

Urological care for healthy aging of male: An emergence of awareness

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Bangladesh is experiencing a demographic shift with a rapidly growing elderly population who are ≥ 60 years of age. According to the census 2011 and 2022, they constituted 7.47% and 9.29% of the total population respectively and in 2050 it is predicted to be double. With the advancement of age, risk of developing all systemic diseases increases and urological problems are not exceptions. It hampers not only their physical health, also mental and social welling and is closely associated with the quality of life irrespective of gender. People often neglect and hide the problems as these are mostly not life threatening but they continuously suffer and pay financial penalty to get management at the later stages.

Several risk factors are responsible for urological health issues. These are aging, medical conditions like diabetes, hypertension, stroke, heart diseases and lifestyle issues like smoking, excessive alcohol intake, obesity, sedentary lifestyle and lack of physical activity, poor diet and hydration, stress etc.

Urological diseases are a broad category of illnesses, connected to the body's urine filtration and excretion mechanism. Among male population health related urological issues may appear long before their 60 years of age.

Common urinary problems among males:

Urinary Incontinence (UI): It is involuntary urination leading to uncontrolled leakage of urine. Age-related alterations affect smooth muscle, causing weakening of urethral tone and resistance to intra-abdominal pressure. This is one of the most prevalent urinary issues among the elderly male and female. It creates an embarrassing and distressful situation and seriously affect the quality of life of the patients.

Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs): UTIs are more common in older adults and can cause symptoms such as frequent urination, burning sensations, fever, lower abdominal pain and discomfort. They can also lead to more severe complications if left untreated.

Interstitial Cystitis (IC): A type of chronic pain syndrome of bladder and pelvic floor of unknown cause characterized by chronic pelvic pain, urinary urgency and increased urinary frequency.

Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH): Many older men experience an enlarged prostate, which can lead to urinary symptoms like frequent urination, weak urine flow, and difficulty in emptying the bladder.

Overactive Bladder: This condition causes a sudden urge to urinate, which can be challenging for seniors to manage, particularly if they have mobility issues.

Kidney Stones: These are hard deposits of minerals and salts that form inside the kidneys. Symptoms include severe pain, nausea, and haematuria.

Prostatitis: This is the inflammation of the prostate gland, which can lead to pelvic pain and urinary issues.

Erectile Dysfunction (ED): This refers to the inability to maintain an erection adequate for sexual intercourse, impacting both physical and psychological health and conjugal disharmony.

Urological Cancers: These include prostate, bladder, and kidney cancers. Many serious conditions, including prostate cancer, bladder cancer start quietly. Early detection through regular screenings can significantly improve outcomes.

Managing urinary issues in the elderly:

Proactive screening and lifestyle modification is a powerful duo of thumb rules that prevents a spectrum of urological conditions, from benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) to urinary incontinence, kidney stones, and erectile dysfunction (ED). These issues might not be life-threatening, but they can still produce disability and affect quality of life. Identifying them early opens the door to management strategies before they become severe.

Interventions for prevention and proper management:

1. Routine yearly screening tests

Includes urine analysis and urine culture, Blood for creatinine and uric acid, Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test, Digital Rectal Examinations (DRE), Imaging tests like CT scans, Ultrasounds etc.

2. Healthy lifestyle

- **Diet:** A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains supports overall health. Vegetables and fruits rich in fibers have impacts on regular bowel movements. Drinking Cranberry juice or taking cranberry pills can prevent UTIs and reduce urinary incontinence.
- **Physical activity and exercise:** Regular physical activity helps to maintain a healthy weight and reduces the risk of conditions like BPH and ED.

Practice Pelvic floor exercises, also known as Kegel exercises. It strengthens the muscles that control urination and increase vascularity and neurophysiological function of urology system. These exercises can be easily incorporated into daily routines

- **Hydration:** Drinking plenty of water helps to flush the urinary tract and reduces the risk of kidney stones and UTIs.

3. Managing chronic conditions

Proper management of chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension is crucial as they are risk factors for many urological problems. Medications to control blood pressure and blood sugar can help protect kidney function.

4. Medications

Depending on the specific urinary issue, medications may be prescribed. For example, antibiotics are commonly used to treat UTIs, while medications like alpha-blockers can help manage BPH symptoms in men. Additionally, drugs that reduce protein in the urine (e.g., ACE inhibitors or ARBs) can be beneficial.

5. Avoidance of bladder irritants

Tobacco, alcohol, caffeine etc. are bladder irritants. Cessation of smoking of all forms, avoiding excessive caffeine and alcohol are important for control as they can exacerbate urinary problems.

6. Maintenance of healthy body weight

Prevention of obesity and maintenance of healthy weight is essential.

7. Scheduled bathroom breaks

Establishing a routine for bathroom breaks, even if the urge to urinate is not present, can help manage overactive bladder symptoms and prevent accidental urinations.

8. Assistive devices

For seniors with mobility issues, assistive devices such as bedside commodes, raised toilet seats, or grab bars in the bathroom can provide much needed support and prevent falls.

9. Catheterization:

In some cases, individuals with severe urinary retention may require intermittent catheterization under medical supervision.

10. Surgery:

For certain conditions like BPH or severe incontinence that do not respond to conservative treatments, surgical interventions may be considered. In severe cases of incontinence, surgical options such as sling procedures or bladder neck suspension may be considered.

11. Dialysis and Transplantation

In advanced stages of CKD, dialysis or kidney transplantation may be necessary. However, these options are less common in very elderly patients due to associated risks and complications.

12. Patient education and empowerment

In medical practice patient education is a critical component. An informed patient is an empowered patient for decisions and actions to take regarding when, where, whom and why to seek care! So fostering suitable environment of open communication is also very important.

Conclusion:

Aging is a natural phenomenon. But we must remember every age is unique and could be productive for thyself, family and community. Very often our aging population are neglected and under cared in the family, even they also give up to live a healthy and graceful life.

However, with proper care, attention, and medical guidance, these challenges and shortcomings of the society can be effectively managed. Aging gracefully involves taking proactive steps towards maintaining urological health. Seniors and their caregivers need to be proactive in seeking medical evaluation and adopting lifestyle modifications that can make a substantial difference in managing urinary problems. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that our aging population receives the care and support they need to live comfortably and with dignity.

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