

Stopping gastroenteritis in summer

DR MD RAJIB HOSSAIN

Hospitals in the country continue to receive high number of cases of gastroenteritis, a condition that causes irritation and inflammation of the stomach and intestines characterised by diarrhoea, vomiting and abdominal pain. Experts identified scarcity of safe drinking water, accompanied by summer heat which makes a perfect environment for bacteria, viruses and other germs to flourish as the main causes. They advised to pay particular attention to personal hygiene and warned people not to take roadside drinks and food.

Unhygienic food and contaminated water is taking a toll on public health. Roadside drinks and cut fruits sold by roadside vendors pose serious health hazards for people. Sugarcane juices, lime water, sorbet, ice cream and kulfis, coloured drinks mix with a drop of essence such as strawberries, orange, mango, pineapple and sometimes grapes bring unbridled temptation to savour the roadside flavours.

But hold back, if you value your health. The ingredients are tap water, colouring agents, saccharine for all milk for ice cream and kulfis.

School children are the most prospective customers for these pushcart cool drink vendors. Children usually relish kulfis, flavoured drinks and ice creams.

The most crucial ingredient among all, the ice cubes, also does not pass through any quality norms or hygienic methods of manufacture. So, children should not be allowed to take this food. Along with these, we have to be more cautious while taking street food this summer. Because street foods are mostly uncovered and are not prepared hygienically and water added or used is not safe in maximum places.

Gastroenteritis caused by bacteria, virus or parasites are very contagious and can spread through contaminated food or water. Improper hand-washing following a bowel movement or handling dirty things can spread the disease from person to person.

Gastroenteritis caused by viruses may last 1-2 days. On the other hand, bacterial cases can last a week or more. Most people recover easily from a short bout with vomiting and diarrhoea by drinking fluids and easing back into a normal diet. But for others, such as babies and the elderly, loss of body fluid



A common picture of ICDDR,B during summer when huge number of patients are admitted due to gastroenteritis.

with gastroenteritis can cause dehydration, which is life-threatening illness unless the condition is treated and fluids restored.

For gastroenteritis and food poisoning, the most important thing is to complement water and electrolyte that you lose with watery stool and vomiting. If the symptom is not serious and you keep replacing water and electrolytes by ORS (Oral Rehydration Saline), you are

likely to get better within a couple of days.

While fluid replacing, we have to keep in mind that tea, fruit juice and carbonated soft drinks will not correctly replace fluid or electrolytes lost by diarrhoea or vomiting. Nor will plain water, as plain water cannot replace electrolytes and may dilute electrolytes to the point of seizures.

So consider only ORS in this regard. Admission to a hospital for intravenous

fluids may be necessary if dehydration occurs despite drinking the oral rehydration solution.

After each loose stool, children younger than 2 years should be given 1-3 ounces of any of the oral rehydration saline (ORS). Older children should be asked to drink 3-8 ounces. Zinc tablet should be given with ORS.

This guideline serves only to replace fluid loss due to

diarrhoea. Drink additional fluid equal to the amount you normally drink.

The World Health Organisation has established a field recipe for fluid rehydration: Mix 2 tablespoons of sugar (or honey) with ¼ teaspoon of table salt and ¼ teaspoon of baking soda. (Baking soda may be substituted with ¼ teaspoon of table salt.) Mix in 1 liter (1 qt) of clean or previously boiled water.

You will need solid foods eventually to help end the diarrhoea. After 24 hours, begin to offer bland foods with bananas, rice, chira without sugar, toast, pasta, or potatoes.

In case of adult, they should eat ice chips and clear, non-caloricated, non-dairy liquids such as gatorade, ginger ale, fruit and juices. After 24 hours of fluid diet without vomiting, begin a soft-blended solid diet.

- Key things to remember:
- Avoid roadside cool drinks
 - Drink boiled water after cooling
 - Avoid consumption of food outside
 - Always eat covered food
 - Wash your hands before meals

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Low blood sugar a dementia risk for diabetics

Severe low blood sugar episodes affect brain health; balanced approach to diabetes control best

REUTERS, Chicago

Older diabetics whose blood sugar drops to dangerously low levels have a higher risk of developing dementia, U.S. researchers said. The study by researchers at Kaiser Permanente in Oakland, California, suggests that aggressive blood sugar control resulting in blood sugar so low it requires a trip to the hospital may increase dementia risks in older adults with type 2 diabetes.

Several studies have found that diabetics have a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's disease — the most common form of dementia — than do the general population. And

others have shown that diabetics who take insulin and pills to help control their disease have a lower Alzheimer's risk.

"The very current issue here is balance of blood sugar control," Rachel Whitmer, a Kaiser research scientist whose study appears in the Journal of the American Medical Association said.

She said a number of things such as a missed meal can cause severe low blood sugar in diabetics, but the chief cause is too much insulin, which can happen in people who take insulin injections or with oral diabetes drugs such as sulfonylureas or glimepiride that cause the body to make more insulin.



Broken heart syndrome

DR MUNTASHIR MARUF

Many of you might remember a common scene in a drama or movie where a manager suddenly enters the room of the boss and exclaims, "Oh no, there is a huge fire in your factory. The loss is of more than crore taka." In most cases, the boss grabs his chest and before fall-down exclaims, "Oh no, how is it possible! I am finished!"

This type of reaction, complaining of chest pain after receiving bad news or experiencing other types of stress reaction, is commonly depicted in television drama and movies — but it is not just fiction. It is a medical phenomenon referred to as Broken Heart Syndrome.

This phenomenon was first described medically in 1991 by Japanese doctors. Now-a-days, the condition is also referred to as "stress cardiomyopathy", "stress-induced cardiomyopathy" or "apical ballooning syndrome". It is a condition in which intense emotional or physical stress can cause rapid and severe heart muscle weakness (cardiomyopathy).

This condition can occur following a variety of emotional stressors such as grief (e.g. death of a loved one), fear, extreme anger, and surprise. It can also occur following numerous physical stressors to the body such as stroke, seizure, difficulty breathing (such as a flare of asthma or emphysema), or significant bleeding. Broken heart syndrome affects women far more than men. Some research indicates that almost 9 out of 10 cases occur in women, and of those, almost all are aged 50 or older.

Patients with this syndrome can have similar symptoms to patients with a heart attack including chest pain, shortness of breath, congestive heart failure, and low blood pressure.

Typically these symptoms begin just minutes to hours after the person has been exposed to a severe, and usually unexpected, stress. Though the name is "broken heart", the symptoms are not limited only to cardiovascular area. Other common symptoms include stomach-ache and/or loss of appetite, nausea, fatigue, partial or complete sleeplessness, anger, loss of interest, feelings of loneliness, feelings of hopelessness and despair, feeling of complete emptiness, loss of self-respect and/or self-esteem.

This syndrome can easily be mistaken for heart attack. But with a closer look, there are major differences found during diagnosis. No standard treatment guidelines have yet been established because of the limited knowledge about the condition. Most people suffering from broken heart syndrome are initially treated similar to a heart attack victim. Many people are hospitalised and the diagnosis is often made in the hospital.

Doctors might prescribe medicines primarily. These medications may not be required long term, because heart function usually returns to normal. But remember that chest pain could be a sign of a heart attack. So, if you experience chest pain, don't ignore it. Take it seriously and seek immediate medical attention.

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Call for day to unite against pneumonia

Pneumonia kills more than 2 million children annually, yet draws hardly any attention in most countries in the world

DR TAREQ SALAUDDIN

Child health groups have united with Save the Children Artist Ambassadors Gwyneth Paltrow and Hugh Laurie to establish an annual World Pneumonia Day on November 2, 2009. The day will mobilise efforts to fight a neglected disease that kills more than two million children under the age of five each year worldwide.

Many people are unaware of pneumonia's overwhelming death toll. Pneumonia has been overshadowed as a priority on the global health agenda, and rarely receives coverage in news media. World Pneumonia Day will help bring this health crisis to the public's attention and will encourage policy makers and grass roots organisers alike to combat the disease.

Pneumonia kills more children than AIDS, malaria and measles combined. UNICEF and WHO estimate that pneumonia accounts for nearly 1 out of 5 deaths in children under five years old. "It's easy to forget that around the world, pneumonia is still killing more than 5500 kids every day," said Dr. Orin Levine, a pneumonia expert and associate professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. "Pneumonia is both common and extremely serious, but with existing tools like vaccines and antibiotics, we can save more than a million children every year."

Dr. Levine underscored that the policy makers must know that pneumonia is common, serious, preventable, and treatable since often they have not placed the priority on pneumonia control and prevention that it deserves.

In addition to killing more than two million children a year, pneumonia causes severe financial difficulties and emotional burden for families and communities and contributes to the cycle of poverty. Few caregivers can recognise pneumonia symptoms. Consequently, less than one third of chil-

den suffering from pneumonia receive antibiotics, which are available for less than US\$1. "We have what it takes to prevent and cure childhood pneumonia. Yet the disease tragically claims more than two million babies and toddlers every year," said actress

critical to reducing deaths. "Research shows that a package of health measures provided globally, especially to the poorest communities, could dramatically cut childhood deaths from pneumonia," said Dr. Robert E. Black, Chairman of Department of International Health at Johns

status of children etc. Vaccines against two of pneumonia's common bacterial causes, Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type B) and pneumococcus, have prevented many deaths in industrialised countries. Other proven, low-cost techniques include exclusive breast feeding for six months, ensuring good nutrition, reducing indoor air pollution, using antibiotics, washing hands, and preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

Additionally, many children do not get the care they need, making education of parents and health providers a priority so they better understand the necessity of preventive measures. Health workers must be trained to diagnose pneumonia and must be equipped with a steady supply of quality antibiotics for treatment.

Fighting pneumonia is a critical strategy for countries working to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, which include a goal to reduce under-5 child deaths by two-thirds from the 1990 level.

"We have been fooled too long ignoring this disease. Children dying of pneumonia may be living in poor countries but these are not lesser lives. We must do all we can to take care of all children," said Lance Laifer, founder of Hedge Funds vs. Malaria & Pneumonia. "Our complacency ends today. We won't let millions of children gasping their last breath go unnoticed by the world."

Sami K. Saha, Head of the department of Microbiology at Dhaka Shishu Hospital, Bangladesh said, "Let's take an oath to convince others to work for a public cause and save the children irrespective of their race, colour and religion."

"We should invest more in combating pneumonia; it is not the crisis of money, it is how we look to address the issue..." he added.

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Every country should make pneumonia control a priority and their efforts should begin with the use of Hib and pneumococcal vaccines and the expansion of treatment programmes with simple antibiotics. There is no reason for children to continue to die from this disease at the rates that they do today.

— Dr. Orin Levine



A child suffering from severe pneumonia

and Save the Children Artist Ambassador Gwyneth Paltrow. "We can stand on the sides and continue to watch this tragedy unfold or we can step in and change the ending. World Pneumonia Day gives everyone the chance to act."

Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Dr. Black said that reducing child death from pneumonia requires multifaceted approach like prompt treatment facilities at community level, skilled health workers, introduction of vaccine, improving the nutrition



Walking for fitness: Using weights?

Thinking of walking with weights? Take some precautions. Walking with weights can cause injury. Add weights only if you are a serious walker, you are already walking fast and uphill, and your regular walking routine has become too easy for you.

Then, start with 1-pound hand-held weights. Bend

your elbows to 90-degree angles as you swing your arms and keep them close to your body. Add more weight only when the 1-pound weights feel too easy.

Don't increase by more than 1 pound at a time, and wait two weeks between increases. Don't use ankle weights. They can cause knee injuries.

Novo Nordisk launches new range of modern insulins

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Novo Nordisk, a leading healthcare company in diabetic care has launched modern insulins named NovoMix® 30 Penfill® and NovoRapid® Penfill®, says a press release.

NovoMix® 30 is a pre-mixed dual acting insulin analogue while NovoRapid® is a rapid acting insulin analogue. Regarding the advantages of these newly launched insulins Mr Rajan Kumar, Managing Director, Novo Nordisk Pharma (Private) Limited, Bangladesh expressed satisfaction that physicians and patients now have a choice to either go for a durable NovoPen® 3 or a disposable prefilled insulin device.

These penfills are available in global market for more than 7 years and fit into the NovoPen® 3, the

world's most widely used durable insulin delivery device offering simplicity, safety and reliability providing accurate dosage of insulin injection.

"These analogue insulins are developed with an objective of overcoming the problems with conventional insulins and are considered more physiological, predictable and safe insulin preparations," says Prof. A K Azad Khan, President, Bangladesh Diabetic Shomiti.

He further reiterated that these analogues offer the following advantages over conventional insulins. It has rapid onset of action, better control of post-prandial blood glucose and less risk of major hypoglycaemia and night time hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar). It also offers meal time flexibility as it can be given just before the meals or even after the meals.