

good

Lifestyle diseases are hitting young people, forcing them to make healthy changes in their lives

By MONALISA DAS & NALINI RAVICHANDRAN

THE pronouncement that he had diabetes struck like a nightmare. Ankur Bhalla was only 15 years old and a tenth standard student at the time. Though he experienced frequent bouts of tiredness, thirst and nausea, he never imagined that these were symptoms of a disease like diabetes. It was only when he lost ten kilos for no apparent reason that his parents took him for a checkup. "Ankur has Type 1 diabetes which needs to be managed with insulin and a careful eating and exercise regimen," says Dr Manju Panda, senior diabetes counsellor, Max Healthcare.

The 15 year old was given a list of do's and don'ts and has completely changed his eating habits and lifestyle. "I avoid foods made with refined flour and sugar and fatty snacks and junk food. My meal timings are also fixed - I need to have three meals a day at proper intervals, else my sugar levels plummet," says Ankur. This apart, Ankur was also forced to chuck his sedentary lifestyle and get onto a regular exercise regimen. "Being struck by diabetes has forced me to get on a healthy track early in life," he declares proudly.

Ankur is just one of the thousands of young people who are being struck by conditions that typically hit people in their middle or senior years. A World Bank report says that most South Asian countries including India are facing a major health crisis with lifestyle diseases cutting across age barriers and affecting people even in their teens.

IT IS NOT just the diabetes, arthritis and heart attacks. The range of lifestyle diseases has also broadened covering more mundane problems like joint, muscle and back aches. "Earlier ulcer, diseases of the GI tracts, digestive diseases, and joint pain used to affect those above the age group of 50s but now all these are the domain of school kids too," says Dr M.P.Sharma, Internal medicine specialist, Rockland hospital. Fatty liver disease is also striking younger people.

More serious illnesses such as neurodegenerative diseases are also catching young people off guard. "While Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and such diseases are considered to be an above 50 phenomenon, now the target group as young as in their 40s," says Dr Sharma.

The reasons are varied, ranging from lifestyle factors to social and emotional issues. Family

relationships aren't as close as they used to be, and the lack of communication between generations impacts both emotional and physical health. "The stress of coping with too many things and social pressure of all sorts burns out people and leads to many physiological problems," points out Bhavna Sharma, Clinical psychologist.

Lifestyle factors are equally rel-

evant. "Stress, lack of physical activity and a highly fat laden diet along with improper nutrition are the major causes for these diseases. Youngsters today lead a highly fast paced life with no consistency or stability in terms of their food intake, sleep and daily schedules," says Dr Sharma. Cigarettes, video games and fast food can be blamed for most of our health woes, say experts.

The good news, however, is that most of these problems are preventable. Adopting a healthy lifestyle right in the beginning is a move designed to help you cultivate good health. Almost 90 per cent of lifestyle diseases are preventable, doctors say. Even if one is genetically prone to some of these problems, they don't necessarily have to manifest diseases.

The recipe to good health can be summed up in one word; Moderation. An effort to wear your seatbelts will pay off. Eat regular meals, move more, sleep earlier, cut down on alcohol and chuck the cigarettes. These measures can help youngsters to avoid developing a majority of lifestyle diseases. It's all a matter of personal choice.

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BEING PUSHED ON TO THE HEALTHY TRACK



OMAR SIBTAIN

DEEPAK had finished dinner and was going to sleep, when he felt pain in the chest. Without thinking much, Deepak asked his family to take him to the hospital. On doing the angiography, it was found that twenty-nine-year-old Deepak had suffered a minor heart attack, which could have damaged his heart had he delayed it for a few hours. "We found that Deepak had a 90 per cent blockage in the main artery of the heart," says Dr Atul Mathur, Director, Interventional Cardiology, Fortis Escorts Heart Institute. Immediately angioplasty was done and a stent was placed.

Deepak is the second member in his family who has suffered a heart attack. His father went

Genes to blame for early heart attack

through bypass surgery when he was forty one. According to Dr Mathur, Deepak is genetically predisposed to heart problems but his unhealthy lifestyle habits set off the trigger earlier. Deepak suffered heart attack at the age of twenty nine. "I never ate healthy food or took my meals on time before I suffered a heart attack. I would often skip my breakfast or dinner. I would eat a typical North Indian diet with loads of ghee. And on top of that I had a sedentary job and

would smoke," says Deepak.

However, being a heart patient at an early age has changed a lot of things in Deepak's life. Now he eats only home-cooked food, doesn't skip meals and has stopped smoking. "I suffered heart attack just after a few months after I got married. Had I suffered it at my dad's age, I might have been a little casual. But now I am disciplined. I have stopped eating fatty foods and doesn't smoke or touch alcohol," says Deepak.

By Harsha Chawla

40

per cent of Indians are at high or moderate risk of heart attack

Indian Recipes in Spanish Olive Oil



DAHI KABAB

MIX 300 gms of hung curd, 2 tbsp besan (gram flour), 1 finely chopped onion, 2 de-seeded and chopped green chillies, ½ tsp green cardamom powder, ½ tsp cumin powder. Cook all the ingre-

dients on low heat till the mixture pulls away from the pan. Now cool down the mixture and shape it into patties. Dust with 2 tbsp corn flour. Shallow fry in Spanish olive oil.

