Adequate intake of Vitamin D can prevent the risk of Type 1 diabetes in children

It can also lower the risk of developing islet autoimmunity

New Delhi, 29 October 2017: A recent research indicates that children receiving higher levels of Vitamin D during infancy and childhood have significantly lower risk of developing islet autoimmunity as well as Type 1 diabetes. The incidence of Type 1 diabetes is increasing by about 3% to 5% annually worldwide. Statistics indicate that over 80% of people in India are deficient in Vitamin D. Vitamin D represents a candidate protective factor for Type 1 diabetes as it regulates the immune system and autoimmunity.

Islet autoimmunity is detected by antibodies that appear when the immune system attacks the islet cells in the pancreas that produce insulin. This is a precursor to Type 1 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes in children requires consistent care. However, advances in blood sugar monitoring and insulin delivery have improved the daily management of the condition.

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, “Although the exact cause of Type 1 diabetes is unknown, in most people the body's immune system mistakenly destroys insulin-producing (islet) cells in the pancreas. Genetics and environmental factors have a role to play in this process. Insulin has a critical role – that of moving glucose from the bloodstream to the body's cells. When food is digested, glucose enters the bloodstream. Once the islet cells are destroyed, very little or no insulin is produced. This causes glucose to build up in the bloodstream, where it can cause life-threatening complications. Type 1 diabetes develops gradually, but the symptoms may seem to come on suddenly.”

One of the early signs of diabetes in children is increased urination and thirst. Some other warning signs include fatigue, changes in vision, fruity smelling breath, extreme hunger and unexplained weight loss, and unusual behavior such as being more moody or restless than normal.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “While it may not be possible to prevent this condition entirely, it is possible to reduce complications by helping your child maintain good blood sugar control as much as possible; teaching them the importance of eating a healthy diet and participating in regular
physical activity; and scheduling a yearly eye exam beginning no more than five years after the initial diabetes diagnosis. This condition requires lifelong treatment and includes blood sugar monitoring, insulin therapy, healthy eating, and regular exercise.”

In Type 1 diabetes, tight control of blood sugar can prevent diabetes complications. Some other preventive tips for those with Type 1 diabetes include the following.

- Choose healthy foods to share.
- Take a brisk walk together every day.
- Talk with your family about your health and your family’s risk of diabetes and heart disease.
- If you smoke, seek help to quit.
- Make changes to reduce your risk for diabetes and its complications — for yourself, your families and for future generations.

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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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