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Celebrating World Heart Day with the Experts!

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The Global Burden of Disease study estimate of age-standardized CVD death rate of 272 per 100,000 population in India is higher than the global average of 235 per 100,000 population.



Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) have now become the leading cause of mortality in India. A quarter of all mortality is attributable to CVD. Ischemic heart disease and stroke are the predominant causes and are responsible for >80% of CVD deaths.

BioSpectrum spoke to few healthcare experts to get more insights on World Heart Day-

"Heart disease is getting younger day by day in India and striking at early ages. There has been an increased incidence of heart problems in youngsters owing to faulty lifestyle which includes intake of junk foods, lack of physical activities, increasing stress levels, increased smoking and drinking habits. However, 80% of premature deaths from cardiovascular disease (CVD) could be avoided if factors like tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol are controlled. Regular screening and avoiding sedentary lifestyle is the only way to keep heart up and doing. Further, taking care of the small eating habits to regularly exercising are the best preventive measures one should take besides seeking doctors advice."

Dr Sanjay Mehrotra, Senior Consultant – Cardiology, Narayana Health City, Bengaluru

"World Heart Day, celebrated every year on September 29, spreads awareness about cardiovascular disease and highlights the actions that individuals can take to prevent and control CVD. Roughly a third of all deaths around the world are the result of heart disease and stroke, making cardiovascular disease the number one killer globally. Many of these people have been exposed to unhealthy behaviours including tobacco use, unhealthy diet, inadequate physical activity and harmful use of alcohol etc. However, cardiovascular diseases are preventable to a considerable extent, provided the right things are done in the right way at the right time. Many lives can be saved by regular check ups for high blood pressure (responsible for the bulk of heart disease-related deaths annually), high blood cholesterol and other conditions that raise the risk for heart disease and stroke. Lack of physical activity is a major risk factor for the development of many diseases.

Taking a comprehensive approach to address the cardiovascular disease burden is the need of the hour. It is also very important to advocate life-saving techniques to prevent heart failure like CPR for revival after a sudden cardiac arrest. Conducting CVD awareness programmes and counselling sessions are also required to a greater extent to raise awareness. Governments and Ministries of Health must accurately understand the scale of the problem by investing in surveillance and monitoring of cardiovascular disease. By making just a few small changes to our lives, we can reduce our risk of heart disease and stroke, as well as improving our quality of life and setting a good example for the next generation. There is no-shortcut to a healthy heart. We should spread the word that a healthy lifestyle is the key to a healthy heart.

Good heart health is good for MY HEART, for YOUR HEART, for ALL OUR HEARTS.

Dr. Sanjay Bhat, Consultant - Interventional Cardiology, Aster CMI Hospital, Bengaluru

"Indians are genetically predisposed to coronary artery disease. Hence, even someone who is very particular about a healthy lifestyle may not be aware of certain changes in the heart. At times, a routine checkup can diagnose blockages in people who may never have experienced any heart-related ailments. On World Heart Day, there is a need to raise awareness on the risk factors and importance of timely health checkups particularly in those above the age of 35. Some symptoms to watch out for include shortness of breath, extensive fatigue, fluid build-up fluid in the body, persistent cough or wheezing, appetite loss, nausea, confusion, and increased heart rate."

Prevention should begin early in life. People should get checked on time, undertaken age-appropriate health checkups, and be aware of risk factors. Family history may be an unavoidable risk factor, but the remaining choices lie in our hands. Women need to more careful as the symptoms they experience may not be the same as those in men."

Dr Vishal Rastogi, Principal Interventional Cardiologist, Fortis Escorts Heart Institute & Research Centre, Okhla Road, New Delhi

"Ischemic heart diseases account for the largest fraction of cardiovascular diseases. This is due to poor lifestyle and high incidence of risk factors like hypertension, use of tobacco, diabetes, obesity, physical inactivity, lipid abnormalities, etc. Life expectancy is increasing. In Karnataka, it was 62.5 years and 59 years for females and males, respectively, in 1990, which increased to 71.1 years and 67.1 years, respectively, in 2016. This has resulted in a large aging population with attendant cardiovascular problems such as valve diseases, heart rhythm problems like atrial fibrillation, and heart failure. These heart-related problems are on the rise among both genders across age groups in both urban and rural areas. However, due to improvement in socioeconomic status, the occurrence of rheumatic heart diseases has declined considerably among the people."

Dr. Ganeshakrishnan T Iyer, Cardiothoracic & Vascular Surgeon, Vikram Hospital, Bengaluru

"The higher the person's blood sugar level is the higher the chances of developing heart diseases. Compared to people who do not have diabetes, people having diabetes are at an elevated risk of heart disease even at young age.

Diabetes affects heart disease risk in three major ways-

Just like smoking, hypertension and high cholesterol, diabetes itself is a serious risk factor for heart disease. People with Type 2 diabetes are at same risk of suffering a cardiac arrest or heart attack like those who have history of heart attack.

Diabetes when combined with other risk factors like obesity, overweight and metabolic syndrome causes harmful physical changes to the heart. People with history of cardiac disease treatment like bypass grafting, angioplasty etc tend to have less success if the blood sugar level is uncontrolled.

Diabetes increases the risk of heart diseases as it raises the cholesterol levels in the blood and hardens the arteries, a condition known as atherosclerosis. Moreover, diabetics are overweight which furthermore worsens it and raises the risk to heart diseases."

Dr. Naresh kumar Goyal, Associate Director - Interventional Cardiology, Max Super Speciality Hospital, Shalimar Bagh, New Delhi

"World Heart Day on September 29 aims to combat the rising number of people with cardiovascular disease (CVD), by promoting the importance of living a heart-healthy lifestyle. The theme this year 'My Heart, Your Heart,' posed the question "What can I do right now to look after my heart and your heart?" for all stakeholders to walk the talk. The main call to action for this year's campaign is to make a promise.

Cardiovascular diseases are a collective of various kinds of heart ailments, stroke and diseases of blood vessels. However coronary artery disease, also called ischemic heart disease - symptomised by the hardening of arteries - and strokes account for most deaths. It was presumed that ischemic heart disease and stroke afflicted only affluent people and it was thought that Indians would not bear the brunt. However it has been seen that India has a very high incidence of ischaemic heart disease. This is because of modernization with reduced physical activity, increased consumption of high calorie and refined food and genetic predisposition to develop heart disease. Indian patients are affected at a younger age and develop severe blockages.

This disease affects people during a productive period in their lives and causes a great social and economic burden.

On world heart day the emphasis is on preventing heart and stroke in the population. Various awareness camps and preventive health checks are done. Prevention of heart disease can be done by:

- Regular Physical activities – at least 30-45 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity everyday.
- Evaluating cholesterol levels and taking remedial measures through lifestyle changes and medication
- Strict control of hypertension and diabetes.
- Achieving ideal body weight
- Smoking Cessation.
- Consuming foods high in whole grain, protein, fruits and vegetables and low in fat and refined food.

Incorporate heart-healthy habits into your lifestyle and you may well enjoy a healthier life for years to come.

Dr. Pradeep Kumar D, Consultant - Interventional Cardiology, Aster CMI Hospital, Bengaluru

"Cardiovascular disease is one of the significant reasons for mortality in India, in the last 26 years, India has seen a steep rise in death rate by 34% due to this fatal disease. One may hear the terms 'heart disease', 'cardiac disease', and 'cardiovascular disease' all during a single medical appointment. The former two technically refer to any disease that affects your heart and the remaining term is the result of a progressive biological process in the arteries and heart.

The most common type of heart disease in India is Heart Attack and Heart failure. Heart attack is the death of heart muscle due to loss of blood caused by a complete blockage of a coronary artery and Heart failure doesn't mean that the crucial organ has ceased functioning, but that it isn't working as well as it should. Any type of heart damage, weakness, or stiffness can result in heart failure. Heart diseases are a serious ailment in this country. But this doesn't mean that one should panic, instead, you need to work towards everything you can to maintain a healthy ticker. Start by learning your family history and maintaining routine doctor appointments."

Satesh Bidaisee DVM, MSPH, EdD, CPH, FRSPH; Professor of Public Health and Preventive Medicine; Assistant Dean for School of Graduate Studies, St. George's University

"Heart diseases are catching up fast and have become more of a lifestyle disease which is proving to be chronic and prevalent in the age group from 20 to 45 as indicated by many surveys/studies. As work pressure, stress and less sleep is becoming common in adults, a routine check is the need of the hour in order to not be a victim of heart diseases and avoid the adverse affects of heart attacks. A healthy lifestyle should be inculcated by doing regular exercises for at least 30 minutes in a day which helps to reduce heart risks and also maintains a healthy weight that prevents the body from diabetics, cholesterol and blood pressure. "

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