

WORLD HEPATITIS DAY - JULY 28

Protect your liver, bid goodbye to Hepatitis

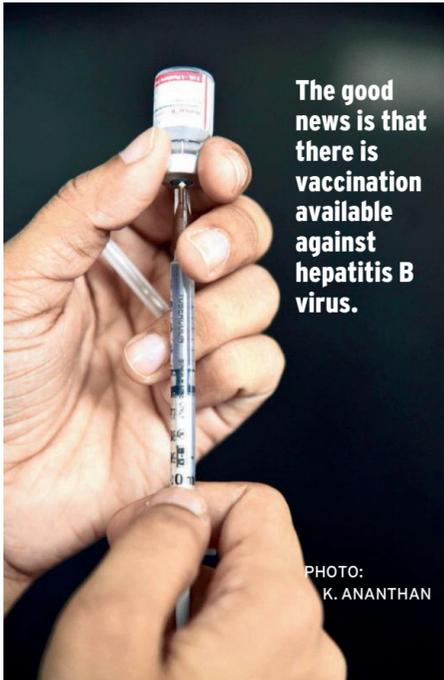
World Health Organisation (WHO) observes World Hepatitis Day on July 28, every year. Its current global campaign aims to eliminate the infectious disease by 2030. Read on to know more about viral hepatitis and its impact on the liver...

R. Keerthana

World Hepatitis Day is observed on July 28 every year to create an awareness about the infectious disease among people. Hepatitis kills about 1.4 million people every year worldwide and affects about hundreds of millions. The disease may present itself in the form of acute or chronic infection if not diagnosed in its earlier stage. There are no distinct symptoms in the early stages. The infection can go undetected for years, and many people do not know they are infected until much later. This makes spreading awareness all the more important.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO), India has intermediate level of endemicity of hepatitis, with 2 to 3 per cent of its population affected by the disease. According to Chennai Liver Foundation, about 40 million Indians are carriers of hepatitis viruses.

Hepatitis is a contagious disease that affects the liver. It may have short-term impact or may become chronic, depending on its type, immunity of the patient, spread and timely diagnosis. There are five main hepatitis viruses - A, B, C, D and E. Hepatitis may also be caused by alcohol use, autoimmune diseases and



The good news is that there is vaccination available against hepatitis B virus.

PHOTO: K. ANANTHAN

certain medications. But most common cause all over the world is virus and our focus today is 'viral hepatitis'. Hepatitis A and E are short-term, while B and C may become chronic. Hepatitis D occurs only in those patient who are infected with Hepatitis B.

Hepatitis A and E

The most common types of infection found in India, South-Asian and African countries are Hepatitis A and E. Caused by HAV and HEV viruses respectively, Hepatitis A and E are transmitted through contaminated

food and water. The HAV is found predominantly in the faeces of people with Hepatitis A.

Dr. N. Murugan, hepatologist, Apollo Hospitals, Greaves Road, Chennai, explains that infections caused by HAV and HEV are self-limiting and are 100 per cent curable. "When infected, the patient may experience flu-like symptoms. Jaundice may also occur." Healthy and hygienic practices like washing hands after using bathroom, before eating food, avoiding road-side eateries, ensuring that the food you eat is germ-free and keeping the surroundings clean are some of the ways to avoid spreading as well as being infected by HAV and HEV.

Hepatitis B, D and C

HBV, HCV and HDV spread from affected person to another through blood and body fluids. "The infection can also be vertical - spreading from mother to child at the time of birth," adds Dr. Murugan. The viruses may also spread through blood transfusion, contaminated needles and other medical equipments. It may also occur through unsterilised tattoo needles and razors. When a person is infected by HBV, his/her immune

system may fight against the foreign body and may clear them from the body within 6 months. But if this does not happen within six months, then the infection becomes chronic. The patient becomes a carrier of the viruses. He/she may pass on the infection to others through blood or body fluid.

"These viruses are like silent killers. For instance, HCV remain dormant in the system for 10 to 15 years and start to impair the liver in the later stages," says S. Vivekanandan, Liver Transplant Surgeon, Kovai Medical Center And Hospital, Coimbatore, and Managing trustee, Chennai Liver Foundation. The hepatitis B virus may or may not cause symptoms. One third of the infected people get jaundice. Chronic hepatitis B is treated with antiviral medications, which limits the damage done to the liver. But the good news about hepatitis B is the availability of vaccine. "Children are administered vaccination in three dosages. And it can be administered to people of any age," says Mr. Murugan, adding that "HCV can completely be eradicated from the system through treatment." According to



World Health Organization appointed Amitabh Bachchan as its Goodwill Ambassador for Hepatitis in South-East Asia Region. The actor got infected with hepatitis B in 1982 through a blood transfusion after an accident on the sets of his film, Coolie. Bachchan showed no symptoms for close to 18 years after being infected. In 2000, he was told after a routine health checkup that his liver was infected.

Dr. Vivekanandan, who conducts regular screening for hepatitis, 60 per cent of the newborns are covered under the vaccination in India, which is good because the future generation is protected against HBV. But the awareness and prevalence of hepatitis among people in rural India is still a question. Hepatitis D infections occur only in those who are infected with HBV. The dual infection of HDV and

HBV can result in a more serious disease.

What happens to the liver when the infection becomes chronic?

The damage happens in stages. People will develop persistent liver inflammation and may show symptoms like tiredness, feeling sick, lack of appetite, pains over the liver, and jaundice. The next stage is fibrosis when scar tissue start to build up. This later

develops into cirrhosis, when the scarring takes over most of the liver. Liver failure and liver cancer are the advanced stages of the infection. "There is treatment available at every stage of the infection," assures Mr. Murugan.

Diagnosis

Viral hepatitis can be diagnosed through blood test. Doctors recommend test when they suspect liver disorder and as part of 'general check-up'.

Why you should take care of your liver

The liver is among the vital organs of our body. It carries out 500 different functions important to life. It is located on the right side of the abdomen below the diaphragm. "It is the most resilient organ, which never complains," says Dr. Vivekanandan, liver transplant surgeon. It starts to give trouble only when 50 per cent of it has failed, he adds. The liver has a wide range of functions - processes everything you eat, drink, and breathe in. It aids in metabolism by converting ammonia to urea, helps in regulation of glycogen storage, decomposition of red blood cells and hormone production.

The liver produces bile, which aids in digestion. The gallbladder stores bile produced by the liver. Liver is regenerative. Even if cut down into fraction of its initial size, it will repair itself and works without any ailment.

Liver cleanses blood. It detoxifies the blood so that it gets rid of harmful substances. Stores vitamins, iron and sugar glucose. When the body's sugar levels go down, the liver converts stored sugar to functional sugar. It breaks down haemoglobin and insulin.

It destroys old RBCs. The liver manufactures many essential body proteins involved in clotting of blood and providing resistance to infection.



DOS AND DON'TS

- Adopt healthy lifestyle. Avoid fatty food. Exercise regularly.
- Do not share personal items. Maintain personal hygiene
- Say no to alcohol
- Every medicine you take passes through the liver. Hence it is important to follow doctor's advice on dosages.
- Avoid direct contact with chemicals from environmental pollution

Higher sun exposure may up risk of eye freckles

Eye freckles could indicate the presence or risk of sunlight-triggered eye diseases like cataract or muscular degeneration.

LONDON: A higher lifetime exposure to sunlight may increase the risk of developing eye freckles or dark spots on the coloured part of the eye (iris), researchers warned.

The findings showed that

A freckle of the eye' is coloured growth, like a mole on your skin.

eye freckles could indicate the presence or risk of sunlight-triggered eye diseases like cataract or muscular degeneration.

Further, the development of eye freckles also correlated with increasing age, lifetime number of sunburns and a history of severe sunburns resulting in blisters, the researchers reported.

"While we do not know the exact role of sunlight in

several eye diseases, we now have a biomarker (iris freckles) indicating high amounts of chronic sunlight exposure," said Christoph Schwab, ophthalmologist at the Medical University of Graz in Austria.

In addition, people with dark coloured eyes were found less likely to have eye freckles, as well as those who maintained better sun protection habits like using sunscreen or covering up.

For the study, published in the journal Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science, over 600 swim-

mers at public pools in Styria, Austria, had their eyes examined for freckles and filled out a questionnaire that asked about their lifetime sun exposure and sun-protection habits.

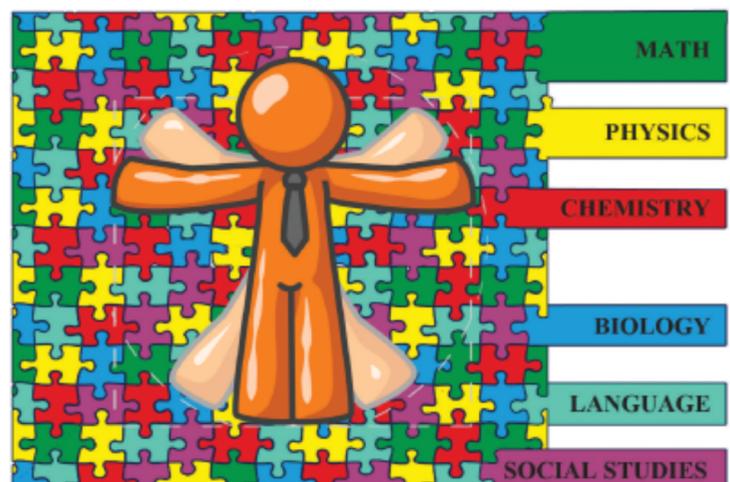
Researchers also found that freckles were most commonly found in the lower outer quadrant (away from the nose) of each eye.

This may be because the eyebrow and nose shield the upper and inner quadrants of the eye from the sun, lowering exposure and the risk of developing freckles, Schwab explained. IANS

The myth that

IT JUST HAPPENS!

Although many children develop good physical skills on their own, there are many who do not. It's a myth if you think 'it just happens!'



Just like learning the alphabet and phonics are needed to eventually read and write, or identifying numbers and learning to add and subtract are needed to earn and pay, the development of fundamental motor skills is critical to move with confidence and competence in a wide variety of activities and environments.

Physically literacy is developing these fundamental movement skills that include:

Body control skills: Agility, balance and coordination; Rhythm, poise, expression

Body movement skills: Walk, run, hop, jump, skip, gallop, slide

Object manipulation skills: Catch, trap, receive, throw, strike, push, kick

In order to be successful, you must be competent !

Become Physically Literate !



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