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Family history of heart disease a major risk factor in acquiring CAD

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Precautions must be taken at a young age to prevent premature mortality due to CAD



Statistics indicate that heart ailments including Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) are responsible for 60% of all deaths in India. More than 52% deaths caused by heart diseases in the country are in people below 70 years of age. People with a family history of the condition are more susceptible and therefore, the need of the hour is to raise awareness on following a healthy lifestyle and undergoing timely checkups.

CAD impacts the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the heart, which can over time, put a person at an increased risk of a heart attack. Cardiac ailments can put a huge dent in the lives of people, especially those who are susceptible to it. While timely diagnosis and treatment are important, it is also imperative to people to start making healthy changes to their lifestyle from a young age.

Speaking about this, Dr Manoj Kumar, Director & Head - Cardiac Cath Lab, Max Super Specialty Hospital, Patparganj, New Delhi, said, “People who have a family history of heart diseases are more likely to have high levels of calcium build-up in their arteries. It is thus important that they get their coronary artery calcium levels checked at regular intervals. Coronary Artery Disease occurs when the arteries supplying blood to the heart muscle become hardened and narrowed. This is due to the buildup of cholesterol and other material, called plaque, on their inner walls and is called atherosclerosis. As it grows, less blood can flow through the arteries. As a result, the heart muscle can’t get the blood or oxygen it needs. This can lead to chest pain (angina) or a heart attack. Blockage in the arteries can develop from a young age. While some amount of it is common, wrong lifestyle choices can worsen the situation. If you have a parent or a sibling with a case of CAD, you must take precautions right from a young age to avert the risk.”

Adding further, Dr Manoj Kumar, said, “The tendency of premature CAD in Indians can be attributed to a genetic predisposition including high levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL-C) or ‘bad’ cholesterol and metabolic syndrome. When combined with an unhealthy lifestyle, these can wreak havoc on the heart leading to early mortality and morbidity. It is therefore important to cultivate healthy habits right at the outset to reduce the risk of acquiring CAD and other heart problems.”

Angioplasty is a treatment that is used to restore and improve blood flow. A long, thin tube (catheter) is inserted into the narrowed part of the artery. A wire with a deflated balloon is then passed through the catheter to the narrowed area. The balloon is inflated, compressing the deposits against the artery walls. A stent is often left in the artery. Drug-eluting stents release medication to help keep the arteries open. A drug-eluting stent is coated with time-release medicine. That medication is gradually released into blood vessel to prevent it from becoming blocked again. In CABG, the surgeon creates a graft to bypass blocked coronary arteries using a vessel from another part of the body. This allows blood to flow around the blocked or narrowed coronary artery.

Some tips to prevent CAD.

- Eat a low fat, high-fibre diet (including plenty of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains). Limit your salt consumption to 6 grams a day.
- Indulge in regular exercise to maintain a healthy weight. Exercise will also help strengthen the heart and increase blood circulation; reduce cholesterol levels; and keep blood pressure under check.
- Smoking is one of the major risk factors for CAD and must be avoided. It is also imperative to reduce your alcohol consumption.
- Keep your vitals such as blood pressure and blood sugar under control.