Press Release

A World Liver Day Initiative

Excess alcohol bad for the liver

- On World Liver Day, IMA warns that excess alcohol is responsible for fatty liver disease in a majority of people
- Lifestyle changes key to a healthy liver

New Delhi, 19th April 2017: Recent WHO (World Health Organization) statistics indicate that every year, about 2 lakh people die of liver ailments around the world. As per data, fatty liver disease is the third most common cause of chronic liver disease and affects 1 in 6 individuals. Just like the brain and heart, the liver is also a crucial organ that needs to be taken care of, more so if you are a heavy drinker. It has been found that about 25,000 lives can be saved by a liver transplant. However, data shows that at present, only 1,800 liver transplants happen every year globally.

As in every year, 19th April is being celebrated as the World Liver Day this year as well. The liver has a very important role in the body’s digestive system. Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, "Anything that we eat or drink, including medication, must pass through the liver. It is the second-largest organ in the body and helps filter chemicals like drugs and alcohol from the blood; regulates hormones and blood sugar levels; stores energy from the nutrients and makes blood proteins, bile and several enzymes that the body needs. Keeping the liver healthy therefore is all about a healthy lifestyle. The basic thing about taking care of the liver is to avoid what’s bad rather than eat or drink something that nourishes this organ. Alcohol does more damage to the liver cells than one can imagine. It leads to swelling or scarring, later turning into cirrhosis, and can prove fatal to life."

Alcoholic cirrhosis is the most common cause of cirrhosis, accounting for 40% of liver deaths from cirrhosis. The liver helps to remove alcohol from the blood through oxidation. However, once too much alcohol has been ingested for the liver to process in a well-timed manner, the toxic substance begins to turn into 'fatty liver'. This then is the early stage of alcoholic liver disease and can be seen in about 90% of people who drink more than two ounces (60 ml) of alcohol per day. Continuing to drink similar quantities of alcohol can lead to liver fibrosis and ultimately cirrhosis.
Dr K K Aggarwal adds, "Fatty liver is reversible with timely medical intervention. However, it is also important to bring about certain lifestyle changes. If ignored, this condition can cause irreversible damage with liver transplant as the only end option. Therefore, it is important to avoid intake of alcohol, eat healthy, and get regular exercise. Timely hepatitis vaccines should also be considered to avoid any sort of complications to the liver."

It is important to take care of the following points to keep the liver healthy.

- Eat a healthy balanced diet and exercise regularly.
- Eat out of all food groups, for instance, grains, protein, dairy products, fruits, vegetables, and fats. Eat fibrous food such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads, rice, and cereals.
- Avoid consuming alcohol, smoking, and drugs. They can permanently damage the liver cells.
- Always make sure to consult your doctor before starting a new medication. Taking incorrect combinations of medicines can lead to liver damage.
- Chemicals like aerosols and cleaning products can injure liver cells and therefore it is better to avoid extensive contact with these.
- Keep a check on your weight as obesity can cause non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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