

Edition 2024 | English



DOCTOR **NEXT STEP** **DOCTOR**
LIVING LONGER BOOKS
Finally A Revolution In Indian Health Care

NEXT STEP LIVING LONGER BOOKS

**Manage 10 Factors
Easily & Add
15 Years to Life**



Author:

(Prof.)Dr.S. Om Goel, MD/DM (USA)

From family of doctors

from AIIMS, MAMC & Delhi University

MD medicine, USA

DM/Fellowship, USA

table of Content

FIRST FACTOR IS SMOKING

SECOND FACTOR IS OVERWEIGHT

THIRD FACTOR IS LACK OF EXERCISE

FOURTH FACTOR IS BLOOD PRESSURE

FIFTH FACTOR IS BLOOD SUGAR

SIXTH FACTOR IS HEART

SEVENTH FACTOR IS HIGH CHOLESTEROL

EIGHTH FACTOR IS CANCER

NINTH CHAPTER IS ARTHRITIS

TENTH FACTOR IS THE HIGH-RISK LIFESTYLE

FIRST FACTOR IS SMOKING

(Disclaimer: Please always consult your family physician before starting any prescription medicine.)



When we do not smoke or quit smoking for several years, it can add 15 years to the life of our heart and lungs; it can add 15 years to the life of our marriage and family life.

Smoking is a huge risk factor for heart attack and of course lung cancer, and tons of other health issues that are unbelievable, but one of the most important reason if smoking continues or to stop

smoking will be heart attack.

The doctors in United States and the Government are so obsessed with the public to stop smoking that it has almost become illegal for anyone to smoke in US, and it feels like the



wholeworld is moving towards getting cigarettes by a medical prescription from doctors.

We don't worry about smoking just like as we don't worry about drinking Coca-Cola, but unfortunately, smoking has such a dramatic effect on heart that it cuts down the blood supply of heart. It puts a huge risk of heart attack. If our heart is already

compromised, it pushes us over to the edge.

Of course, we cannot deny that smoking is also a risk factor for lung cancer and it can also cause tons of other health issues.



Today, some film actors and actresses like Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, and Amir Khan smoke; these are role models for our younger generation. The important thing for our younger generation is to understand that they are all trying hard to quit smoking.

Risks of smoking are sinking into everyone - Rich or Poor.

SECOND FACTOR IS OVERWEIGHT

(Disclaimer: Please always consult your family physician before starting any prescription medicine.)

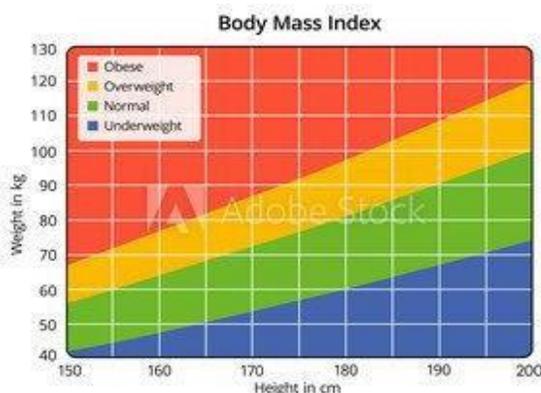


Overweight is a risk factor for health and risk factor for taking years away from our long life. Many things happen to our body when we are overweight.

So, how do we decide that we are overweight?

Today, the concept of telling that he or she is overweight, just by looking at someone, is obsolete. Today, we all in medical profession go by the concept of Body Mass Index (BMI) which is based on our height, weight and a formula.

Tons of BMI applications are available in Apple and Android play stores to calculate our Body Mass Index. We can download any application and then enter our height and weight in that, it will automatically calculate our Body Mass Index.



‘Normal Body Mass Index is between 18 and 25.’

If our Body Mass Index is less than 18, then we are underweight. We worry about such a person being malnourished or not having enough food.

If there is any sudden medical crisis like fever or gastroenterology setback, then such a

person will tolerate any situation like flu for few days very poorly. There are few terms we need to know as we use in medical profession.

If our Body Mass Index lies between 25 and 30 then, we call that person overweight. Or, in other words, if Body Mass Index is between 25 and 30, we medically use the term 'Obesity'.

We all medical professionals are in agreement that if Body Mass Index exceeds 40, then we should all treat it as a medical emergency and use every medical or surgical means to bring Body Mass Index below 40. We can use medications or Bariatric Surgery (weight loss medicine surgery).

We may shoot like on an average Body Mass Index of about 22, but as long as we keep it above



18 and below 25, we should be very happy about it. Let me be honest, it is always a challenge as we go through years of our life. On the other hand, ignore whatever anybody says - if our body mass index lies between 18 and 25, we are cool.

It is my observation that somewhere around age 30, may be because of lifestyle change around this age, that we start gaining weight and our body also resets at a new weight and tries to maintain it. Every few years, this cycle goes on, body resets and the new weight is the one body tries to maintain.

One has to understand that for thousands of years of evolution, storing extra energy as fat was an important mean for the survival as people use to hunt for food, they might not get anything to eat for several days. But, as long as they got enough water and oxygen, they survived.

Why weighing more than normal is a risk factor for our health and longer life?



One has to understand that for thousands of years of evolution, we all are born with certain numbers and maintaining these numbers within normal range is very healthy for our body, whether it is blood pressure or body temperature or blood pH or body weight or blood sugar level. So, as long as we maintain these numbers within normal range, we will stay in good health. And, whenever these

numbers start going out of range, our body too starts having changes, which are not good for our long life.

Overweight or Obesity obviously increases the risk for:-

1. Diabetes
2. Blood Pressure
3. Arthritis

Suppose, we weigh 10 kg extra and try to climb a staircase then, our body has to work harder. There are other psychological reasons also like because of being overweight, we may not feel good about it. Though, I personally do not agree with it. As long as we are healthy, it is not a crime to be overweight.

THIRD FACTOR IS LACK OF EXERCISE

(Disclaimer: Please always consult your family physician before starting any prescription medicine.)



‘Top medical bodies have described lack of exercise as a risk factor for taking few years out of our long life’.

Today’s environment has dramatically changed as we are using cars as means of transportation and most of the jobs now require sitting in front of computers in comfortable offices with air conditioning where we end up spending most of

our time sitting, with not enough activity outdoors.

Again, based on thousands of years of human evolution, we were supposed to be running around, climbing trees, collecting fruits and hunting for food. But trust me in thousands of years, our lifespan has consistently and persistently increased.



Thousands of years ago, most of the people would not survive beyond 30, 40, or 50 years because of a high risk of mortality from wars or epidemics or just being exposed to very extreme environment. Today, social rules and medical knowledge have helped us to survive longer.

Coming back to the exercise, whenever we start exercising several things happen to us which are

very healthy for our body. The very thought of exercising starts releasing hormones or

chemicals into our blood which are very good for our health, but you have to remember that we cannot lie to our own body and it will only happen when we are sincerely thinking of exercising or actually exercising.

‘Exercise is very important for the heart and all the top medical bodies recommend exercise for at least 30 minutes every day’.

We can achieve that by any means, like:-

- We can walk
- We can play any outdoor game like tennis, football etc.
- We can go to gym



- We may enjoy swimming or playing cricket
- We may take stairs instead of elevator
- We may do exercise even inside the home like we can lift some gentle weight
- We can do pushups
- We can walk back and forth in our garden or

outside in the neighborhood

Exercise is important for our muscles and joints. If we spend most of the time sitting in one place, we start losing our muscle mass and our bone mass. Muscles are the one, they support our joints and if we start losing our muscle mass due to lack of exercise, then joints become very prone to arthritis which can happen at early age also.



Even more important now, all studies have proved that exercise also keeps our brain healthy

because exercise increases the blood supply to the brain and it delays our memory loss also by years as we grow older.

So, we have so many reasons to exercise. For our mobility, strength of our joints, walking, maintaining a balance in doing daily activities of the life, exercising have a very important role to play especially as we get older.

'It does not matter what our age is, it is never too late to start developing the habit of exercising every day'.

FOURTH FACTOR IS BLOOD PRESSURE

(Disclaimer: Please always consult your family physician before starting any prescription medicine.)

Blood Pressure

Systolic Pressure:

Diastolic Pressure:

Heart Rate:



‘Again, you will be surprised to know that even 5 to 10 mmHg of high blood pressure will cut down your life by 5 to 10 years’.

The most important fact is that we have no symptoms of blood pressure or blood sugar for years and years. While our body is reacting to high blood pressure and high blood sugar, we seem to have no pain, no headache, no chest pain, no fever, and nothing dramatic. We can not put a finger on it for years because it happens so slowly. But, we keep losing our kidney function or our heart starts getting affected.

Because of high blood sugar, all our chemical metabolic pathways are thrown out of balance which we do not feel. But, if we know that we have high blood pressure or blood sugar, we can do something about it, and add very healthy 15 years to our life.

Our normal body blood pressure is set at 120 mm of systolic and 80 mm of diastolic blood pressure. When our heart contracts and pushes blood, blood pressure goes up to 120 mm systolic. We can also call it as upper number. When heart relaxes, then all blood comes back to heart and blood pressure falls, but it does not go to zero because of the elastic recoil of blood



vessels and blood pressure comes to 80 mmHg. These numbers are normal for us and body functions best at this number 120/80 mmHg.

Let us not be very technical about it, bottom line is anytime you have blood pressure more than 120, even if you have 125 then, we call it high blood pressure. At the same time if you have diastolic blood pressure even 80-85 instead of

normal 80 mmHg, we call it as high blood pressure by definition.

How body reacts to higher blood pressure? First thing, heart has to work harder with high blood pressure, so heart becomes thicker. While it is good for the body muscles of our arms and legs to become thicker, it is not good for a heart because heart has only very limited blood supply, so heart cannot afford to be thicker and bigger. Absolutely, the high blood pressure starts affecting kidneys and you start losing kidney function.



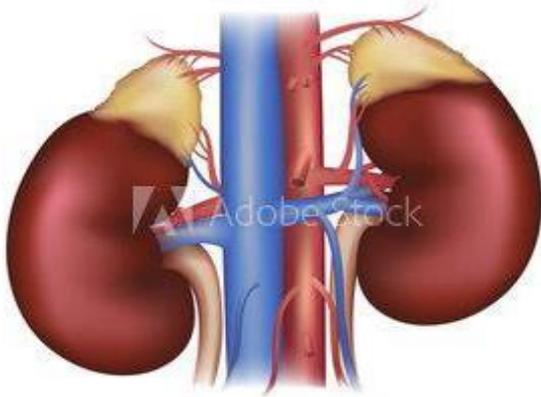
I cannot forget the time when a 40 year old mother of two young children with her husband came for a consultation with me, who had already lost 70% of kidney function and that was a

shock to the couple. She obviously had no symptoms and we doctors can delay the process of loss of kidney function but we cannot bring the kidney function back

because it happens slowly, over many years.

Within a day, she actually crashed and went on dialysis. Husband was literally crying when he came to me, because he did not know how to pay for the dialysis which is very costly in India. He had two kids and a government job (ESI? Need approval).

Another dramatic case was that of a 60-year-old gentleman who came to visit me at Gurgaon Medical Clinic, sector 40 (while I was trying to do medical projects to promote the health of our community). His blood pressure was actually above 200/100 for several years and that is where I proved my point that he had absolutely no symptoms. I do not know how should I say it, should I laugh or should I feel alarmed, but he seemed to be proud of being healthy at this age with these high numbers.



To me while he had absolutely no symptoms, he was actually sitting on a time bomb. With those numbers, I will easily declare a medical emergency. In other words, while I do agree that he had absolutely no symptoms, he was at very high risk of dying while walking out of my clinic or he could get stroke with half of the body paralyzed, it could happen anytime, in seconds and minutes.

Trust me, all of us in medical profession, have seen again and again people having sudden heart attacks or people having sudden stroke. The biggest thing we need to know about blood pressure is that everybody (we doctors included) after age 40 starts gaining blood pressure. Nobody can do anything about it because after age 40, our kidneys start retaining bit of salt and water. It is just like that when we grow older, we do not even realize when our mustaches start turning white and when our hair start turning gray or white.

FIFTH FACTOR IS BLOOD SUGAR

(Disclaimer: Please always consult your family physician before starting any prescription medicine.)



#53885577

Our normal blood sugar is 100. No if's and but's.

There is no question when blood sugar starts rising and fasting blood sugar is more than 100, our body starts going through changes, not healthy for our long life. We may complain, we may jump up and down, but this is a medical fact. We doctors have diabetes, right and left in our families including ourselves and

our colleagues.

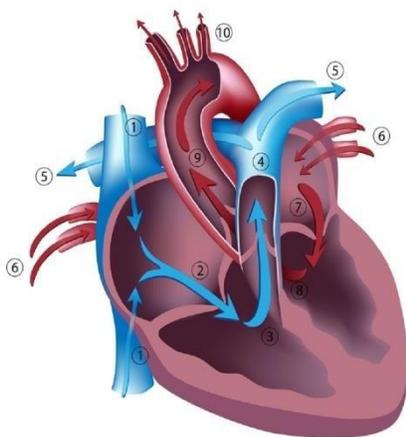
Again, our blood sugar does not start rising overnight. It happens very slowly. Once in a year, we must check our blood chemistry but, if we have a strong family history of diabetes then, we should check our blood sugar every six months somewhere around from age 30 and after. Remember before age 30, we should check our blood chemistry starting at age 18 every year. And, we may also remember that, the only way to find out blood sugar is by blood chemistry because we are not going to have any symptoms for several years to come. But, if our blood sugar keeps rising (which it does with time unless we do something about it) it will seriously affect our heart, kidneys, all our arteries, our cholesterol will rise dramatically. So, all these changes will keep happening and we will not even know about it unless late in the game, we start developing serious symptoms, all of a sudden we have a heart attack or stroke or we find

out suddenly that kidneys are failing. All of us without dialysis, die in less 6 months.

SIXTH FACTOR IS HEART

(Disclaimer: Please always consult your family physician before starting any prescription medicine.)

The pathway of blood flow through the heart



Heart is very important to us. Statistically, major cause of dying in USA (and in other countries) is due to heart disease and cancer. We doctors/MDs do not consider old age as the reason. In other words, we may be very old and die of old age but, we would not die unless our heart fails or some other reason.

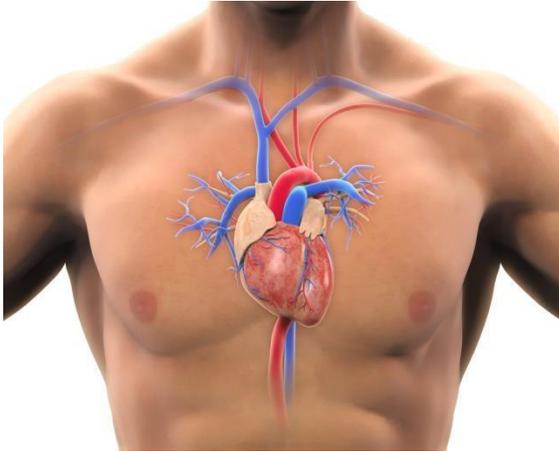
As long as our heart is pumping blood and our brain is fine, we can win a Nobel Prize just sitting in a chair with access to computer or we can also go bankrupt these days shopping online.

Out of all the factors mentioned in this book, heart is the single most important factor for the very reason that heart is the only system in our body which can make us lose our life in 5 minutes.

Nothing else can make us lose our life in 5 minutes, whether it is smoking, overweight, blood pressure, blood sugar, cancer, or joint pains but heart attack does.

So, how to protect our heart?

There are several ways for a healthy lifestyle. While there is a social definition of healthy lifestyle but, I am more interested in the medical definition of healthy lifestyle and it needs a separate whole book.



Some factors seriously affect the heart health. At this time, I can mention that smoking definitely is very detrimental to heart.

It is a simple medical fact, heart only gets rest while we are sleeping. When we are sleeping, lying horizontally our basic metabolism rate is at the lowest. Rest is really very relaxing for heart and every doctor knows that when we have congestive heart failure, rest is very important for

recovery and whenever heart has compromised blood supply, then as long as we are resting or not stressing our body, we may do well. But, the moment we cross the line of stressing our heart when it is too weak, ejection fraction is 30% (normal ejection fraction is 55 to 70%, it means normal heart is able to push out 55 to 70% of blood with each beat) by extra running or exercising or stressing, the body is not consistent with limited blood supply of the heart and we may have a heart attack and we may faint or even die because heart fails.

Combination of unmanaged blood sugar or diabetes and unmanaged high blood pressure or hypertension and the keyword here is 'unmanaged', should open eyes of our family members for buying Rs. 1 crore life insurance for the Unmanaged Family Member, because he or she - will be gone as unmanaged diabetes and hypertension have a dramatic negative effect on heart and cut down our lifespan by tons of years. But at least family will be financially well looked after getting crores of money from life insurance.

On the other hand, as long as, we manage high blood pressure and high blood sugar with available wonderful medications (with literally no side effects), we can really live a healthy long life.

Yes, we will have to take medications for rest of our life. So what -- in 2018 we love our cell phone, our cars and trust flying in planes, but we do not trust the medications for diabetes and blood pressure. Why?

Answer is simple—

What are the risks of taking medicine (side effects etc.) -- may be 5% but benefits for good health and long life are 95%. 100 of years ago, everyone used to die by age 40 to 50. Why? - NO MEDICATIONS (ANTIBIOTICS).

If we have a high blood pressure or diabetes starting at age 30 and do nothing about it, we will have a heart attack at age 50. Today, probably your children will be just coming out of high school, you can at least let them know that-- I won't be around long but do not worry children, you will be rich, after I am gone.

Actually, with moderate high blood pressure and somewhat high blood sugar, our heart will fail within five years and kidneys will fail within less than 10 years without medications.

Why no body takes medications Because, there are no symptoms for slowly rising blood sugar or diabetes and slowly rising blood pressure or hypertension. But yes, once again-- if your blood sugar is 100 and blood pressure is 120/80 -- yes, you can throw out medicines out of window.

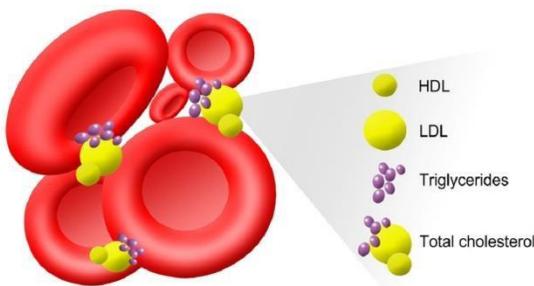
The only way to figure it out is by testing (a blood test) or checking our blood pressure and being conscious about our health. BP machine costs Rs. 1000 and blood sugar machine costs Rs. 500.

Everybody after age 40 will have blood pressure, almost 100 out of 100 people, I will be very honest. Practically speaking, we all retain salt and water after age 40, and we are going to have increasing blood pressure with age. There is no escaping it. We call it essential high blood pressure. It means high blood pressure for no reason at all. Every doctor knows that.

So, I would say that today as much as we need cell phones, we need doctors too.

SEVENTH FACTOR IS HIGH CHOLESTEROL

(Disclaimer: Please always consult your family physician before starting any prescription medicine.)

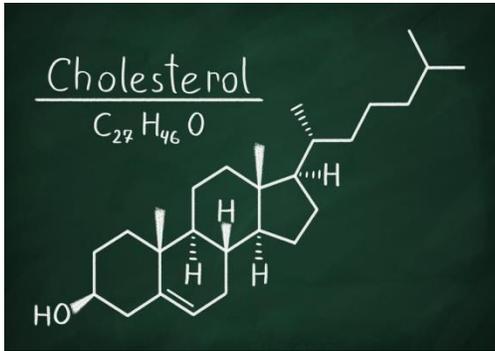


There is no question, high blood cholesterol puts us at a risk of heart disease and heart disease is really the leading cause of death in the United States and as far as I am concerned, anywhere else in the world. The people who have high cholesterol are twice at the risk of having a heart attack than people with the lower cholesterol.

Cholesterol is one of a fat-like (waxy) substance and yes, our body does require it. But, higher cholesterol sticks to the wall of the blood tubes and leads to the heart disease and stroke, when we have too much of it in our blood. By the way, we have not yet proved that how low we can go on the cholesterol level by using medicines. All the medical recommendations are different, but most of the doctors of cardiology believe that we can take LDL/Bad cholesterol as low as 50 to 70 without causing any side effects.

If we lower our cholesterol- the risk of heart attack becomes less; need for heart bypass surgery becomes less; need for angioplasty becomes less; and then, risk of dying from heart disease becomes less.

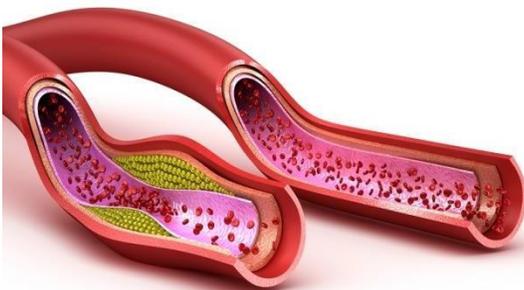
Exercising, having a healthy diet, and not smoking definitely helps to keep the cholesterol level on low side but personally speaking it is a very slow process. We should definitely modify our lifestyle and make it a habit, but at the same time, I do value quality of life also. If we enjoy eating good food and there are medicines available that can let us enjoy the good food and at the same time lower our cholesterol, then, we should definitely have a discussion with our doctor.



Again, this is my personal opinion that like in high blood pressure when people cannot enjoy food without salt, we will let people take food with some salt and give them extra water pill to get rid of extra salt and water.

High (bad) cholesterol has no symptoms for years so people do not even know that their cholesterol is high and a simple blood test can check the blood levels. Recommendations/guidelines may be different, but I would recommend everyone to check their cholesterol level at least once a year especially in our Indian setup.

So, there are two main kinds of cholesterol which really matter (we rarely have high triglyceride so we ignore that in real life). These are Good Cholesterol which is HDL or High Density Lipoprotein and Bad Cholesterol called LDL or Low Density Lipoprotein. The way to remember is that LDL should be Low and HDL should be High based on their first initial letters- L and H.



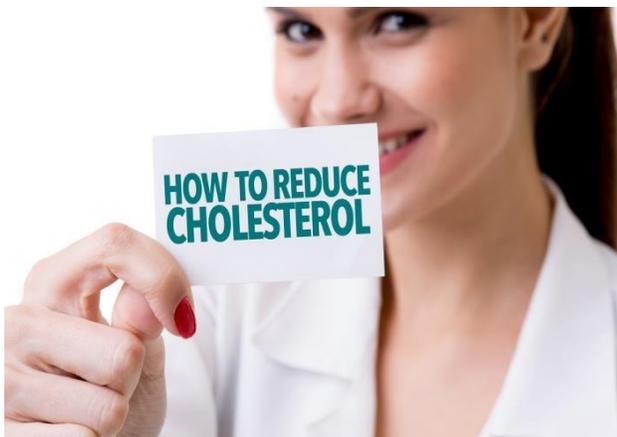
So, why do we call it bad cholesterol? Because, it is a sticky kind of cholesterol. And, why do we call it good cholesterol? Because, it does exactly the opposite. It dissolves the sticky material.

When we have high amount of bad cholesterol, it goes in tubes/blood vessels supplying food and oxygen to the heart and it sticks there all around inside the tube. So, lumen of the tube becomes smaller, also smoothness of the blood flow is affected and there can be plaque/clot formation which can break it and can lead to cut-off of the blood supply to a portion of the heart and leads to heart attack. The high HDL does exactly opposite. It dissolves the sticky material. All the studies have dramatically proved that lower LDL cleans and open our blood tubes/arteries.

I will tell you the secret. Every heart doctor in US (whom I know) to the best of my knowledge takes cholesterol lowering medicine called Statins and answer is very simple it is

a whole simple math of risks and benefits. If risks are minimal and benefits are huge down the road then, why not!!!! Only issue is that it is a prescription medication. Most of the doctors do have access to lot of samples so they can take it but otherwise, it is impossible to get without any clinical indications. But, in India you can buy Statins.

I am putting a disclaimer here. I am not saying that we should take any of the cholesterol lowering medicines without consulting our family doctor. I am just giving you the facts. I am saying that if your cholesterol is high then it is ridiculously simple to control your cholesterol with Statins rather than trying months of exercising, dieting, and changing your food habits (it helps but, it is a very slow process).



Once again, we should definitely try exercising, dieting, and changing our food habits, besides medicines. But without medicines it's a very slow process and we do not have time especially with a condition like diabetes which totally throws metabolic pathways out of whack because of lack of insulin or not having enough insulin; suddenly cholesterol starts rising dramatically and along with that, all of

the side effects of high cholesterol.

Cholesterol does not just deposit in the heart, it deposits in the kidney blood supply and the brain blood supply, as well, and predisposes us to kidney failure and stroke (body paralysis). As mentioned, with high cholesterol (LDL) we are at risk of stroke besides the heart attack and so as long as we manage our cholesterol (LDL), it will add healthy years to our life.

Again, one of the most important thing is that high cholesterol (LDL) has no symptoms, none whatsoever, what we call as symptoms which make us run to a doctor- pain, fever, headache, loss of appetite and just not feeling good -- nothing like that happens with high cholesterol. We were never focused on these so called 'symptom free medical issues' back in 1970's and 1980's as we were fighting to save lives from typhoid, tetanus, jaundice

cholera, dengue, dysentery, worm infestation, syphilis, gonorrhoea, and other epidemics. We were admitting, at a time,

almost 25 more youngish patients in 20's and 30's in medicine wards and about 10 of them would die or were at very high risk of dying.

As I moved to US in 1980's leaving behind a ward in hospital full of tetanus patients in India, I have never seen a single patient of tetanus in US in last 30 years till today and no US doctor has. We do give tetanus shot right and left in US but no active tetanus case.

There was a research treatment tried at National Institute of Health which is the top research body of US which fund every other university with research money. When we have cancer which spreads all over the body, there are some cells in the body which are able to fight those cancer cells because they recognize them as different from their own body and so the research team at National Institute of Health collected those immune cells which were already in the body. They grew those few immune cells into crores of immune cells, then injected them back into the patient's blood and these patient's own cells started attacking the cancer cells.

Now, the patient (real patient on national US news) who received this treatment has been free from Cancer for 2-1/2 years and the research team believed that the army of the immune cells is still at work. This is, at present, a research treatment and is very costly. It takes tons of money to grow those few cells to turn into crores of cells, but this is the future of cancer treatment and it will get cheaper as the years go by.



Another fact I want to mention is that we have our three close family members who have had breast cancer-- we all cried, we were all very sad and scared that we are going to lose them. Bless the recent advance, they all did well and it has been several years now they are cancer free and leading a normal life. We family people are all very happy. I will write a separate book on cancer, of course, the

diagnosis and what the options are.

But, we have to understand that medical bodies have defined a statistical age and younger than that age, cancer is rare but after that age-risk of getting cancer is high. So, we need to screen everybody for certain cancers at certain age and we need to be aware of that and we need to take that screening testing seriously. Most of women will start breast cancer screening at age 40, but if anyone's mom has breast cancer at age 45, then she needs to start screening at age 35, 10 years less than her own mother. Same applies to colon cancer too. We have to start screening after at age 50, but if our father developed colon cancer at

age 50, then we have to start screening at age 40. Genetically, we are at a high risk for developing colon cancer

or the breast cancer at earlier age than our own parents.

The screening guidelines are very well documented and most important fact is that in US every insurance company will pay for it. It may cost thousands of dollars, but insurance has obligation to pay for the screening. Look at from their point of view, if you develop a cancer then instead of paying \$1000, they will have to pay \$100,000 for the treatment, so it works for both and it's a win-win situation.



Then, in the same way, we would like you to have a screening for the cancer at the right age or even sooner if the risk is high.

'Every cancer diagnosed at stage 1 is 100% treatable'.

We classify all the cancers into four stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and whenever cancer is diagnosed at stage IV then most of us

believe person has 6 months to a year to live. Although, that is changing with most recent research treatments but still risk remains high. On the other hand, we have to understand that the early stage cancers may be very difficult to diagnose. Again, they may not have any symptoms. In the advanced stage we start developing fever, weight loss, any bleeding with cough or passing blood in our stools or passing blood with our morning activity when we go to bathroom.

If someone develops a breast cancer at age 40 or even at age 50 and diagnosed early, treatment can easily add 20 to 30 years to their life, it is so true today. At least in today's time with long education years and small families and more resources, we are starting our family in late 20's or early 30's (we still have companionship today through dating etc. which takes pressure off early marriage and huge commitments of marriage). So, now

when we are in our 40's and 50's, our children are still young, and they still need their parents and, I personally believe we parents have a very important role to play (to help our children through any major crisis) till our children turn into their 30's and get married. Then they will be very independent and ready to face any kind of crisis.



All the top medical bodies say that we must have gold standard blood test every year that costs about Rs. 3000 each year. It's worth every rupee; but worthless, if you throw away the report or do not get it or save it in cloud (very easy today). In other words, we must maintain record of those blood tests as any slightest deviation from those numbers should make us jump up and figure out why those numbers are different from last few years. Believe it or not, our blood test numbers are like fingerprints and they remain very constant over years.

If our liver enzymes start going up, then we should suspect pancreatic cancer that drains liver enzymes.

If our overall blood count/blood amounts are falling, then we need to look for it (depending of our age). We should have a suspicion of colon cancer if we lose blood through our gut.

'Most common symptoms of any cancer are losing weight and running mild fever'.

If we are not trying to lose weight and we are losing weight, then we should definitely worry about cancer anywhere in the body or at least we should make sure that it is not the reason for losing weight.

Every young and youngish woman should feel their breasts (you can consult a lady doctor to show you how it's done) every time they take shower and if the breasts feel any different or you feel a lump in the breast then you should see your doctor right away.

If our GI tract or as we call it gut is involved, then we may have loose motions or we may have constipation or we may have both. Any persistent change from our daily habits should make us run to our doctor. It is time to be proactive. Time to move from crisis medicine to proactive medicine. Benefits are dramatic.

If we are having a cough and we start to spit of little bit of blood, then we have to worry about lung cancer.

My aim/our aim is to diagnose early cancer before we are having any of the above symptoms and we can do it today. You bet, we can (Answers in separate book).

NINTH CHAPTER IS ARTHRITIS

(Disclaimer: Please always consult your family physician before starting any prescription medicine.)



As we gain years, there is wear and tear in our joints and that by definition, we call arthritis. Arthritis just means wear and tear of our joints. It can be mild and it can be very severe, especially in the knee joint where women aren't even able to walk because of pain.

The most important joint that actually bothers us, obviously is the knee joint and besides that what bothers is our neck and our lower back. So, of all these joints that are prone to arthritis, knee joint is the most important joint in our body.

We have only two body systems which medically speaking and more importantly, statistically speaking can take our independence away from us. One is our heart. If our heart is weak, we cannot really do much, we cannot walk around from one room to another without the help of oxygen, we feel very weak. On the other hand we feel okay if we are sitting down. Same thing is with the knee joint. If our knee joint leads to the point where it is hurting so much, we are so afraid to stand up, walk, or climb chair or walk some distance because pain is so bothersome, we prefer to just sit down and do nothing else.

Just do an experiment, if you are 20 years old or younger than that then, just try to sit in a wheelchair for 2 only days and see how it feels.

Another fact you should know about knee joint is that it is the most complex joint in the body, absolutely, it is unbelievable and every other joint is much more simple. But, knee joint is very unique. While hip and ankle joints are also important for our mobility, but they get affected much less than the knee joint as hip joint is very deep and protected by very

strong muscles and if anything happens to ankle joint, we can fuse it in a working position and we can still be mobile. But, if anything happens with the knee joint, we really cannot walk around or climb stairs and stuck to sitting in one place. Our comfort position for knee is about 90 degree (sitting

posture) we can sit all day in ONE PLACE but we can not stand all day in ONE PLACE.

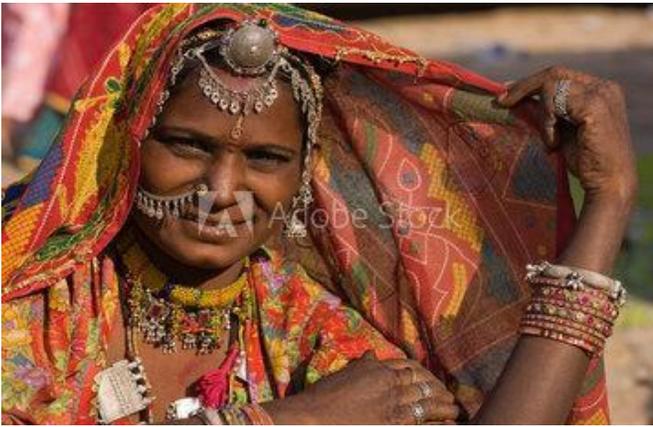
I lived my young age, late 20's in India/Delhi and obviously now 25 years in US. What a contrast I have seen pertaining to knee joint between two populations and two countries!

Any Indian women I know in 40's, 50's, and 60's has all knee joint issues and especially when they get into 50's and 60's, they start having a difficult time climbing up the stairs or walking long distances or have very difficult time and avoid going out with family for outings.

In contrast since I have been in US, I see women in their 60's and 70's or even 80's running around doing fine and knee pain or knee joint is not their main issue compared to this age group in India. Eventually when women get older, they still get knee issues, but there is a difference when you get knee issues at age 60 or when you get at age 80 or 90.

One fact about knee joint or knee pain or knee arthritis is that it happens so slowly and our lifestyle starts changing (or being getting affected) so slowly or gradually that we hardly realize that it has happened to us. As our pain starts getting worse, we try not to climb stairs; we try to sit down more often; we try to avoid walking long distances; and slowly, slowly, and slowly we try to avoid activities where knee joint really hurt us.

We do not even realize if we start telling our family members please you go ahead when we go to a park and go to a mall. We just want them to go ahead and we just want to sit down in one place. But, the fact is as we sit more and more, we start losing our bone mass and our muscle mass. And, when we really sit for long hours and are not very active, then especially women become at the risk of urine infection and become at very high risk of developing pneumonia also because our muscles are no longer as strong to clear our lungs.



If the knee joint pain is so bad that you cannot just walk from one room to another, it is really, really very painful and if to a point, it seriously starts affecting your lifestyle, then it is time to have a total knee replacement. If you do not, you are not going to live for more than one or two years anyway. I know every woman worries about knee surgery or having a knee replacement.

And we are all scared of major surgery. But, do we have a choice once we get to

that point? (Again we are writing separate book on knee joint plus all issues including how to choose the right doctor.)

So, the important fact is not to get to that point of severe knee joint. Answer is exercise, exercise, and exercise for the knee joint. There are exercises of the knee joint, we should consider a physiotherapist, they can guide us, they can tell us when we need to make muscles strong around our knee joint which help us to protect our knee joint and takes away wear and tear and that is how most of the American women do it.

One of the reason may be in lifestyle of squatting among Indian women which is very strenuous on the knee joint and when you are squatting/cooking as all our mother did and then getting up is very stressful on the knee joint. Even though we may have a very active life but we need specific exercises for the knee joints.

In US, it is different. Here, women cook standing or sitting on a chair or even when they go to the washroom -- here system is such -- where one does not squat but sit down. So, I strongly believe that this is one of the major factor plus here in US exercising has been a part of the day-to-day lifestyle. In contrast, (when we were young, now younger generation is changing fast) our Indian women love to socialize, spend time at home and I mean they are not used to doing anything more than the routine day-to-day life. Our moms and wives have/had very active life, but we really have to focus on our knee joint and our weight.

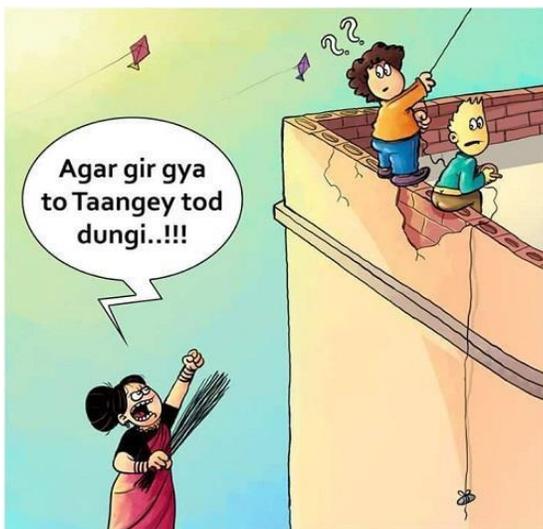
Weight also is a very important factor to cause wear and tear of the knee joint as extra body weight goes on the knee joint and it makes wear and tear worse. Less weight we have (within range of our body mass index) and more active we are -- less wear and tear of our knee joint, and our muscles around the knee joints remain strong.

Same way, we should protect our neck also. We should do neck exercises. We should even wear a cervical quad if we think there is a stress on our neck.

Same thing with the back also, we should stretch our back and most important thing is we should minimize weight gain beyond our normal body mass index. And, if we have belly, it changes the center of gravity on our back and stretches the ligament and put more stress on our lower back which causes pain. Every woman who has been pregnant knows that.

TENTH FACTOR IS THE HIGH-RISK LIFESTYLE

(Disclaimer: Please always consult your family physician before starting any prescription medicine.)



All the medical bodies have NOT mentioned high risk lifestyle as one of the factors, but I consider high risk lifestyle as a very important factor especially as parents, we can guide our children in the right direction and towards right kind of lifestyle, but first we have to know what the high risk lifestyle is.

High risk lifestyle is-

When we go out to a party with a friend and we drink lot of alcohol and then towards the midnight,

we want to go home but we are not stable on our feet and we start driving-

- our reflexes are poor;
- our mind is not sharp;
- plus, the night-time and foggy environment.

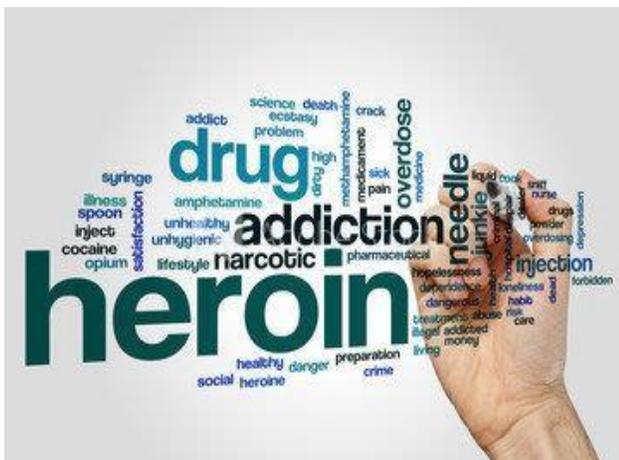
That's a very high-risk situation!

In such a situation, in the past, we use to just sleep at our friend's house. And today, we should call for Uber or Ola. We have insisted this with our children in US where weekend drinking is

a tradition in college. While I understand that social drinking in the US is part of culture, but drinking alcohol was never part of our Indian culture. Upper middle class in India is adopting it more and more and they feel that they have to prove that they belong to upper middle-class society and that they have money. But, this kind of thinking is taking us exactly in the wrong direction and responsible members of the family need to put a check on it.

Medically speaking, social drinking or a couple of drinks is not going to hurt you. But, the most important risk from drinking is the driving part. We have to drink for 20 years almost every day and excessively before our liver will fail, but even before that if we are kind of drinking 2 or 3 times a week or excessively, then more importantly sooner or later we are going to get into trouble with the law or we can get into the accident. As we become addicted to alcohol as it does alter our mood, it has even more serious consequences. We may end up drunk at our work and we may lose our job. Our family life may seriously get affected. We may be facing a financial ruin. Even threat to our life and malnutrition.

‘Drinking alcohol when it gets out of control leads to a very high-risk lifestyle’.



In my case, I have negotiated with my children for about 2 drinks on a weekend and that they will always take Uber or Lyft here in US or what we call a designated driver - as out of 5 people in a get together - one will be the driver who does not drink and he will be the one driving the car. As husband and wife when we go to a social get-together, as I do not drink so I make sure that I do all the driving for my family.

Smoking is another very high risk lifestyle and while medically speaking it definitely exposes you to lot of health issues and socially also it is becoming somewhat highly risky. My understanding is that Bollywood king Shahrukh Khan came close to getting in arguments with the Law due to smoking at a game. There are becoming less and less places where one can smoke these days.

Every young person does an experiment with the risky lifestyle occasionally, but it is our obligation as parents to watch for red flags and deal with it quickly.

What are red flags?

We obviously use the term red flags very frequently in US in our medical profession.

So, what does it mean?

Suppose there is a young boy who is in 12th grade and who has always done very well till 11th grade and always scored excellent marks - 95% out of 100% and suddenly when he is in 12th grade his grade starts going down to 60% or 50% then, that is a red flag because that does not happen in real normal healthy lifestyle.

At this time, parents should realize something is not right. They need to figure out either he has fallen in love with someone or he is heartbroken, or has he started drinking alcohol or he is trying some street drugs.



Sometimes, young people are in the company of boys or girls and do these things just to belong

to the group. Young people think that is a cool thing to do, but parents need to watch for those red flag signs. Children and young people are very good at hiding it from the family.

One of a very important red flag especially in US among the young high school girls is eating disorder and it happens to, believe it or not, almost 30% of high school girls in US. That means 30 girls out of 100 girls have eating disorder what we medically call Anorexia Nervosa and it is a very, very serious and dangerous situation. Outcome is girl ended up dying. We doctors consider this diagnosis as a medical emergency! Trust me, if we do not move fast or do right intervention- we may end up losing our child/daughter. (Again separate book on eating disorders).

Ignore all those wild Hollywood movies -- that does not represent US; Dating in US starts in middle school and it is a very healthy thing as parents arrange it for young boys and young girls to spend few hours together. Girls become very conscious of their figure and somehow they start thinking that they are fat even though they are not and then, they start cutting down on their diet, exercising more and they start losing weight and although everybody can see and tell that they are becoming more and more skinnier, but the girls still think that she is fat or overweight and if it continues, then we know the results are very tragic, like I said, in medical profession, once we diagnose a girl with eating disorder, we consider it a medical emergency.



So far "eating disorders" is almost unknown in India. But, as our middle class society in India is becoming more prosperous, now I worry about our Indian high school girls from middle class or upper middle class families going through the same. So, parents need to be aware of this and seek intervention or consult with the doctor as soon as possible.

Another high risk lifestyle obviously is bungee jumping and rock climbing which exposes you to high risk situations. Climbing the Himalayas whatever anybody may say but, it's a very high risk situation.

Another high risk situation I consider is flying small planes. In US, pretty much every upper middle class family own a small plane and let me tell you, there is one small plane crash pretty much once a week in US. My children too have several friends whose parents have small plane and they have been invited too and I have to pick up a fight with my children and show it to them that how risky it is and they do finally agree with me.

Obviously, taking street drugs is a high risk lifestyle. Occasional experiment is understandable, but once young people start using it on a regular basis, then they become prone to addiction and once they are addicted, then they start taking more and more street drugs and then it starts affecting their achievements, their intelligence, and they

become obsessed with continuing with their addiction in seeking drugs. It can totally destroy a young man's or a young woman's life. Second thing- addiction by definition is life long and even if you do recover (yes, you do recover if you seek the treatment at the right time). But, you have to worry about it the rest of your life.

Another high risk lifestyle is the indiscriminate intimacy. Somehow young people in India on TV see the hero trying to go out with every other girl -- 4 or 5 girls and our young boys think it is a very mature or macho thing to do. But, medically speaking it's absolutely NOT true. And, I can tell that it's a clear sign of sex addiction or serious boundary issues.

A normal healthy young man will always prefer a proper stable relationship. The young age is a very exciting age, and the interaction with the opposite sex is equally exciting and it is a very emotional situation and you cannot just switch on and switch off with 4 or 5 different girls and if you are doing that then it is not healthy, not a normal human behavior. Then your interest is not in relationship, it is just in sex. And sex is a very powerful force, actually the most powerful force. And, if we do not control it or seek it in a healthy way, it can destroy our life. Normal healthy young boys do not date 3 or 4 girls. They may meet different girls, but they can fall in love with only one and Love is psychologically speaking, a state of obsession – but with only one person.



Lifestyles are so demanding these days, think about if you are maintaining a relationship with 3 or 4 girls or boys, then it costs

a lot of time;

lot of energy;

& lot of money;

You cannot take out your girlfriend without spending lot of money and obviously it costs time. So, it can take away important time from studies or work. With one girl or boy, it makes sense; but, with 3 or 4 ?? forget about a good future, most of the young people, actually none of young people are not rich at all (how much a 12th grade degree will pay!).

What they are doing is throwing away their parents wealth and that is unfortunate as in future everyone has to be financially self-independent and be a good role model for their own families.



BUNTY'S FIRST BIRTHDAY IS COMING UP NEXT MONTH AND WE HAVE NOT YET ENROLLED HIM IN THE 17 YEAR COACHING PROGRAM FOR IIT JEE...

Rich parents should never give a message to their children that it is okay to spend money indiscriminately or irresponsibly. The consequences at least today are very serious. No longer any boy can marry a girl because he belongs to the rich family; no girl will want a husband who is just rich, drinks and goes out with other women and does not respect the relationship. Even if she does, it won't last for long; it is not 1970 or 1980 anymore. There

was a time when Indian wife would go along, but not anymore. One will end up losing one's family life.

I can say that as a doctor/MD, first 18 years of life are very crucial, as they help us decide the direction of rest of our life. If we can give a direction to our children, show them the right direction and constantly be involved in their life, then chances that our children will do very well, are high. College period is also crucial but we parents have less control once children are in college.

One of the very strong factors is Role Modeling. We cannot just drink in front of the children and tell them not to drink or we cannot just smoke in front of the children and tell them not to smoke or we cannot just take drugs with our friends and tell children to keep away from the drugs. It won't work. We cannot lie right and left to people around us and then tell our children not to lie or to be honest. All these situations are high risk situations with long term negative consequences on our younger generation.

Why our children are doing so well in US? It's because we all are trying to be a good role model for our children, sacrificing our personal needs for the sake of our children.

Americans do it too, but Indian culture is very strongly rooted in family values – especially sons living with parents (along with their wives). A very unique Indian custom and tradition!