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STRIKE a co-ord!

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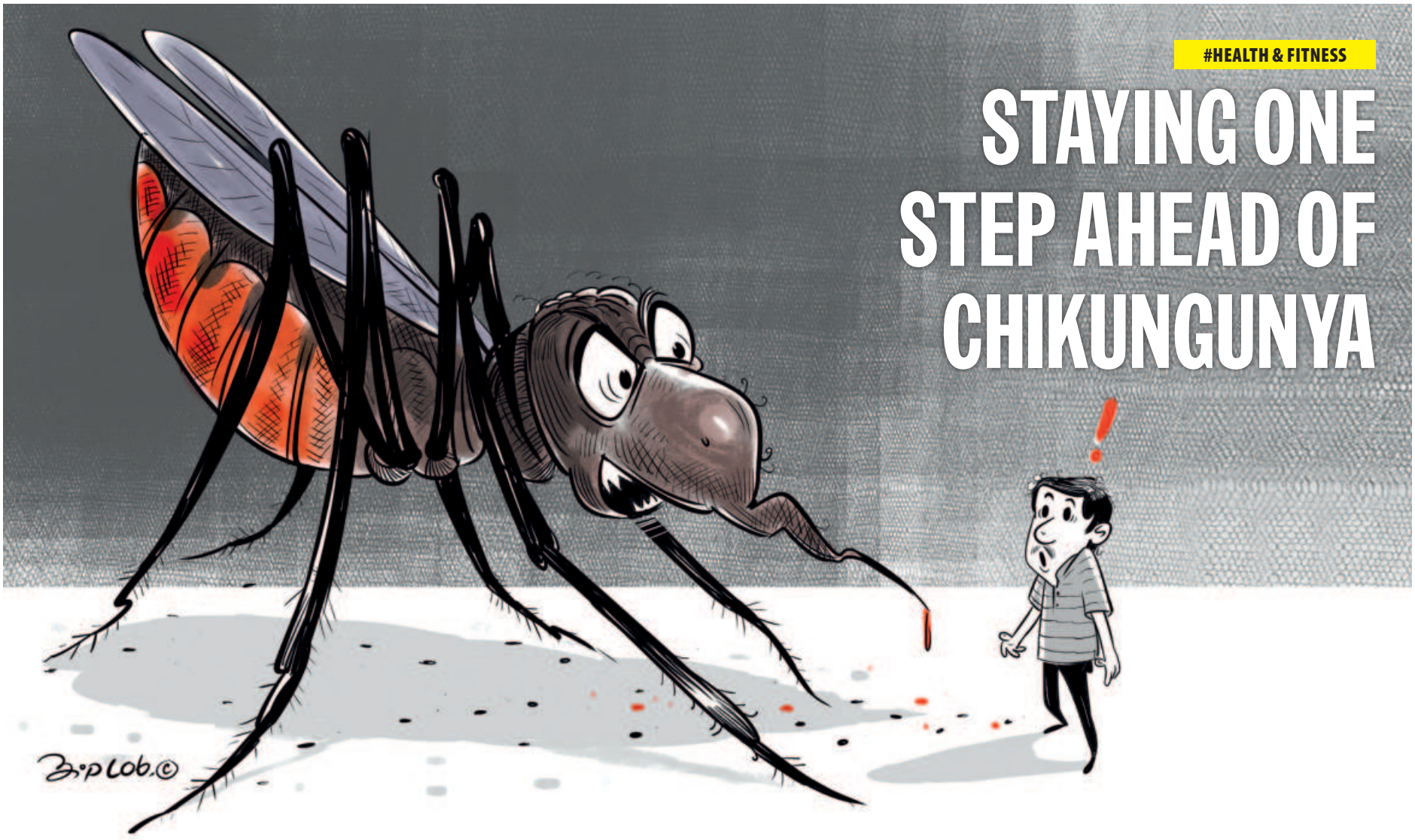
PHOTO: ADNAN RAHMAN MODEL: FABLIHA STYLING & FASHION DIRECTION: SONIA YEASMIN ISHA WARDROBE: COMFYSTYLE WOMEN'S COORD SETS
JEWELLERY: ZAFS JEWELS MAKEUP: SUMON RAHAT HAIR: PROBINA SPECIAL THANKS TO ZAFREEN KHAN

#HEALTH & FITNESS

STAYING ONE STEP AHEAD OF CHIKUNGUNYA



Recently, chikungunya has been making headlines. Staying one step ahead means treating every drop of stagnant water and every uncovered container as a potential threat. With consistent small actions, both at home and in the neighbourhood, we can protect our families from needless suffering.

The disease is spread by the same Aedes mosquitoes that already trouble us with dengue. The puddle left to sit on construction sites after rain, the half-broken bucket behind the house, or the uncovered water jar on the balcony are all common places for the insects to thrive. Prevention is the only effective weapon in the battle against chikungunya — a cumulation of practices rather than a single action that can build a barrier of defence around families and communities.

Using mosquito nets and repellents is a classic defensive measure. However, a net might seem like a bother on hot, humid evenings; small actions like placing nets on doors and windows can have a significant impact. Clothing is important as well. When going outdoors during peak biting hours, loose long sleeves and trousers can work as a line of defence.

In many Bangladeshi homes, keeping water is a necessity, not a choice. However, jars and drums become larval nurseries when people leave them exposed. A fine mesh cover or even a simple lid that fits snugly can end that cycle.

Protecting the healthy while providing care for the ill is another step that is often overlooked. By keeping a person from getting bitten during the first week of their illness, you can stop mosquitoes from transmitting the virus. It is a communal duty as much as a personal one. Neighbourhood clean-up campaigns, which are frequently organised by nearby schools, mosques, or even resident groups, are more than just symbolic — they actually reduce breeding grounds.

And then there are subtle defences, trimming overgrown vegetation, avoiding ornamental plants that retain water in their leaves, and designing homes and compounds with adequate drainage to prevent rainwater from accumulating can all be beneficial.

By Rehnuma Shahreen
Illustration by Biplob Chakroborty

#FYI

Fatherhood beyond biology

In Bangladesh, adoption has slowly emerged from the shadows of stigma, embraced by some as an act of love while remaining a hesitant choice for others. Through the stories of two fathers, this article explores how families today are redefining what it means to be a parent beyond biology.

For Riad Ahmed Khan, 44, a businessman, the journey to parenthood was long and exhausting. "My wife and I got married when we were a bit over 37 years old, and trying to have our child was a very painstaking and long process, especially for my wife," he recalled.

"We had to keep attempting the process of IVF over a period of more than five years. The whole experience was hopeful and frustrating in almost equal measure. During this process, adoption was something that we had to think about, in case the IVF process did not work out for us."

Eventually, the IVF process did succeed. "As the IVF process worked out for us in the end, we are not planning to have a second child as it is."

Still, adoption had been a serious topic within his family.

"We received a lot of support from family and friends when discussing adoption, and at one point, the topic was brought up quite often, especially by my father-in-law, who encouraged us to consider the process. But we wanted to continue the fertility treatment process a bit longer before making that decision."

Riad believes the stigma around adoption is fading. "I think social stigma was probably more of an issue for earlier generations in this country. I believe it is more readily accepted in general and probably lauded nowadays in our society. However, it does depend on the demographic in which it takes place."

Yet, even when the idea of adoption had been seriously considered, personal fears lingered. "We did have anxieties about the matter of bonding emotionally with an adopted child. However, we also looked at it in a positive light and did feel that it would not matter eventually."

Muntasir Shahrear, 44, who works in the private sector, carries a narrative rooted in grief and hesitation.

"Losing a child leaves a scar that never truly heals. And my wife has been mourning the death of our infant daughter for years. Samia still finds it difficult to talk about her without breaking down."

However, while his wife's pain makes her reluctant to consider adoption, Muntasir quietly holds onto the thought.

"My wife is still not open to adoption, perhaps because of the trauma that she went through. But am seriously considering the idea of bringing a baby girl into our family."

For Shahrear, the challenge is not society's gaze but the internal questions. "I am confident we can go beyond the social stigma. However, what worries me is whether we are truly ready to go through the long legal process."

These accounts show that while adoption is becoming more socially accepted, it is still often considered only after other options are exhausted, and many families remain cautious. Greater awareness, simplified processes, and supportive policies could play a crucial role in helping more families view adoption not as a last resort, but as a valid and meaningful path to parenthood.

By Pothbhola
Photo: Collected

#RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY

DISCOVERING PARENTHOOD even before becoming a parent

Currently, discussions on the difficulty of parenting are commonplace. There is also much talk on the role of secondary caregivers — grandparents, siblings, or people with no familial connections who assist parents or fill their shoes in their absence.

However, one aspect that gets overlooked is the lesson young people can learn from the entire experience. Still in my late twenties, I am already a secondary caregiver, a "secondary parent" of some sort, to at least two children and being part of their childhood and helping bring them up is teaching me a thing or two.

"How hard can it be?" — I used to think, but now realise, we never know how difficult it is to be a parent until we become one. As a caregiver, I have this opportunity to taste parenthood for a while, and this has been a humbling experience so far.

Ever since I took up this role, I have definitely become more sympathetic towards parents and their struggles. This experience also gave me a newfound appreciation towards my own mother and father. We all have issues with them — some trivial, while others are serious.

However, learning the struggles of managing a child helped me see life through their eyes. This made me feel like no matter how imperfect, they still tried their best, and for that, I am forever thankful. I realised that I would not be able

to do any better.

The most valuable takeaway from all this is the journey of self-discovery I saw myself embark on. Many things from my childhood suddenly made sense, and this newfound appreciation, I believe, has made me a better person.

I am presently taking care of my niece, who turned six this year. Whenever she drops or breaks something, I think she expects to be reprimanded, but I make sure that she is never scolded for such things. And I discovered recently that being admonished for being clumsy has left a lot of emotional scars on me. I realised that when accidents happen, being yelled at does not help at all. And it only affects young children, often giving them unpleasant memories for life.

Similarly, I always crouch or kneel next to my niece while talking to her, so that she does not have to look up while speaking. I feel like this gives a more emotional connection, and this way, children feel you are friendlier.

So, is it worth it? Surprisingly, yes! Parenthood is all about sacrifices. Take it from someone who was not fond of children. They are loud, and I like a little bit of peace. But even a person like me can vouch that the feeling of being a parent is great. I am not even a real parent yet, and I still feel a strong bond with the two children that I help raise.

My niece has picked up a lot of my mannerisms over the years, and she has learned a few things from me. I have taught her to say thank you whenever someone gifts her something; I have taught her to use a bin instead of littering inside the house; I have even taught her how to play chess! Sure, she does not know what it means to 'fork and pin', but she can play a simple game.

I don't think I am ready yet to become an actual parent, but my respect goes to all the young parents who are figuring it out as they go, and my appreciation goes to every single "secondary parent". You are sure to learn a great deal from this valuable experience.

By Ashif Ahmed Rudro
Photo: Collected

#FASHION & BEAUTY

Necklaces, hoops, and attitude: DRESSING STARTS HERE

Gone are the days when jewellery would be worn only as accessories. Nowadays, it is the ornaments that do the talking while the attire merely provides a supportive backdrop. Bold and made to stand out, statement jewellery is no longer reserved for special occasions. Rather, it has become a street-styler's best friend.

Statement jewellery can adorn the neck, ears, nose, or even the hair. The good news? That one bold piece is all one needs to carry their look through. It dictates the wearer's outfit, allowing them to express themselves in a fun, aesthetic way.

Take, for example, jewellery for the neck. Sitahaars may not be the first jewellery choice for young fashionistas, unless, of course, they are worn on a plain T-shirt or shirt, and paired with a contrasting A-line skirt. A cross between a lehenga choli and a skirt blouse set, the look can easily set you up for a glamorous gaye holud.

And there's more. Given the rage of one coloured co-ord sets in the fashion mood board for the year, we all have a few lying around in our cupboards in bright colours like orange or bottle green. Rather than wearing heavy jewellery that can make you look over the top, especially given the loud colour palette, employ the powers of statement jewellery. Choose a long-chained necklace with a bold pendant, and that's it!

For those of you who are ever uninspired sartorially, pairing supersized statement earrings over literally anything can eliminate the need to put together other accessories for your outfits like a complex puzzle. Dresses, pantsuits, or kameezes, a chunky pair of hoops or drop earrings can set your look up instantly. Sweep your hair up for a more dramatic effect and let the ears do all the talking.

Finally, rings! J R R Tolkien would never have known how relevant his line, "One ring to rule them all", would become in the world of fashion until statement rings hit the market. A tad bit more subtle than the other pieces mentioned above, statement rings should be worn with some jewellery, albeit subtle. Whatever the outfit, the "stacking technique" has everyone fixated. Of course, one can also go for that one ornamental, show-stopping piece that would be a conversation starter, but to each their own!

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Fabliha
Styling & Fashion Direction: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Wardrobe: Comfystyle women's coord sets
Jewellery: Zafs Jewels
Makeup: Sumon Rahat
Hair: Probina
Special Thanks to Zafreen Khan

THE CO-ORD TAKEOVER

Effortless *style* EVERYWHERE!

In Bangladesh, the rise of co-ords has been less of a sudden trend and more of a natural evolution. The idea of a "matching set" once meant a solid shirt paired with trousers — simple, uniform, and practical. Then came the era of casual kurtas and easy kameezes worn with matching pants, seamlessly bringing the co-ords into a typical Bengali wardrobe.

Fast forward to today? What began as casual go-to linen sets for errands or cotton pairs for campus has now spilt into every corner of fashion.

"Honestly, I started wearing co-ords because I was tired of overthinking my outfits," says Nafisa, a 27-year-old marketing professional. "Now I wear them to work, casual meet-ups, and even semi-formal dinners."

What makes co-ords irresistible right now is their universal appeal of effortlessness without compromising on style. Unlike separates that often demand careful pairing, co-ords arrive as a complete outfit on their own. The look is cohesive, polished, and instantly flattering.

FROM COTTON COOL TO EVENING GLAM

The beauty of co-ords lies in their adaptability to fabric and form. Cotton and linen sets are perfect for daywear, giving off a relaxed yet structured feel that's perfect for warm South Asian afternoons. Muslin adds a softer edge, while organza brings in a layer of dreamy sophistication.

Designers are also experimenting with subtle embroidery, delicate thread work, and tonal detailing, enough to elevate co-ords from "casual chic" to something worthy of a wedding after-party.

Prints can sometimes skew too casual, but solid tones (think deep magenta, earthy olive, ivory, jet black) help co-ords retain an elegant minimalism. They are also endlessly versatile: style them with sneakers for errands, with strappy heels for a party, or with embellished juttis for a desi celebration.

THE JEWELLERY STATEMENT

The one rule of styling co-ords is to let them be the blank canvas. Statement jewellery works like magic here. A chunky neckpiece on a monochrome co-ord instantly transforms the look into festive wear. Oversized hoops lend urban cool, while layers of dainty gold chains bring softness.

"I wore a pastel co-ord with kundan earrings at my cousin's engagement," shares Taniya, a lecturer at Brac University. "It was so different from the usual lehengas and sarees and still so chic." She added with a smile, "I literally saw heads turn!"

This is perhaps what co-ords offer that traditional outfits often miss: a balance between elegance and comfort. You don't have to choose between looking good and feeling free.

A PALETTE FOR EVERYONE

Bold shades are trending recently, but there's no single colour code for co-ords. The freedom to experiment is what makes them exciting.

Neon greens and electric blues for the daring, earthy neutrals for the minimalists, whites and pastels for summer purists — there's space for every mood and personality.

"Earlier I stuck to black and beige, but with co-ords I feel confident enough to try bright colours," says Shahana, a high school student. "I have a fiery red set I wear with juttis, and it always gets me compliments."

Clothing brands everywhere are embracing this diversity. Collections now feature everything from butter-soft cotton basics to silky jewel-toned pieces with just the right shimmer for nighttime glamour.

At the heart of it, the co-ord trend represents a shift in how we approach dressing. Fashion today is about being effortless yet intentional. It's about pieces that work harder for you, pieces that don't demand too much but give plenty in return.

"Once you start wearing co-ords, it's hard to go back," says Aysha, a school teacher. "They're comfortable, stylish, and versatile. It's like having the perfect outfit formula ready at all times."

In a world where style increasingly overlaps with comfort, co-ords have become the ultimate equaliser. They are not confined to vacation wardrobes or Instagram aesthetics. They are here; on the streets, in boardrooms, at weddings, reshaping what it means to be stylish today.

It's the new fashion philosophy: uncomplicated, adaptable, and unapologetically chic.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Fabliha
Styling & Fashion Direction: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Wardrobe: Comfystyle women's coord sets
Jewellery: Zafs Jewels
Makeup: Sumon Rahat
Hair: Probina
Special Thanks to Zafreen Khan

#TRAVEL

The hills where silence stares back at you

You don't really know how loud your life is until it gets quiet. The kind of quiet that doesn't come with noise-cancelling headphones or a do-not-disturb button, but the real, unsettling silence of no signal.

An incomplete plan and sheer desperation to escape the daily urban grind is where we got the idea for the trip. We packed as light as possible, a phone and a few board games to keep us entertained. The idea was simple: to stop scrolling through the endless feed.

As the car drove deeper into the hills, the signal bars began to fall like flies. As the bars were going down, we ensured to utilise the chance to inform our families about being safe. Even to think that we are going to be completely off the grid was surreal. Then the moment came, two bars, one bar, then none!

That is when a strange kind of worry set in. No texts from chat groups. No alerts. No quick Google searches to get rid of awkward pauses. I was in a car with my wife and a couple of friends, and we shared a look, and we knew this was all we had for the next two days.

When we finally reached our destination, it didn't welcome us with any fanfare. The only way to commute there was by boat. No resorts, no influencers posing with straw hats. Just hills, houses on stilts, and a silence that stared back. Our host served lunch. Fish from the stream, vegetables from the garden, rice that tasted alive. No fancy presentation. No photo filter required. Food that filled you up in more ways than one.

The first few hours were restless. My hand kept reaching for the phone, but with no signal to feed the itch, the mind slowly started to soak up the other side of the spectrum — the serenity.

We sat on a bamboo porch, sipping tea that could wake the dead, and watched the cloud come and go. By night, the power went out.

We thought all we had were the board games until we actually looked up and saw the stars giving the hills a whole new character.

We decided to take a boat ride. A wooden boat drifts across in the slow current of the river. For sound, there were just water splashes and hills full of crickets creating the most natural white noise. That's when you realise how small you are, how loud your life has been, how little all those notifications actually matter. My wife leaned back, just looking up, and whispered, "This is insane." She was right.

The hills stripped us down. Not in a spiritual, preachy way. More like it forced us to look at ourselves without the noise. My friend, the reel addict, admitted she didn't miss it once. At first, the stillness seemed overwhelming to me, but after it sank in, it felt like a reset button I didn't realise I needed.

We didn't bring back any souvenirs. Sure, a few snaps. But the most important thing was how light we felt. It's a special type of lightness that comes when you finally quit carrying other people's noise.

The fact is that the hills will not provide you with luxurious hotels or planned activities. It won't care for your hashtags or your reels. What it will give you is space. The kind that makes you squirm at first, but eventually sets you free.

By K Tanzeel Zaman
Photo: K Tanzeel Zaman

#HEALTH & FITNESS

Hungry after workout? Check what you should eat and drink

After a workout or long walk, the primary instinct is often to grab a bottle of water and call it a day. However, anyone who's walked out of a gym with a throbbing headache or that hollow, gnawing hunger knows hydration alone doesn't cut it. What you put on your plate, or in your glass, matters just as much as the workout itself.

Chowdhury Tasneem Hasin, Chief Clinical Dietitian and HOD, Dietetics and Nutrition Department, United Hospital Ltd, explained it in simple terms, "During exercise, our muscles get stressed. Protein helps repair them. At the same time, we lose energy, and carbohydrates help bring it back. Carbs are not just fuel for the body; they're essential for the brain too. That's why some people feel dizzy or get headaches right after exercise, their body is "asking" for carbohydrates."

But the good news is, you don't have to chase imported protein powders or some neon-coloured protein bar for a balanced post-workout diet. They are on the same kitchen shelves we often overlook.

"The easiest options are oats and yoghurt, or chira (flattened rice) with yoghurt, or even muri (puffed rice) with yoghurt. These are readily available, and they combine carbs, protein, and probiotics."

That word 'probiotics' is not just another nutrition buzzword for her. It's about balance.

"After a workout, blood circulation increases in our whole body, along with the gastrointestinal tract, the long passage that food travels through. That also indicates acid secretion rises, and some people might immediately feel hungry or face acidity. Probiotics, like those in yoghurt, really help balance that out."

For individuals who opt for milk instead of yoghurt, she said, "Oats or chira with chilled milk, banana, and some nuts can be a great alternative. Even just milk and bananas work well. As bananas digest easily and work as a source of both protein and carbs, the fructose in them quickly turns into glucose and covers your carbohydrate needs. Plus, bananas have potassium, which is important as we lose potassium when we sweat."

And sweating is something Chowdhury Tasneem Hasin does not want people to ignore.

"For people who sweat a lot, I'd suggest drinking a glass of oral saline with their snack. A glass of green coconut water or a glass of saline replaces electrolytes faster than plain water. In fact, it hydrates you even better."

Nowadays, it's easier to be tempted by the glossy world of protein powders and bars, but she advises skipping the artificial processed stuff and making it yourself.

"Protein smoothies are a great option, but I'd recommend making them at home rather than buying processed protein powders or bars. Blend milk with bananas, dates, nuts, or other fruits; it's simple and far healthier."

She adds, "Dates or kishmish (raisins) are also very effective on their own. They're rich in potassium and help with rehydration."

Solid food still has its place.

"A boiled egg is one of the most reliable post-workout snacks. If being overweight is a concern, then you can add red-wheat roti, whole-grain bread, or brown bread instead of refined ones. Oats, red chira, and other complex carbs are also better choices."

And then there's timing, something people often overlook.

"You should not eat anything, except water or saline, at least 30 minutes before and after a workout. That's because blood circulation is already very high, even in the stomach, during exercise. Eating right after working out makes digestion difficult and leaves you uncomfortable. So, give your body that half-hour to calm down."

In the end, post-workout eating does not need to feel like decoding a chemistry textbook. It's about paying attention to how the body feels, dizzy, sweaty, hungry, or thirsty, and responding with the right mix of protein, carbs, and water.

Your very own kitchen items, like a bowl of yoghurt, a boiled egg, a banana, or a glass of oral saline, might not look extravagant on Instagram, but they do what your body requires: help it recover so you can get on with the rest of your day.

By Rehnuma Shahreen
Photo: Collected

KUNDALINI RISING

SECRETS OF YOGA

Breathing deep, living fully

SHAZIA OMAR

Writer, activist and yogini
www.shaziaomar.com

For twenty-five years, I have been practicing breathwork (pranayama) and I have trusted one simple truth: breath is the living bridge between the body and the mind. Emotions shape the breath, and the breath reshapes emotion.

When we learn this duet, this tender, dialectic call-and-response, we learn to regulate ourselves with kindness. The following are some of the benefits of pranayama.

Vitality: Re-energise yourself

Most of us sip at life. When you breathe wide — belly, ribs, back — oxygen meets every corner, carbon dioxide is released, and your cells hum. You don't amp yourself up; you plug yourself in.

Lung capacity: Make more room for you

Practice is gentle scaffolding. Slow, steady breaths mobilise the ribcage, strengthen the diaphragm, and awaken quiet pockets of the lungs. Stairs soften. Walks lengthen. Your body remembers spaciousness.

Parasympathetic ease: The vagus whisper

Long, velvety exhales stroke the vagus nerve and invite "rest and digest". Heart rate loosens its grip, shoulders unhook, and your chemistry recalibrates. From this calm, choices get wiser, kinder.

The NO effect: nasal magic

Through the nose, breath gathers nitric oxide (NO), a natural vasodilator and antimicrobial. Airways open, blood carries oxygen more gracefully, and each inhale feels like a clear path through a quiet forest.

Mental clarity: The sky after rain

When breath steadies, the mind untangles. A few rounds of box breathing (4-4-4-4) or (4-7-8) and the inner weather shifts, thoughts line up, mood brightens, focus returns. Clarity is not forced; it arrives.

Begin simply — Five minutes, nose-only, slow and low. Let breath be your mood's steward and your body's guide. If this speaks to you, come practice with me. We will map this bridge together, movement, stillness, and the sweet conversation between them. Until your breath knows exactly where to lead you.

Shazia Omar is an author, a yogini, and the founder of The Flow Fest. www.theflowfest.com

#FASHION & BEAUTY

Fish DNA: Is it the anti-ageing fix you need?

In cultures where sentences such as "You don't look your age" and "Not a day beyond sixteen" are compliments, pressures to look youthful persist through each stage of life. No wonder, therefore, that women rush to try the first treatment that promises them the fountain of eternal youth. Retinol serums for the face? Yes! Fish DNA for your face? Hell yes!

"Ageing bothers me," concludes Zariat Raunak, a housewife in her late 30s. "Wanting to look young is not a crime!"

Zariat admits that she and her friends regularly go for invasive skin firming treatments and like to remain informed about the latest skin fixes in the market. While Zariat and her friends are well within their rights to feel this way, not every ageing female shares this sentiment. Some choose natural ageing over skin treatments, placing their trust in the power of clean and healthy eating and embracing their progressing time.

"I am quite comfortable in my own skin," shares Sharmin Rahman, a teacher in her 50s. "Not every grey hair or wrinkle bothers me. My age is the biggest truth of my life, so I don't feel the need to hide it."

Zariat and Sharmin may stand on two extreme ends of the spectrum, but there are plenty of other women who fall somewhere in the grey area between the two perspectives. There are those who will religiously try every new K-beauty product that offers them skin elasticity and dewiness, but will draw the line at needles, and then there are those who will do facial yoga regularly and choose the occasional expensive facial in their salon menus, but will hold off on anything more than that.

There is a third group of women, however, who are on the fence about invasive skin treatments but will incline towards it if the right one comes along. And, for them, there may be good news on the horizon.

Samia Kader, who has heard of the new salmon DNA technique, is quite intrigued about it.

"Salmon DNA is not new in the field of medicine," she mentioned. "It helps with areas such as tissue generation already. And omega-3, of course, is one of the best natural collagen builders. This is why this particular composition is so interesting to me."

For those like Samia who are looking for a natural, "heal from within" formula and do not mind investing in it, salmon DNA boosters may be the answer.

Founder of SkinFix, Dr Rimita Farid, feels that salmon DNA, with its gradual results, are definitely a promising cell rejuvenation procedure.

"Think of Salmon DNA as a superfood smoothie for your skin cells: nourishing, restorative, and packed with potential. Just don't expect one sip, or in this case, one session, to change your skin overnight."

While some are still taking the benefits of such a treatment with a pinch of salt, science seems to be backing it for now. Benefits of salmon DNA, according to experts, include reducing inflammation and increasing the growth of blood vessels. In layman's terms, the more nutrients and oxygen that are delivered to the skin, the better it heals from within, the smoother it looks, and the brighter it glows.

For now, salmon DNA looks like a good compromise between chemical fillers and non-invasive skin treatments. While involving the use of needles, the process works best when part of a more comprehensive skincare and lifestyle approach. Not a quick fix for the skin, the treatment is rather a gradual cellular regenerative process that is safe and sustainable.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Collected

LIFE AS IT IS

WARA KARIM
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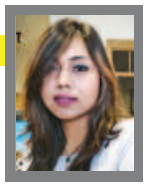
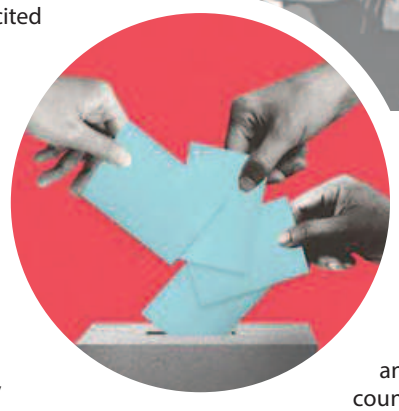


Every vote matters, every voice counts

The first time I participated in an election process was in 2018, a year after I became a US citizen. Before that, I had never experienced the joy and the honour of casting a vote in any kind of election. I had lived in Bangladesh until 2008, and during my life there, I never went out to vote in any election. I am not entirely sure why. Was it because nobody ever taught me about the significance of voting? Perhaps. It was when I saw my child voting in a mock election at her preschool during the 2016 US presidential election that I realised that voting must be so important that children are taught about it even before they can speak clearly!

In 2016, I was not a US citizen yet, so I had to wait two more years in order to be able to vote. Finally, in 2018, I voted in the US midterm election.

It was a cold and rainy November evening, but I did not mind the weather; I was just too excited about voting for the first time in my life. I felt so empowered at the same time, because I knew every vote mattered! I also could not wait to wear the iconic "I Voted" sticker and have a picture taken to commemorate my participation in the democratic process!



I recently followed the DUCSU (Dhaka University Central Students' Union) election in Bangladesh. On social media, I watched young men and women being interviewed by journalists. When some students, with smiles on their faces, revealed that they would be voting for the first time in their lives, it gave me goosebumps. I could feel their excitement and the sense of empowerment they felt in being able to express their voices.

I learned about the importance of voting from my daughter's preschool. What an unlikely place to learn about the democratic process!

Growing up, I was never taught about democracy and voting at school or at home, but I firmly believe that times have changed in Bangladesh, and students across the country should now be taught about the significance of democracy and voting. This should be integrated into their social studies education at school. Such awareness will help foster informed citizens who will respect and uphold the constitution, laws, and democratic process. In addition to educational institutions, parents can also assume the responsibility of teaching their children about the significance of free and fair elections and the value of participating in them.

Here in the US, children participate in various school projects before the presidential election. They design campaign posters, engage in civic discussions, analyse presidential debates, evaluate local candidates, and even vote in mock elections. Last year, on the day of the 2024 presidential election, we took our daughter with us to the polling station to give her a firsthand experience of what voting in real life looks like. The volunteers and polling officers warmly welcomed her.

The DUCSU election demonstrated how enthusiastic our young people are about making their voices heard through voting. While the election was centred around Dhaka University, the tension and excitement surrounding it touched people across the country and beyond. It is an indication of what we might see in the general election. The general election, which is expected to be held early next year, is going to be an opportunity for so many young individuals to exercise their most fundamental democratic right for the first time in their lives.

The upcoming Bangladesh general election presents an excellent opportunity for our school-going children to learn about voting rights and the electoral process. Similar to the US and other countries, learning about the electoral process could be made part of every school's civic education so that every child in the country grows up understanding that voting is their fundamental democratic right.

Being able to vote is not only a right, it is also a privilege. So many people around the world do not have the right to vote and choose their own lawmakers. Bangladesh itself had gone through this struggle, and never again should we let a leader evolve into an autocrat.

Photo: Collected

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#DECOR

The perfect living room: Creating a cosy corner for two

A living room is meant for the family to spend quality time together. However, for a newlywed, a living room can be their dream space, where there should be a dedicated corner that captures their essence, beckoning them to spend quality time together. Reading a book together or simply having a conversation — all these shared experiences are bound to strengthen their bond.

If you want to carve out a cosy reading nook as the primary purpose of the living room corner, start very simply. Add a cosy sofa or a pair of accent chairs to your lobby set, ideal for reading and spending time together.

A set of accent chairs would also be good for multipurpose use. However, if you are getting a single seater accent chair, you should get at least two identical ones facing one another and keep them in proximity. Positioning the seating this way encourages conversation and recreational activities.

If you want to lounge and sit back, consider getting an ottoman to keep along your sofa so you can rest your feet. This way, you can also set this up as a snug conversation area and maybe more.

Consider getting a plush floor rug that feels soft, tempting you to sit and stay longer with your loved one. Use large-sized area rugs to highlight the seating area within your living room.

There should be a side table to keep your books and a tea tray. This makes it easier to rest your phone, cup of tea, or glass of water within arm's reach.

Even if reading together is not really your love language, you can keep a small showpiece, souvenir, flower vase, or scented candle on the table that will make the space feel even more intimate. You can also consider this your hobby nook.

An entertainment centre facing your special living room corner can come in handy for your TV or Bluetooth speakers, making movie nights and musical evenings even more magical. A standing lamp on the side or a pendant light on the ceiling with warm light should set the mood for romance and create wonders.

Consider setting an indoor plant near your sitting corner as it will give your living room corner a rustic vibe, luring you two to sit together in this setup. Choose a tall indoor plant that thrives in a living room, even with limited sunlight, such as a snake plant, peace lily, or dracaena, commonly known as lucky bamboo.

Beyond serving a practical purpose, it is always nice to keep something beautiful to look at on your wall — whether it is a piece of artwork or a picture from a trip you two went on together, reminding you of the happy moments you shared.

Finally, as a new couple just starting their married life together, getting this new lobby set can be a big investment for you. However, it does not necessarily have to put a dent in your pocket or drain your bank account. Simply, look for a furniture brand that offers Equated Monthly Instalments (EMI), allowing you to pay for your purchases in equal monthly payments. This option can help you pay off the furniture bills in affordable portions.

By Minhazur Rahman Alvee
Photo: Hatil