

BP CONTROL

Is hypertension disrupting your life?

Most of us regard hypertension, or a sustained high blood pressure (BP), to be an age-related medical condition. Almost all of us have seen our grandparents routinely check their BP with the familiar device comprising an inflated cuff called sphygmometer, but never bother to apply it on ourselves, the reason being the widely-held belief that high BP strikes only the old, possibly diabetic and necessarily obese.

Observations by doctors in the past few years, however, are showing that more and more young people are falling prey to hypertension. The incidence of hypertension in each age bracket, considered by the medical fraternity, has risen by twice at least. As per World Health Organisation statistics, while 20 years back, the prevalence of high BP among those aged 25 years and above was five-six per cent, now it is eight-12 per cent. Among those aged 45 years plus, the figure has gone up from 10 to 20 per cent, and in the 65 years plus age bracket, the number has risen alarmingly from 20 to 40-45 per cent at least.

The factors attributed to this trend are the usual suspects: Stressful lifestyle, poor dietary habits, lack of exercise, little family support and to some extent, pollution.

Doctors, though, say that there is a lot that we can do, instead of blaming environmental factors, to keep hypertension at bay.

Dr Rishi Gupta, senior interventional cardiologist and director, cardiology depart-

ment, Asian Institute of Medical Science, says, "Hypertension is known as a silent killer. You can be suffering from high blood pressure for many years without your body showing any symptoms. Your heart, constantly pulling up blood at high pressure, will continue to bloat, till finally you suffer a heart attack or cerebral haemorrhage. I get so many patients who are

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barely 30 who suddenly have a brain stroke and only then realise that they had hypertension.”

The doctor further informs us that hypertension is largely of two kinds—primary and secondary. Primary hypertension is the more manifest va-



WORRYING An increasing number of youngsters are falling prey to hypertension.

riety accounting for 93 per cent of cases while the secondary variety accounts for the remaining seven per cent. While secondary hypertension is caused by additional health issues such as cardiac structural abnormalities, kidney-related problems and metabolic disorders, primary hypertension arises from genetic predisposition, that is, family history. Lifestyle problems add to this making it unmanageable.

“Junk and packaged foods have become a way of life for most of us not realising the fact that these contain high amounts of salt which is a sure shot BP aggravator,” says Dr Rishi.

“Then our sedentary lifestyles, shorn of any kind of exercise or sports activity,

also lead to hypertension. Obesity, a condition in which the heart has to put in more effort into pumping blood, is also a major cause of high BP. All these are interconnected, which points to the fact that one has to have an active lifestyle and reduce stress and anxiety.”

General dissatisfaction with one's life, marital discord, work-related problems, a mismatch between expectations and what you ultimately achieve in life is also a chief reason for having high BP.

Dr (Col) SP Singh, principal consultant, Internal Medicine, Fortis Escorts Heart Institute, explains, “A healthy family and work life is essential to keep you calm and composed in every situation. People lacking in this aspect of life will develop high BP even at 25, which I see in most patients I receive these days.”

“Thankfully,” he adds, “Most corporate companies, of late, hold preventive health check-ups including BP checks which are proving to be very helpful. You, essentially, need to spot hypertension in time. Lifestyle changes and medicines, then, can easily manage it.”

Baishali Adak

