Familial hypercholesterolemia is genetic and can raise the levels of LDL cholesterol in the body leading to several cardiovascular complications

Awareness and lifestyle modification can help you combat the potent risk factor.

New Delhi, Dec 22, 2016: Familial hypercholesterolemia currently has a prevalence of 1 per 1 million persons. LDL or bad cholesterol is produced naturally in the body however; some people inherit genes from their families that can cause excessive production of LDL. High cholesterol level is a potent risk factor for heart diseases, stroke and hypertension. High cholesterol can accumulate into arteries and vessels and can cause atherosclerotic plaques.

Fifty-four percent of all patients with premature heart disease and 70% of those with a lipid abnormality have a familial disorder. Children affected with the disorder are at a risk of sudden cardiac deaths and early coronary events, leading to premature mortality.

Padma Shri Awardee Dr. K.K Aggarwal, President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and National President Elect Indian Medical Association (IMA), stated that, “Patients may develop premature cardiovascular disease at the age of 30 to 40. A person is said to be suffering from premature heart disease when it occurs before 55 years in men and 65 years in women. In premature heart disease, the prevalence of dyslipidemia (high cholesterol levels without symptoms) is 75-85%. Hence, a screening test for lipids is recommended for first-degree relatives of patients with myocardial infarction, particularly if premature. Screening should begin with a standard lipid profile and if normal, further testing should be done for Lp(a) and apolipoproteins B and A-I”.

About 25% patients with premature heart disease and a normal standard lipid profile will have an abnormality in Lp(a) or apo B. Elevated apo A-1 and HDL are likewise associated with reduced CHD risk. First-degree relatives are brothers, sisters, father, mother; second-degree relatives refer to aunts, uncles, grandparents, nieces, or nephews and third-degree relatives refer to first cousins, siblings, or siblings of grandparents. Familial hypercholesterolemia (FH) is a genetic disorder, characterized by high cholesterol, specifically very high LDL “bad cholesterol”) levels and premature heart disease. To detect familial high cholesterol levels, a universal screening must be done at age 16. The cholesterol levels in heterozygous patients are between 350 to 500 mg/dL, and in homozygous, the levels are between 700 to 1,200 mg/dL.

“Several lifestyle changes can be adopted to decrease the impact that this risk factor has on your health in terms of cardiovascular and other complications. Good dietary and physical activity habits are crucial to a preventive management approach to familial hypercholesterolemia”, added Dr K.K Aggarwal.
Following are some lifestyle tips to manage your risk:

- Get regular checkups for cholesterol levels, blood pressure and blood glucose.
- Eat a heart healthy diet composed of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, poultry, fish and nuts. It is best to limit significantly the consumption of sugary beverages, sugary fruits and red meat.
- Physical activity is crucial for preventing a variety of lifestyle disorders and the same applies to high cholesterol. Couple your healthy diet to a complementary exercise routine.
- Avoid smoking at all cost; exposure to secondhand smoke should also be avoided as much as possible.

About Heart Care Foundation of India

Initiated in 1986, the Heart Care Foundation of India is a leading National NGO working in the field of creating mass health awareness among people from all walks of life and providing solutions for India's everyday healthcare needs. The NGO uses consumer-based entertainment modules to impart health education and increase awareness amongst people. A leading example of this is the Perfect Health Mela; an annual event started in 1993 that is attended by over 2-3 lakh people each year. The Mela showcases activities across categories such as health education seminars and check-ups, entertainment programs, lifestyle exhibitions, lectures, workshops, and competitions. In addition to this, the NGO conducts programs and camps to train people on the technique of hands only CPR through its CPR 10 mantra for revival after a sudden cardiac arrest. They currently hold three Limca book of world records for the maximum number of people trained in hands-only CPR in one go. Keeping article 21 of the Indian Constitution in mind, which guarantees a person Right to Life, Heart Care Foundation of India has also recently initiated a project called the Sameer Malik Heart Care Foundation Fund to ensure that no one dies of a heart disease just because they cannot afford treatment.

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