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These two seemingly simple health issues in youth can multiply your heart risk later

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Did you know women's Alzheimer's risk differ from men's?

July 17, 2019/The Asian Age

Ebola outbreak in Congo declared an 'international emergency' by WHO

July 18, 2019/The Times of India



Oral health given short shrift: study

July 19, 2019/The Hindu

New cell that can heal hearts discovered

July 19, 2019/The Indian Express

Oral health given short shrift: study

July 19, 2019/The Hindu

Antibiotics can weaken flu defences, says new study

July 6, 2019/The Indian Express

Antibiotics can leave the lung vulnerable to flu viruses, leading to significantly worse infections and symptoms, according to a study. The research, published in the journal Cell Reports, discovered that signals from gut bacteria help to maintain a first line of defence in the lining of the lung. When mice with healthy gut bacteria were infected with the flu, around 80 per cent of them survived. However, only a third survived if they were given antibiotics before being infected. “We found that antibiotics can wipe out early flu resistance, adding further evidence that they should not be taken or prescribed lightly,” Andreas Wack, who led the research at Francis Crick Institute in the UK. “Inappropriate use not only promotes antibiotic resistance and kills helpful gut bacteria, but may also leave us more vulnerable to viruses. This could be relevant not only in humans but also livestock animals, as many farms around the world use antibiotics prophylactically,” Wack said.

The study found that type I interferon signalling, which is known to regulate immune responses, was key to early defence. Among the genes switched on by interferon is a mouse gene, Mx1, which is the equivalent of the human MxA gene. This antiviral gene produces proteins that can interfere with influenza virus replication. Although often studied in immune cells, researchers found that microbiota-driven interferon signals also keep antiviral genes in the lung lining active, preventing the virus from gaining a foothold.

Common cold virus could destroy bladder cancer cells

July 6, 2019/The Asian Age

A recent study discovered that a strain of the common cold virus may potentially target, infect and destroy cancer cells in patients with bladder cancer. Researchers investigated the safety and tolerability of exposure to the oncolytic ('cancer-killing') virus coxsackievirus (CVA21), a naturally occurring strain of the common cold, in fifteen patients with non-muscle invasive bladder cancer (NMIBC). NMIBC is found in the tissue of the inner surface of the bladder and is the tenth most common cancer in the UK with approximately 10,000 people each year diagnosed with the illness, reported the study published in the journal of Clinical Cancer Research.

Current treatments for this cancer are problematic. Transurethral resection, an invasive procedure that removes all visible lesions, has a high tumor recurrence rate ranging from 50 per cent to 70 per cent as well as a high tumor progression rate between 10 per cent and 20 per cent over a period of two to five years. Another common course of treatment, immunotherapy with Bacille Calmette-Guerin, a live bacterium used to treat bladder cancer, has been found to have serious side effects in one third of NMIBC patients while one third do not respond to the treatment at all. During this pioneering study fifteen NMIBC patients, one week prior to pre-scheduled surgery to remove their tumours received CVA21 via a catheter in the bladder. Examination of tissue samples post-surgery discovered that the virus was highly selective, targeting only cancerous cells in the organ and leaving all other cells intact.

Diabetes can increase risk of cardiovascular diseases, say experts

July 7, 2019/The Tribune



People with diabetes are at a higher risk of suffering heart attack, experts say and recommend routine health checkups and lifestyle modification to keep the condition in check. With 69.2 million people suffering from diabetes, India is among the top 10 countries in the world suffering from the condition, according to International Diabetes Federation's Diabetes Atlas. Apart from that, 36.5 million people suffer from pre-diabetes conditions. "Diabetes damages blood vessels, making a person more prone to cardiovascular diseases. It is strongly recommended that all people with diabetes have their heart disease risk factors checked as aggressively and routinely as people who have already had heart attacks," said Dr RN Kalra Cardiologist, Medical Director and CEO of Kalra Hospital. Dr Ajay Kumar Ajmani, Endocrinologist at BLK Super Speciality Hospital said studies have proven that diabetic patients are prone heart disease at a young age. Maternal diabetes also carries an increased risk of fetal loss and major congenital malformations. High blood pressure during pregnancy and preeclampsia are more common in women with diabetes, she said. "In severe cases, there may be risk of heart failure. The effects of gestational diabetes in the growing fetus can be minimised by proper antenatal care, strict sugar control, lifestyle modifications, and care during delivery," the doctor explained. Experts recommend regular check-ups, lifestyle modification which includes regular exercise, at least 30 minutes brisk walk five days a week, nutritious diet, quitting smoking and alcohol to keep diabetes at bay.

Tata Trusts searches for innovations to eliminate malaria

July 8, 2019/The Tribune

In line with India's target of eliminating malaria by 2030, the India Health Fund (IHF), an initiative by Tata Trusts on Monday announced its "Malaria Quest" -- a nationwide search for innovations towards eliminating the mosquito-borne disease. One of the primary objectives of the initiative is to seek innovative technologies to strengthen surveillance to provide accurate estimates of disease burden and data-based decision making and risk-prediction. Other objectives include developing innovative methods of vector control and personal protection for enhancing or complementing current strategies, improving logistical modalities and quality assurance of malaria consumables and consistently detecting and diagnosing cases of malaria, both in high and low endemic regions. Applications from interested candidates will be accepted till September 2, 2019, IHF said in a statement. Selected applications stand to receive wide support, including milestone-based funding support for validation, beta prototyping, feasibility studies and pilot introduction, as applicable, it added.

Genes may play role in tooth decay, gum disease

July 8, 2019/The Tribune



Hereditary traits and factors such as obesity, education and personality may play a role in tooth decay and gum disease, according to a study. Tooth decay and periodontitis, also known as gum disease, are among the most common diseases around the world but unlike many other well-known diseases knowledge of how genes affect the risk of developing these dental diseases is still limited, said researchers at the University of Bristol in the UK. Two people who eat the same things and take care of their mouth the same way may end up with a different number of cavities but researchers have not been able to explain why until now, they said. "The study makes it clear that teeth are part of the body. Among other things, we can see that there seems to be a causal link between risk factors for cardiovascular disease and tooth decay," said Ingegerd Johansson, from the Institute of Odontology at Umea University, Sweden. Previous research has suggested several genes may be involved but none had been confirmed. This is partly because complex diseases, such as tooth decay and periodontitis, require large studies to draw firm conclusions. The analysis involved scanning millions of strategic points in the genome to find genes with links to dental diseases. The researchers were able to identify 47 new genes with connections to tooth decay. The study also confirmed a previously known immune-related gene is linked to periodontitis. Among the genes that could be linked to tooth decay are those that help form teeth and the jawbone, those with protective functions in saliva and those which affect the bacteria found on the teeth. The researchers also looked at the genetic link to cardiovascular and metabolic health factors such as smoking, obesity, education and personality to try and understand connections with dental health.

Alzheimer's may be a risk to older men with prostate cancer: Study

July 8, 2019/The Indian Express

Dementia has been linked to hormone-blocking prostate cancer treatment, found a large, US government-funded analysis. Previous studies have been unclear about the findings but experts say the new results stand out because they are from a respected national cancer database and the men were tracked for a long time — eight years on an average. Among 1,54,000 older patients, 13 per cent who received hormone-blocking treatment developed Alzheimer's, compared to nine per cent who had other treatment or chose no therapy, the study found. The results, using perhaps one of the largest and most reliable databases, suggests there truly may be a connection, said Dr Sumanta Pal, a prostate cancer expert with the American Society of Clinical Oncology. However, Pal was not involved in the study. The results aren't proof but experts say they underscore the importance of discussing potential risks and benefits when choosing cancer treatment. The researchers analysed data from a National Cancer Institute database of cancer cases and treatment and covered almost 30 per cent of the US population. The study focused on men in their 70s, on an average, with local or advanced prostate cancer diagnosed between 1996 and 2003. They were followed until 2013. Medicare records indicated dementia or Alzheimer's diagnosis.

Diabetes can increase risk of cardiovascular diseases, say experts

July 9, 2019/The Indian Express



People with diabetes are at a higher risk of suffering heart attack, experts say and recommend routine health checkups and lifestyle modification to keep the condition in check. With 69.2 million people suffering from diabetes, India is among the top 10 countries in the world suffering from the condition, according to International Diabetes Federation's Diabetes Atlas. Apart from that, 36.5 million people suffer from pre-diabetes conditions. "Diabetes damages blood vessels, making a person more prone to cardiovascular diseases. It is strongly recommended that all people with diabetes have their heart disease risk factors checked as aggressively and routinely as people who have already had heart attacks," said Dr RN Kalra Cardiologist, Medical Director and CEO of Kalra Hospital. Dr Ajay Kumar Ajmani, Endocrinologist at BLK Super Speciality Hospital said studies have proven that diabetic patients are prone heart disease at a young age. "A new study has also revealed that people with undetected diabetes have a higher risk of a heart attack. Hence, routine health checkups to detect a diabetic condition can help in reducing the risk of heart diseases as well," he said.

Dr Archana Dhawan Bajaj, gynaecologist, obstetrician and IVF expert at Nurture IVF Centre said diabetes puts pregnant women at high risks of congenital malformations in the fetus including heart defects, genital urinary defects, caudal syndrome and multiple others defects.

Air pollution may age your lungs faster: Study

July 9, 2019/The Tribune

Exposure to outdoor air pollution is linked to decreased lung function and an increased risk of developing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), according to a study of over 300,000 people published Tuesday. COPD is a long-term condition linked to reduced lung function that causes inflammation in the lungs and a narrowing of the airways, making breathing difficult. According to the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) project COPD is the third leading cause of death worldwide, and the number of global COPD deaths are expected to increase over the next ten years. Lung function normally declines as we age, but the research published in the European Respiratory Journal suggests that air pollution may contribute to the ageing process and adds to the evidence that breathing in polluted air harms the lungs. The types of pollutants the researchers investigated included particulate matter (PM10), fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and nitrogen dioxide (NO2), which are produced by burning fossil fuels from car and other vehicle exhausts, power plants and industrial emissions. The team then conducted multiple tests to see how long-term exposure to higher levels of the different air pollutants was linked to changes to participants' lung function. The participants' age, sex, body mass index (BMI), household income, education level, smoking status, and exposure to secondhand smoke were accounted for in the analyses. Further analyses also looked at whether working in occupations that increase the risk of developing COPD impacted disease prevalence.

Accurate autism detection technique developed

July 10, 2019/Deccan Chronicle



A new study sheds light on a recent accomplishment by researchers who have developed a technique to detect autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in children quickly and more accurately. The findings were published in the journal 'Computers in Biology and Medicine.' "Many people are suffering from autism, and we need early diagnosis especially in children," said Mehrshad Sadria, a master's student in Waterloo's Department of Applied Mathematics. "Our method allows for the diagnosis to be made more easily and with less possibility of mistakes. The new technique can be used in all ASD diagnosis, but we believe it's particularly effective for children," Sadria added. Researchers evaluated 17 children with ASD and 23 neuro-typical children. The mean chronological ages of the ASD and neuro-typical groups were 5.5 and 4.8, respectively. Each participant was shown 44 photographs of faces on a 19-inch screen, integrated into an eye-tracking system. The infrared device interpreted and identified the locations on the stimuli at which each child was looking via emission and reflection of waves from the iris. The images were separated into seven key areas of interest (AOIs) in which participants focussed their gaze- under the right eye, right eye, under the left eye, left eye, nose, mouth and other parts of the screen. The researchers wanted to know how much time the participants spent looking at each AOI, and also how they moved their eyes and scanned the faces.

Study finds possible link between sugary drinks and cancer

July 11, 2019/The Tribune

People who drink a lot of sugary drinks have a higher risk of developing cancer, although the evidence cannot establish a direct causal link, researchers said on Thursday. The findings of a large study in France do suggest, however, that limiting intake of sugar-sweetened drinks may help to cut the number of cancer cases in a population, the scientists said. Consumption of sugary drinks has risen worldwide in the last few decades and is linked to obesity, which itself increases cancer risk. The World Health Organization recommends that people should limit their daily intake of sugar to less than 10% of their total energy intake, but also says a further reduction to below 5%, or about 25 grams a day, would be healthier. Many countries, including Britain, Belgium, France, Hungary and Mexico, have introduced, or are about to introduce, taxes on sugar with the aim of improving people's health. Published in the BMJ British medical journal, this study analysed data from 101,257 French adults - 21% of them men and 79% women — and assessed their intake of sugary drinks. It followed them for a maximum of 9 years, between 2009 and 2018, to assess their risk for all types of cancer, and for some specific types including breast, colon and prostate cancer. The researchers also adjusted for several confounding cancer risk factors, including age, sex, educational level, family history, smoking and physical activity levels. The results showed that a 100 millilitre (ml) a day increase in consumption of sugary drinks was linked to an 18% increased risk of overall cancer and a 22% increased risk of breast cancer. When the sugary drinkers were divided into those who drank fruit juices and those who drank other sweet drinks, both groups were also linked with a higher risk of overall cancer.

New antibiotics effective without triggering resistance, says study

July 11, 2019/The Tribune



Researchers have developed two new antibiotics that are effective against multi-resistant bacteria, and also appear not to trigger resistance when used to treat infection in mice. The research, published in the journal PLOS Biology, could bring both fresh impetus and new possibilities for fighting antibiotic resistance worldwide. Antibiotics have saved so many lives over the previous century of their use in humans that they are considered to be one of the major breakthroughs of contemporary medicine, said researchers from the University of Rennes 1 in France. Growing resistance is gradually rendering them ineffective, with the threat of catastrophic public health consequences should this trend continue much longer, they said. The few new antibiotics being brought to market essentially consist of so-called me-too drugs — meaning that they are derived from existing classes of antibiotics. Researchers identified a new bacterial toxin which they transformed into potent antibiotics active against various bacteria responsible for human infections, whether Gram-positive or negative. “It all started with a fundamental discovery made in 2011,” said Brice Felden, Director of the Bacterial Regulatory RNAs and Medicine laboratory in Rennes. “We realised that a toxin produced by Staphylococcus aureus whose role is to facilitate infection is also capable of killing other bacteria present in our body. As their name suggests, these peptides are inspired by the existing natural bacterial peptides but have been shortened and modified.

Sugary drinks linked to increased cancer risk, says study

July 11, 2019/The Indian Express

Higher consumption of sugary drinks may be associated with an increased risk of cancer, according to a study published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ). The findings add to a growing body of evidence indicating that limiting sugary drink consumption, together with taxation and marketing restrictions, might contribute to a reduction in cancer cases. The consumption of sugary drinks has increased worldwide during the last few decades and is convincingly associated with the risk of obesity, which in turn is recognised as a strong risk factor for many cancers, said researchers, including those from the University of Paris 13 in France. However, research on sugary drinks and the risk of cancer is still limited. Researchers set out to assess the associations between the consumption of sugary drinks (sugar sweetened beverages and 100 per cent fruit juices), artificially sweetened (diet) beverages, and risk of overall cancer, as well as breast, prostate, and bowel (colorectal) cancers. The findings are based on 101,257 healthy French adults (21 per cent men; 79 per cent women) with an average age of 42 years. Participants completed at least two 24-hour online validated dietary questionnaires, designed to measure usual intake of 3,300 different food and beverage items and were followed up for a maximum of nine years. Daily consumption of sugary drinks and artificially sweetened (diet) beverages were calculated and first cases of cancer reported by participants were validated by medical records and linked with health insurance national databases.

New antibiotics effective without triggering resistance: Study

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Exercise improves dopamine related brain functions

July 11, 2019/Deccan Chronicle

Not just emotional and physical health, regular exercise also improves brain function in overweight and obese individuals, recent findings point out. According to a recent study, on top of its benefits for metabolism, mood and general health, exercise also improves brain function. The researchers learned that obese and overweight individuals are prone to insulin resistance in the brain, where it provides information about current nutritional status, as well as the rest of the body. As part of the study, 22 sedentary adults with overweight or obesity (an average BMI of 31) underwent two brain scans before and after an 8-week exercise intervention, including cycling and walking. The findings were discussed in the 27th Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Ingestive Behaviour. Brain function was measured before and after using an insulin nasal spray to investigate insulin sensitivity of the brain. Participants were also assessed for cognition, mood, and peripheral metabolism. Even though the exercise intervention only resulted in a marginal weight loss, brain functions important for metabolism "normalized" only after 8-weeks. Exercise increased regional blood flow in areas of the brain important for motor control and reward processes, both of which depend on the neurotransmitter dopamine. Dopamine is an important neurotransmitter for learning new motor skills and in reward-related learning and this research shows that exercise significantly improves dopamine-related brain function.

One area, in particular, the striatum, had enhanced sensitivity to insulin after the 8-weeks of exercise such that the brain response of a person with obesity after exercise training resembled the response of a person with normal weight.

Sustainable eating: Forget synthetic meat, lab grown dairy is here

July 12, 2019/Hindustan Times



The search for sustainable, healthy alternatives to meat currently has two paths: the meat-mimicking veggie burger and lab-grown proteins. But in the land of dairy, there's only plant-based alternatives like cashew "butter" and almond milk. Whether you're milking them or slaughtering them, industrial cattle husbandry is bad for the planet. Studies show it to be a key culprit in the climate crisis and a source of localized environmental damage. The refrigerator aisle has been full of plant-based dairy for some time, but now there are a few startups who, like the purveyors of cultured meat, want to take dairy one step further. Already under siege by falling milk sales, Big Dairy lobbyists have been lashing out at makers of plant-based rivals as they grow market-share. But their next enemy may be coming from the laboratory, in the form of synthetic whey, and investors are already lining up. While fewer people are drinking cow's milk, they're still eating yogurt and cheese, and a crucial protein that comes from making those products is whey. It's relatively flavorless and incorporates well into a range of food formulations for everyone from infants to adults. There's already a huge market for it, as demand for whey protein and whey-based products is on the rise thanks to consumer demand for protein in everything, from bars to shakes. The U.S. is the single largest exporter of whey products, with estimated sales of \$10 billion last year. BCC Research said the category will grow by 6% annually through 2023. But for all its popularity, all that whey still comes from cows, a fact increasingly seen as a liability for climate- and health-conscious dairy and protein lovers.

Chinese scientists develop tumor-specific anti-cancer therapy

July 13, 2019/The Times of India

Chinese scientists developed a combined tumor-killing therapy that can be activated specifically at tumor sites in mouse models of cancer, which is more effective than previous similar therapies. The study published on Friday in the journal *Science Immunology* described the new cancer immunotherapy that can prevent the immune system from becoming tolerant of tumors, which occurs in 30 per cent of all cancer patients, the Xinhua news agency reported. A team led by Wang Dange from Shanghai Institute of Materia Medica under the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Fudan University developed a common immune checkpoint inhibitor in a nanoparticle formulation, which is highly tumor-specific. The checkpoint inhibitor is a kind of increasingly popular anti-tumor drug. It can block proteins that keep immune T cells from killing cancer. But the checkpoint inhibitor used to target those immune system-suppressing proteins like PD-1 and PD-L1 often fails to reach deep-seated or metastatic tumors. Wang's team combined the nanoparticles carrying PD-L1-targeting antibodies with a light-activated molecule. The molecule called photosensitizer can produce tumor-killing reactive oxygen species after encountering a protein abundant in tumors, according to the study. In mouse models, a local near-infrared radiation that activated the photosensitizer, along with the administration of antibodies-carrying nanoparticles, promoted the infiltration of cancer cell-killing T cells into the tumor site and made the tumors more sensitive to the checkpoint blockade.

Higher salt intake can cause gastrointestinal bloating, says study

July 13, 2019/The Indian Express



People report more gastrointestinal bloating when they eat a diet high in salt, a study has found. Researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in the US re-analysed data from a large clinical trial conducted two decades ago, and found that high sodium intake increased bloating among trial participants. “Bloating is one of the leading gastrointestinal complaints in the US and can be exacerbated in some people by a high-fiber diet. Our results suggest that they might be able to reduce that bloating, without compromising on healthy fiber, by lowering their sodium intake,” said Noel Mueller, senior author of the study. Bloating is estimated to affect up to a third of US adults overall and more than 90 per cent of those with irritable bowel syndrome, according to the study.

Bloating features a buildup of excess gas in the gut. The production of gas can be attributed to gas-producing gut bacteria breaking down fiber. There is also some evidence that sodium can stimulate bloating. The study, published in the American Journal of Gastroenterology, is the first to examine sodium as a cause of bloating in the context of low- and high-fiber diets. The study analysed data from the DASH-Sodium trial, conducted at four clinical centres during 1998-99. It tested the DASH diet, a high-fiber diet which is relatively low in fat and high in fruits, nuts, and vegetables, against a low-fiber control diet. Each of the two diets was tested at three levels of sodium, and the 412 participants all had high blood pressure at the trial start.

Alcohol causes significant harm to those other than the drinker: Study

July 13, 2019/The Indian Express

People who are in close proximity or connection with alcoholics can experience harm because of their drinking, according to a study led by an Indian-origin scientist. According to the research, published in the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, an estimated 53 million adults in the US experienced harm because of someone else’s drinking in the last 12 months. Researchers led by Madhabika B Nayak of the Alcohol Research Group in the US analysed data of 8,750 adults who answered questions from two databases in 2015 — the National Alcohol’s Harm to Others Survey and the National Alcohol Survey. They found that some 21 per cent of women and 23 per cent of men experienced harm because of someone else’s drinking. These harms included threats or harassment, vandalism, physical aggression, harms related to driving, or financial or family problems, according to the study. The specific types of harm experienced differed by gender. Women were more likely to report financial and family problems, whereas ruined property, vandalism, and physical aggression were more likely to be reported by men.

There is “considerable risk for women from heavy, often male, drinkers in the household and, for men, from drinkers outside their family,” the researchers said. Additional factors, including age and the person’s own drinking, were also important. People below 25 had a higher risk of experiencing harm from someone else’s drinking. Further, almost half of men and women who themselves were heavy drinkers said they had been harmed by someone else’s drinking, the study stated.

The many benefits of betel leaf

July 15, 2019/The Indian Express

My curiosity regarding the healing benefits of betel leaf (commonly called paan ka patta) arose when it miraculously subsided a deep painful injury almost overnight. The rapidity with which it reduced inflammation compelled me to further research on this green, heart-shaped leaf's health effects. It appears that our forefathers were acutely aware of its wide-ranging health benefits, but sadly, modern urban people are not only unaware of its uses but also discourage eating paan citing alleged risk of oral cancer. In India, the tradition of eating paan with soaked lime, areca nut (supari) with or without tobacco is age-old. Betel is also used in religious rituals and prayers as it is considered auspicious. It appears that our paan ka patta actually contains many curative and healing benefits. The leaves are rich in vitamins like vitamin C, thiamine, niacin, riboflavin and carotene and are a great source of calcium. Since the amount of betel leaf one actually consumes is very small, it can hardly contribute as a rich source of these nutrients. However, the real medicinal benefits arise from other non-nutrient components. These include its powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compounds like phytochemicals, including phenolic compounds, flavonoids, tannins, alkaloids, steroids and quinones. Owing to these, betel leaf has anti-microbial, anti-cancer and anti-diabetic properties. Its role in prevention of cardio-vascular disease, high cholesterol and high blood pressure has been documented in Ayurvedic texts and in a few scientific studies. Its benefits in treating wounds, inflammation and asthma too have been reported in traditional medicine. Other known benefits in traditional medicine include treating oral cavity disorders, digestive disturbances and depression.

First suspected leptospirosis victim in Mumbai: All you need to know about this bacterial infection

July 15, 2019/The Indian Express

A 26-year-old woman is suspected to be the first victim of leptospirosis in Mumbai. As a bacterial infection that spreads through animal to human contact, it is considered to be one of the world's most widespread diseases transmitted by animals to humans. The infection is generally transmitted to humans by water or food that has been contaminated by animal urine after it comes in contact with unhealed breaks in the skin, the eyes, or with the mucous membranes.

Causes

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the infectious disease is caused by bacteria belonging to the genus *Leptospira*. The disease is detected in areas which have witnessed excessive rainfall or flooding. The diseases can also affect animals, including pets. However, human-to-human transmission occurs very rarely. The bacteria that cause the zoonotic disease can get into soil or water and can survive there for weeks or months through which they are transmitted to animals. The risk of infection from leptospirosis depends upon the amount of exposure.

Signs and Symptoms

The incubation period of leptospirosis is between 5 to 14 days. According to the National Health Portal of India (NHP), in most of the cases, 'leptospirosis only causes mild flu-like symptoms, such as headache, chills and muscle pain'. However, in some cases the infection is more severe and can cause life-threatening problems, including organ failure and internal bleeding. A severe form of leptospirosis is known as Weil's disease. Leptospirosis is often difficult to diagnose clinically, as it can appear to be very similar to many other diseases such as dengue, typhoid and viral hepatitis. A blood test is done to detect antibodies for the bacteria while other tests include Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA); Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and MAT (microscopic agglutination test) which is a serological test and is considered the gold standard in diagnosing leptospirosis.

Treatment

Leptospirosis can be treated with medicines like Ampicillin, Azithromycin, Ceftriaxone, Doxycycline and Penicillin according to NHP.

Prevention

Since there are no WHO pre-qualified vaccines currently available, measures to prevent transmission of leptospirosis should be taken.

Here are some measures suggested by NHP:

- Wear protective clothing like masks.
- It is ideal to cover skin lesions with waterproof dressings.
- Enough awareness about water bodies which are known or suspected to be contaminated such as pools, ponds, rivers. It is also good to avoid wading or swimming in potentially contaminated water.
- Wash or shower after exposure to urine splashes or contaminated soil or water.
- Wash and clean wounds.
- Avoid urine splashes and aerosols while touching ill or dead animals or assisting animals in giving birth.
- Strictly maintain hygienic measures during care or handling all animals.
- Where feasible, disinfecting contaminated areas (scrubbing floors in stables, butcheries, abattoirs).
- Consume clean drinking-water.

WHO warns of too sugary baby foods

July 15, 2019/The Hindu



Commercial baby foods often contain too much sugar and display confusing ingredient lists, according to a UN report that proposed new guidelines on Monday to improve infant diets. The World Health Organization (WHO) examined nearly 8,000 products from more than 500 stores in Austria, Bulgaria, Israel and Hungary between November 2017 and January 2018. “In around half of products examined... more than 30% of calories were from total sugars and around a third of products contained added sugar or other sweetening agents,” the European branch of the WHO stated. The WHO noted that while foods that naturally contain sugars, such as fruits and vegetables, can be appropriate in young child diets, “the very high levels of sugars present in commercial products is a cause for concern”. A high sugar intake can increase the risk of overweight and dental cavities, the organisation warned. And early exposure to overly sweet products can create a potentially harmful lifelong preference for sugary foods. “Good nutrition in infancy and early childhood remains key to ensuring optimal child growth and development, and to better health outcomes later in life,” WHO Regional Director for Europe Zsuzsanna Jakab said in a statement. The WHO said it was updating its guidelines to help member countries adopt new legislation to curb high sugar intake. The WHO wants the promotion of breast milk substitutes to end, and recommends that children between six months and two years be fed nutrient-rich foods prepared at home.

Swine flu claims 20 lives; here is how you can protect yourself

July 15, 2019/The Times of India

Monsoon is back and so is the spread of viruses and germs in the air. The deadly swine flu, which spreads through HINI influenza virus is back in season and is rapidly spreading with over 1200 cases recorded so far in cities like Hyderabad and Pune. Almost 20 people have lost their lives due to the disease so far. As authorities prepare to battle the deadly disease, do remember that you can ensure your safety by taking a few general precautions:

Prevention

Swine flu carries a greater risk for children under the age of 5, pregnant women and elderly people. Those recovering from health problems or suffering from chronic pulmonary illnesses, cardiac problems, renal, muscular disorders, HIV, immune system problems should also take special precautions to stay safe from the illness. While A and B categories can be easily treated at home, the C type needs immediate hospitalisation because the symptoms are so severe that they can even lead to death in worst cases. So, here are some general precautions and good health practices to follow to keep yourself protected: - Avoid visiting crowded places as much as you can since the risk of spreading of flu causing germs increases during the monsoon season. -Practice good sanitation. Wash your hands as frequently as possible, especially after touching public surfaces. Swine flu spreads through direct or indirect contact so good hygiene can cut out the risk.

These two seemingly simple health issues in youth can multiply your heart risk later



July 17, 2019/The Time of India

With high stress levels and neglected lifestyle, you'd think that high blood pressure and irregular cholesterol is fast becoming a common health phenomena. Right? While what you are thinking may partially be true, what isn't in line is people expecting it to be so common, that it ceases to be dangerous. A new study conducted by the American College of Cardiology reveals that for those who fail to effectively manage it in their initial years are able to fight off coronary heart issues later in life. The study analysed more than 36,000 people. The researcher also highlighted the issues of why young adults mostly fail to get diagnosed on time, which makes it difficult to handle the problems. Talking about the risks, the authors of the study stated that elevated levels of bad cholesterol or low density lipoprotein in young adulthood raises heart disease risk by 64 per cent. And a continued high systolic blood pressure, which is the pressure experienced in the arteries when heart muscles contract, and diastolic blood pressure, the pressure when the heart rests between heart beats, were linked to increased risk of heart failure by 37 and 21 per cent respectively. While high BP and high cholesterol were not independently linked to the risk of stroke in young adults, however, raised levels of systolic and diastolic played a role in predicting the risk of stroke. Those who have a genetic predisposition to the two health conditions need more monitoring and may also require them to take lipid lowering drugs and cholesterol lowering drugs. It may not be resolved completely simply with diet and exercise.

HIV cases decline by 16 per cent since 2010: UNAIDS

July 17, 2019/The Indian Express

Globally, around 1.7 million people became newly infected with HIV in 2018, a 16 per cent decline since 2010, said the UNAIDS in its recently-released report. The decline was driven mostly by steady progress in fighting the condition across most of eastern and southern Africa. The UNAIDS' Global AIDS Update showed that South Africa, for example, made huge advances and has successfully reduced new HIV infections by more than 40 per cent, and AIDS-related deaths by around 40 per cent since 2010. The report also revealed that AIDS-related deaths continued to decline as access to treatment continues to expand and more progress is made in improving the delivery of HIV/tuberculosis services. Since 2010, AIDS-related deaths have fallen by 33 per cent to 7,70,000 in 2018. However, there is still a long way to go in eastern and southern Africa, the region most affected by HIV. There have also been worrying increase in new infections in eastern Europe and central Asia (29 per cent), in the Middle East and North Africa (10 per cent) and in Latin America (seven per cent). However, the report also showed that less than 50 per cent of key populations were reached with combination HIV prevention services in more than half of the countries that reported. "We urgently need increased political leadership to end AIDS," the report quoted Gunilla Carlsson, UNAIDS Executive Director. Carlson said, "This starts with investing adequately and smartly and by looking at what's making some countries so successful. Ending AIDS is possible if we focus on people, not diseases, create roadmaps for the people and locations being left behind, and take a human rights-based approach to reach people most affected by HIV."

Did you know women's Alzheimer's risk differ from men's?

July 17, 2019/The Asian Age



New research gives some biological clues to why women may be more likely than men to develop Alzheimer's disease and how this most common form of dementia varies by sex. At the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in Los Angeles on Tuesday, scientists offered evidence that the disease may spread differently in the brains of women than in men. Other researchers showed that several newly identified genes seem related to the disease risk by sex. Two-thirds of Alzheimer's cases in the US are in women and "it's not just because we live longer," said Maria Carrillo, the association's chief science officer. There's also "a biological underpinning" for sex differences in the disease, she said. Some previous studies suggest that women at any age are more likely than men to develop Alzheimer's. Scientists also know that a gene called APOE-4 seems to raise risk more for women than for men in certain age groups. At the same time, women with the disease in its early stages may go undiagnosed because they tend to do better on verbal tests than men, which mask Alzheimer's damage. The new studies add more evidence and potential explanations for suspected variations between how men and women develop the disease. Vanderbilt University researchers found differences in how tau, a protein that forms tangles that destroy nerve cells, spreads in the brains of women compared to men. Using scans on 301 people with normal thinking skills and 161 others with mild impairment, they mapped where tau was deposited and correlated it with nerve networks — highways that brain signals follow.

Ebola outbreak in Congo declared an 'international emergency' by WHO

July 18, 2019/The Times of India

Ebola remains to be a major viral infection putting a lot of lives at risk globally. With its fatal complications, the outbreak of the disease is severe and has high mortality rates, as much as 90%. In what is believed to be one of the worst such outbreaks in history, the Ebola spread which was declared in August last year in Congo, Eastern Africa has claimed as many as 1600 lives and now, posing a greater threat, it is starting to plague parts around the international borders. World Health Organisation (WHO), taking count of the same has now termed it to be an international emergency. First such case was confirmed last week in Goma, a major regional crossroads in northeastern Congo on the Rwandan border. The situation was being feared for long. Despite awareness and education, Ebola continues to spread rapidly in underdeveloped and developing nations because of the necessary healthcare and resources needed to control the problem. India remains safe from the spread till now. Calling the disease a "very high risk" problem, a declaration like this would bring international attention and aid, which is much needed.

How does Ebola spread?

Ebola virus replicates itself in the body once it enters and attacks the antibodies, just like other viral diseases like Dengue, Malaria or Zika. However, the extent of damage Ebola poses is greater than any other as it overcomes the body's immune system. Symptoms of Ebola virus resemble that of a viral or flu-like infection. It takes anywhere from two days to two weeks to fully manifest. Most common symptoms include a fever greater than 101.5 degrees, muscle soreness, pain, weakness, vomiting and experiencing pain around the abdomen. If the outbreak is

severe, symptoms like bleeding from the nose and mouth, impacted kidney and liver function can be experienced.



Oral health given short shrift: study

July 19, 2019/The Hindu

“Oral diseases present a major global public health burden, affecting 3.5 billion people worldwide, yet oral health has been largely ignored by the global health community,” noted a new Lancet Series on Oral Health. The report warns that with a treat-over-prevent model, modern dentistry has failed to combat the global challenge of oral diseases, giving rise to calls for the radical reform of dental care.

“The burden of oral diseases is on course to rise as more people are exposed to the underlying risk factors of oral diseases, including sugar, tobacco and alcohol and emerging evidence of the food, beverage, and sugar industry’s influence on dental research and professional bodies raises fresh concern,” noted the release. Stating that oral health has been isolated from traditional healthcare and health policy for too long despite the major global public health burden of oral diseases, the paper published in The Lancet states that failure of the global health community to prioritise the global burden of oral health has led to calls for the radical reform of dental care, tightened regulation of the sugar industry, and greater transparency around conflict of interests in dental research. Oral diseases, including tooth decay, gum disease and oral cancers, affect almost half of the global population, with untreated dental decay the most common health condition worldwide. In India, oral disorders are the most prevalent disease condition, and have remained so for the past 30 years.

New cell that can heal hearts discovered

July 19, 2019/The Indian Express

Researchers have discovered a previously unidentified cell population which could lead to new treatments for patients with injured hearts. The cell, described in the journal Immunity, was discovered in the pericardial fluid found in the sac around the heart of a mouse with heart injury. The researchers from the University of Calgary in Canada found that a specific cell, a Gata6⁺ pericardial cavity macrophage, helps heal an injured heart in mice. The same cells were also found within the human pericardium of people with injured hearts, confirming that the repair cells offer the promise of a new therapy for patients with heart disease. “Our discovery of a new cell that can help heal injured heart muscle will open the door to new therapies and hope for the millions of people who suffer from heart disease,” said Paul Fedak, a professor at the University of Calgary. “The possibilities for further discovery and innovative new therapies are exciting and important,” said Fedak. Heart doctors had never before explored the possibility that cells just outside the heart could participate in healing and repair of hearts after injury, researchers said. Unlike other organs, the heart has a very limited capacity to repair itself which is why heart disease is the number one cause of death in North America, they said. “We always knew that the heart sits inside a sac filled with a strange fluid,” said Fedak. “Now we know that this pericardial fluid is rich with healing cells. These cells may hold the secret to repair and regeneration of new heart muscle,” he said.

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Oral diseases, including tooth decay, gum disease and oral cancers, affect almost half of the global population, with untreated dental decay the most common health condition worldwide. In India, oral disorders are the most prevalent disease condition, and have remained so for the past 30 years. Prevalence of oral cancer is highest in South Asian countries.

With regards,

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