriculture, WASH, climate resilience, clean energy, and women's empowerment.