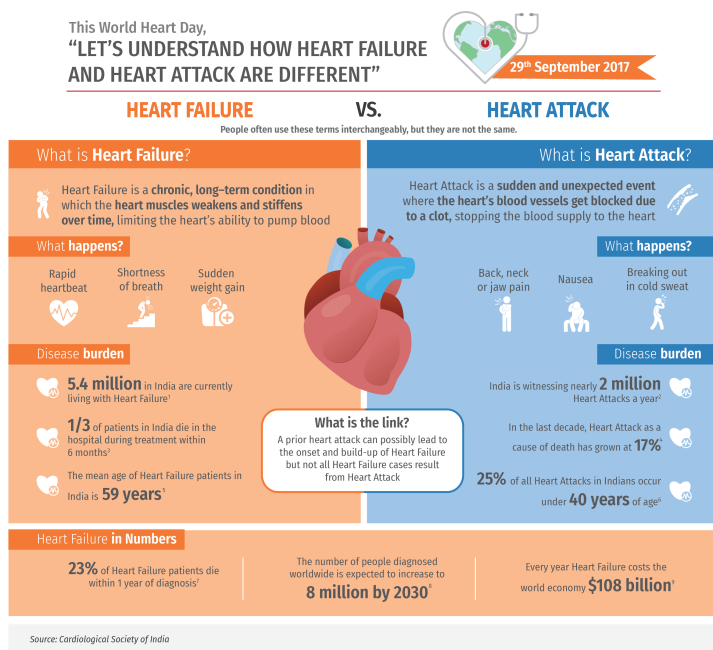


World Heart Day- Healthy Heart Beats the Best!

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Every individual's blood cholesterol level influences the chances of a heart disease. In fact, the higher the blood cholesterol level, the greater the risk of developing a heart disease or having a heart attack. Cardiovascular diseases, including heart disease and stroke, are the world's number one killers, claiming 17.5 million lives a year globally.

Dr. Kirti Chadha, Head, Global Reference Laboratory, Metropolis Healthcare Ltd. explains, "In Mumbai alone, four out of ten people suffer from high cholesterol. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) or "bad" cholesterol builds up in the walls of your arteries, making them hard and narrow and three out of ten people have high LDL and VLDL (Very Low Density Lipoprotein). On the other hand, High-density lipoprotein (HDL) also known as "good" cholesterol picks up excess cholesterol in your blood and takes it back to your liver where it's broken down and removed from your body. The alarming fact remains that six in ten people have low HDL which signifies a greater risk for heart disease".

According to Dr. Keyur Parikh, Senior Cardiologist, Care Institute of Medical Sciences, Ahmedabad, "In India, the overall awareness of heart diseases, especially Heart Failure, is very poor. People do not have the basic understanding of heart failure, its symptoms, its treatment options and the advantages of treating it at an early stage as they often confuse it with Heart Attack. Most patients are admitted to the hospital at an advanced stage of the disease. In Ahmedabad, we see around 100 heart failure patients in a month, with high prevalence of symptomatic Heart Failure among the younger population."

A recent study has found that about 45 per cent of all heart attacks may be silent without the classic symptoms of chest pain,

cold sweats or breathlessness. However, like symptom-related heart attacks, they increase the risk of patients dying from heart disease and other causes. What is alarming is that those who are at risk remain unaware of this condition until a chance electrocardiogram detects damage to their heart muscles.

Speaking about this, Dr Hemant Madan, Additional Director, Cardiology, Fortis Hospital, Shalimar Bagh, New Delhi says, "Changing lifestyle patterns and eating healthy are two ways in which a person can avoid the risk of acquiring a heart attack. On World Heart Day, it is imperative to raise awareness about this fact and encourage people to adopt a healthier lifestyle. Apart from this, it is also a good idea to get regular check-ups done and keep a check on even the most minor signs that the body displays."

As one of the most important organs in our body, it is our responsibility to treat our heart right. The Indian Heart Association says that 50 per cent of all heart attacks in India affects those under 50 years, and 25 percent affects those below 40 years.

But this responsibility comes with a heavy price. Cardiac care is typically being offered by the private sector in India. Government hospitals all across the country lack the infrastructure capabilities to cater to cardiac patients, except a very few centers that are small islands in the vast market.

Dr. Ajit Mullasari, Director of Cardiology, Institute of Cardio-Vascular Diseases, Madras Medical Mission, Chennai adds, "There is a need to develop a robust approach to combat heart failure which is emerging as an epidemic in India. The mean age of heart failure patients in India is 59 years, which is 10 years younger than other countries. The variation in mortality in low-income countries like India can be attributed to low awareness, economic burden, healthcare infrastructure, quality and access to primary healthcare facilities, environmental and genetic factors which results in increasing incidence of heart failure."

Dr. Aashish Chaudhry, Managing Director, Aakash Healthcare shares his concerns on this. "This segment is completely underutilized in our country. Even well reputed cardiac centers do not emphasize on prevention and miss out on the opportunities to prevent cardiac and many other related diseases such as obesity, stroke, etc. This poses a serious problem to solve for any government. The efforts need to be sustained and goal directed. A concrete plan of action has to be formulated by the central government and put into execution. Adequate budget allocation and manpower planning will be the key factors".