

Editorial

Eating Habits and its Impact on Heart

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World Heart Federation states that cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death and disability in the world, killing 17.5 million people a year. That's a third of all deaths on the planet and half of all non-communicable disease related deaths. Around 80% of these deaths are in low and middle-income countries where human and financial resources are least able to address the CVD burden. By 2030, the loss of lives is predicted to rise to nearly 23 million.

In Pakistan, around 30 to 40 per cent of all deaths are due to cardiovascular diseases (CVD) and about 200000 people lose their lives to coronary heart disease CHD per year - that is 410/100000 of the population.

Pakistani population has one of the highest risks of coronary heart disease (CHD) in the world which refers to a narrowing of the coronary arteries, the blood vessels that supply oxygen and blood to the heart. It normally happens when cholesterol accumulates on the artery walls, creating plaques. According to the latest WHO data published in 2017 Coronary Heart Disease Deaths in Pakistan reached 265051 or 21.76% of total deaths. The age adjusted death rate is 246.84 per 100000 of population. The data ranks Pakistan at number 13 among countries where more deaths occur due to coronary heart disease.

Moreover, the survey highlighted the fact that children are also vulnerable. The risk for CVDs can begin before birth during foetal development, and increase further during childhood with exposure to unhealthy eating habits and lack of exercise. This huge number reflects different factors characteristic of our society and culture that are major cause of heart disease. For example, unhealthy lifestyle, fatty diets, oily and unhealthy foods, tobacco use, lack of exercise, and lack of awareness.

All of this can be changed and majority of lives can be saved if we begin to change our daily habits and incorporate healthy life choices. Most cardiovascular diseases can be prevented by addressing behavioural risk factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diet and obesity, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol using population wide strategies. People who are at high cardiovascular risk due to the presence of one or

more risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, hyperlipidaemia or already established disease need early detection and management using counseling and medicines, as appropriate.

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 for heart healthy eating habits are: control your portion size, use a small plate or bowl to help control your portions.

Eat larger portions of low-calorie, nutrient rich foods, such as fruits and vegetables, and smaller portions of high calorie, high sodium foods, such as refined, processed or fast foods. Eat more vegetables and fruits, vegetables and fruits are good sources of vitamins and minerals. Vegetables and fruits are also low in calories and rich in dietary fibre. It may help prevent cardiovascular disease.

Select whole grains, whole grains are good sources of fibre and other nutrients that play a role in regulating blood pressure and heart health.

Limit unhealthy fats, limiting how much saturated and trans fats you eat is an important step to reduce your blood cholesterol and lower your risk of coronary artery disease. A high blood cholesterol level can lead to a buildup of plaques in your arteries, called atherosclerosis, which can increase your risk of heart attack and stroke. Choose low fat protein sources, lean meat, poultry and fish, low fat dairy products, and eggs are some of your best sources of protein. Fish is another good alternative to high fat meats. Legumes beans, peas and lentils also are good sources of protein and contain less fat and no cholesterol, making them good substitutes for meat.

Reduce the sodium in your food, eating a lot of sodium can contribute to high blood pressure, a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Reducing sodium is an important part of a heart healthy diet. Plan ahead; create daily menus and allow yourself an occasional treat, once we know which foods to eat more of and which foods to limit, we will be on our way toward a good health.