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Newsletter

MAY 2020

Hand Hygiene, Hypertension and Tobacco



In this month's Newsletter we will be looking at Hand Hygiene, Hypertension and Tobacco:

Hand Hygiene

There seems to be a natural reflex to touch your nose! COVID-19 is spread in small droplets (expelled by coughing or sneezing) through the air, but mainly through touching surfaces that have been contaminated by the virus.

Constant washing of your hands will reduce the risk of becoming infected.

The following article will guide you on how to wash your hands correctly. Stay safe and healthy, this virus is here to stay for a few seasons until we develop a vaccine.

Hypertension

The main cause of high blood pressure is unknown, however, there seems to be a link to the kidneys.

It is a slow, silent disease, you don't feel ill! Doing an annual medical examination will identify a raised blood pressure. Everyone should have an annual medical

Tobacco

I personally empathise with anyone that smokes. I understand it is very difficult to stop. The best choice is never to start. Our article below will help you get motivated to stop smoking!



The Marvel of Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is the most important method of reducing the transmission of infections.

In 1846 an Austrian obstetrician named Ignaz Semmelweis recognised that a type of maternal infection (puerperal sepsis) was prevented if nurses and doctors washed their hands in a chlorine solution before attending to patients. While his contemporaries of the time thought that he was mad for supporting such a practise, and even called it "homeopathic medicine", we now know how right he was.

Bacteria and fungi are micro-organisms that transmitted from person to person on a person's hands. Certain viruses, for example influenza, rotavirus and chickenpox, can also be transmitted from person-to-person via hands following transfer from contaminated person or surfaces. Parasites may occasionally be transmitted via contaminated hands e.g. eggs from intestinal worms and scabies mites.

Micro-organisms found on human skin are classified as transient or resident flora. Transient skin flora is found on the surface layers (epidermis). They are easily transmitted through physical contact between people and the environment. Transient flora is usually carried on the skin for a short time only and is easily removed by proper hand hygiene.

The physical action of handwashing (friction, rinsing and drying) helps to remove and kill many transient flora from the superficial layers of the skin. The use of antiseptic handwash products, e.g. alcohol-based hand-rubs or medicated soaps, result in further chemical killing or inhibition of micro-organisms. By reducing the load of micro-organisms on a person's hands, the risk of infection transmission is reduced.

Hand hygiene is an important way in reducing the transmission of infections from person to person as it reduces the level of contamination of micro-organisms. Examples are:

- Routine handwashing with ordinary soap or antimicrobial soap and water for at least 40–60 seconds;
- Routine handwashing with ordinary soap and water physically removes dirt, debris and transient micro-organisms;
- Routine handwashing for all individuals is recommended before preparing food, before eating, and after using the toilet or changing babies' nappies/diapers;
- Alcohol-based hand-rub, applied over the entire hand surface area and remaining wet for at least 15 seconds and then allowed to dry completely (20–30 seconds altogether);
- Alcohol hand-rubs have fast action and the greatest killing ability against a wide range of micro-organisms, but do not remove dirt/debris. The advantages of alcohol hand-rub include portability (small spray-bottles of personal hand-rub can be carried by healthcare workers) and that it eliminates the need for handwash basins, water and hand drying supplies.
- Alcohol penetrates the cell membrane of bacteria and fungi or the viral envelope, causing damage (denaturing) of the micro-organisms' genetic material and thereby killing the micro-organism. It is important to note though that to achieve maximal killing, the alcohol must be in contact with the skin at sufficient concentrations and must be allowed to dry.
- The WHO recommendation for alcohol formulations have at least 60–80% alcohol content, as this concentration is most effective at killing micro-organisms;
- A disadvantage of alcohol-based hand-rub is that it is flammable and can cause skin dryness. Allergies to particular alcohol hand-rubs can occur, but are infrequent;
- Surgical hand decontamination with an antimicrobial soap and water for 3–5 minutes;
- The fingertips, thumbs and little finger are commonly missed areas when conducting hand hygiene. Please see correct technique for handwashing below;

Wash your hands in these 6 easy steps



Wet Hands



Soap

Rub & scrub hands,
wrists, between fingers
and under fingernails
for 20 seconds



Rinse



Towel Dry



Turn Tap off with
towel



Hypertension: The silent killer

High blood pressure, otherwise known as hypertension, is when the heart has to work too hard at pumping blood through the body and it is a chronic medical condition. This condition is commonly referred to as the silent killer. It has been established by the World Hypertension Committee that the rule of the halves applies to this disease. Meaning that only one half of the patients with high blood pressure/hypertension in a population group have been diagnosed and of that half, only half of those diagnosed have been treated and only half of those treated have been adequately treated into a normal blood pressure range.

What is high blood pressure or hypertension?

To fully understand the condition that is high blood pressure, one must first understand what blood pressure is. This can be understood to be the pressure or force exerted by blood against the artery walls as it travels through your body. Hypertension is the condition that develops when the pressure of blood travelling through the arteries is higher than what it should be. It should be known that it is quite normal for blood pressure to rise and fall during the course of the day however it is very dangerous if your blood pressure remains high for a long time as this is damaging to the arterial walls and ultimately your overall health.

However, in cases of very high blood pressure you may experience such symptoms as headaches, nose bleeds, sleepiness, nausea, or visual disturbances. Therefore, listen to what your body is trying to tell you.

Who is at risk?

Hypertension is a condition that anyone can develop, however there are certain risk factors such as ethnicity, age, race, gender, lifestyle habits or being overweight that need to be kept in mind. Furthermore, having a family history of hypertension can also increase your risk of developing this condition.

How is high blood pressure diagnosed?

To know if you have the condition you need to go to a medical professional to have your blood pressure tested. The medical professional will measure your blood pressure by wrapping an inflatable cuff with a pressure gauge around your arm to squeeze the blood vessels. They will then use a stethoscope to listen to your pulse while releasing air from the cuff. The gauge on the cuff then measures the pressure in the blood vessels as the heart beats (systolic) and when it rests (diastolic).

What constitutes as having high blood pressure?

Your level of blood pressure is determined by testing two things: your systolic and diastolic pressures, which is gauged in measures of millimeters of mercury (mmHg).

Blood Pressure levels	
Normal	systolic: less than 120 mmHg diastolic: less than 80 mmHg
At risk (prehypertension)	systolic: 120–139 mmHg diastolic: 80–89 mmHg
High	systolic: 140 mmHg or higher diastolic: 90 mmHg or higher

How to treat the condition

Should you have been diagnosed with the condition your doctor may prescribe some medication. However this medication needs to be used in conjunction with lifestyle changes such as eating a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, and being physically active as they are just as important as taking medication. Additionally, also consult with a medical professional on additional ways that you can reduce your blood pressure

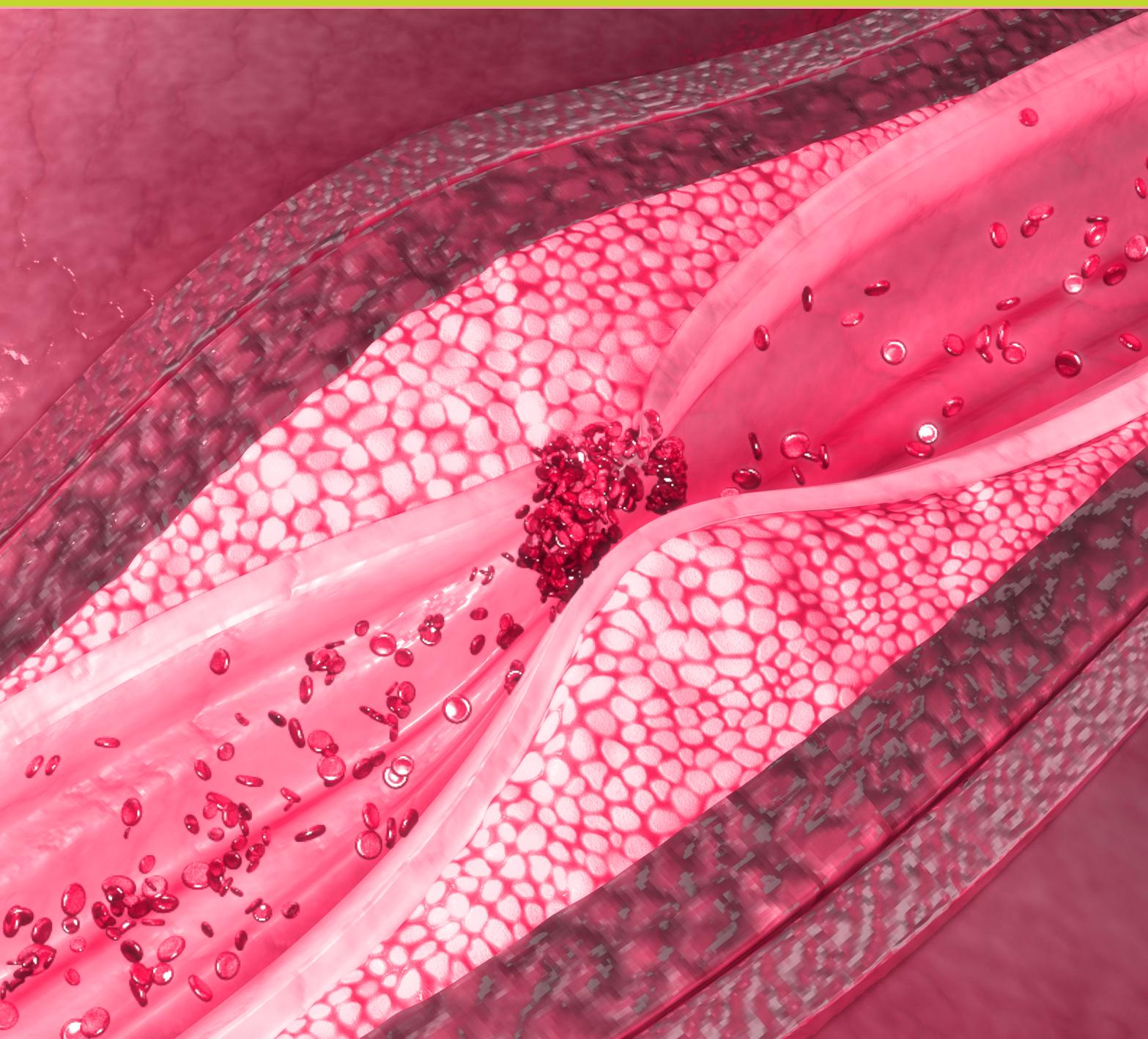
Should a person go untreated for high blood pressure/hypertension, they are at a risk of having a stroke, heart attack or an aneurysm.

How can you reduce the risk of developing the condition?

Healthy attitudes can help combat and control hypertension. That means a change of Lifestyle and this can be done by reducing the risk of developing this condition by doing the following:

- Get your blood pressure checked regularly
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Be physically active.
- Don't smoke.
- Eat a healthy diet
- Limit alcohol use
- eating more polyunsaturated fat,
- reducing your salt intake,

"Take everything with a grain of salt they say... now I have what you call hypertension."
– Anonymous



Thank you for not smoking

The World Health Organisation (WHO) marks the 31st of May as World No Tobacco Day. 2020's theme is #TobaccoExposed and is a global campaign that will debunk myths and expose devious tactics employed by these industries to sell to consumers, most importantly, youths. The aim of the campaign is to help provide young people with the knowledge required to easily detect industry manipulation and equip them with the tools to rebuff such tactics, thereby empowering young people to stand up against them. WHO calls on all young people to join the fight to become a tobacco-free generation.

The WHO, as part of their Sustainable Development plan and response to the 2030 agenda is calling on all countries to accelerate tobacco control and reduce tobacco consumption. The aim of the Sustainable Development Agenda and its 17 global goals includes protecting citizens from harmful tobacco products.

Taxes collected from cigarette sales should be used to finance health and other developmental programs of government thereby reducing the demand for tobacco. Money not spent on tobacco can be used for other essentials, including the purchase of healthier food, healthcare and education.

Governments are not the only element to enforce tobacco control. People can contribute as individuals by creating a tobacco-free world by not using tobacco products. Those who do can choose to break the habit, or seek help in doing so, which will protect their health as well as other family members and friends.

Cigarettes are addictive due to the presence of nicotine and cause a variety of diseases which can be fatal. While major tobacco companies have denied this, it has been proven true by extensive research. Smoking is one of the unhealthiest habits as it causes damage in almost every organ of the body. Smoking significantly increases the risk of heart attacks, stroke, lung cancer and other cancers in addition to tooth cavities, loss of collagen in the skin and hair loss. Many people are aware that these risks are associated with smoking, but due to the intensity of their addiction, they are not able to quit smoking. Research suggests that over 67% of smokers would actually like to quit.



Second-hand smoking

What many smokers do not realise is that their smoking habits can impact the lives of those around them, this includes the people living with them, working with them and anyone else who may come into contact with them.

It is not common for smokers to reserve their smoking habits for when they are alone as this is not always possible. This leads to smoking in front of children at home and around non-smokers at social events. Although this may appear to be harmless, the smoke inhaled by non-smokers is unfiltered and can sometimes be even more dangerous than smoking cigarettes, especially for children and people with pre-existing health conditions such as asthma or pregnancy.

Women are strongly advised to quit smoking if they become pregnant due to the complications associated with smoking during pregnancy. Although most pregnant women who are exposed to smoke during pregnancy are non-smokers who are exposed to smoke by their partners, friends and co-workers. The complications associated with second-hand smoke during

pregnancy include miscarriage, pre-term delivery, behavioural disorders, low birth weight and sudden infant death syndrome. Smoke residue containing over 4000 toxins and chemicals can be left on furniture, clothing or surfaces where smoking occurs, this residue can also be transferred to the pregnant mother and baby through touch and inhalation.

Is it possible to quit?

It is best to quit smoking in order to avoid the detrimental effects of smoking and second-hand smoking. This is possible and can be done with the help of nicotine replacements to assist with physical dependency and high motivation and psychological support to assist with psychological dependency. Many people turn to smoking to manage stress, anxiety or boredom. This means that something will need to replace smoking in these instances in order to reduce psychological dependency. Developing healthier stress management strategies can be done with the guidance and support of a counsellor. Quitting is not easy, and determination is essential.

Smoking etiquette

- Many smokers are not interested in quitting and others will continue to smoke although they would like to quit. It is also common to experience relapses when attempting to quit. It is therefore important to consider the impact that smoking can have on those around you.
- Select an appropriate time and place to smoke, always make use of designated smoking areas as non-smokers will know to avoid these areas if they would like to avoid contact with smoke.
- Ask those around you if it is okay for you to smoke if you are not in a designated smoking area such as at a family event. This also serves as a warning to those who would like to avoid coming into contact with smoke to move away.
- Do not ever smoke in front of pregnant women and children and avoid smoking in parks and recreational centres where there are a lot of children. Second-hand smoke can significantly impact these people as they are more vulnerable to developing health complications.
- Never smoke near doors or entrances to buildings as this will force everyone entering or exiting to inhale it.
- Dispose of your cigarette butts properly and ensure that it is properly extinguished before discarding

"Accept the challenges so that you can feel the exhilaration of victory."

- George S. Patton



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