SWASTH PARIVAR
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Issue
03

Never touched alcohol, yet a fatty liver?

Four useful things to know this week.

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English



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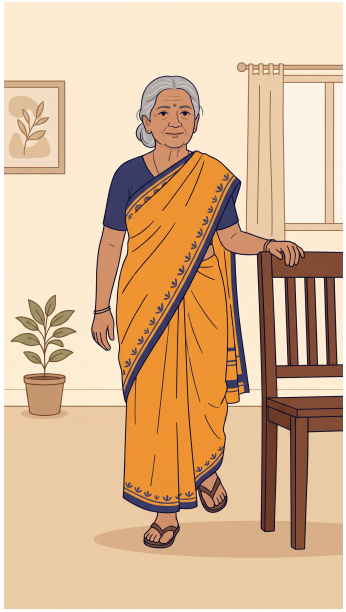
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New research

Unsteady on your feet? It may be lack of practice, not age



When an elder starts walking slowly and unsteadily, most families put it down to age. But balance is a skill, and a skill that fades from disuse can return with practice.

In a September 2026 study in Age and Ageing from the University of Manchester, 202 adults with an average age of 77 took part. Half did simple balance and strength exercises at home for twelve weeks, and their balance scores clearly improved.

Honest note: balance got better, but the study did not show that falls stopped.

Try at home: for a few minutes daily, stand on one foot while holding a chair, walk heel-to-toe in a straight line, and rise from a chair without using your hands. Fix loose mats and slippery bathroom floors first.

Source — Age and Ageing 2026;55(9):afag291, University of Manchester

Breakthrough

Stomach cancer in the family? Ask your doctor about this simple test



A germ called H. pylori lives quietly in many people's stomachs, and in families touched by stomach cancer it deserves a closer look.

A trial from South Korea's National Cancer Center, published in NEJM in 2020, enrolled 1,838 people whose parent, brother, sister or child had stomach cancer, and all of whom carried the germ. Half received a 7-day treatment to clear it, while the other half received a dummy tablet.

After about nine years, stomach cancer had developed in 1.2% of the treated group, compared with 2.7% of the dummy group.

Note: this was a Korean study, and side effects were slightly more common with treatment.

Do this: if stomach cancer runs in your family, ask your doctor whether an H. pylori test is right for you, and never start tablets on your own.

Source — N Engl J Med 2020;382(5):427-436, Center for Gastric Cancer, National Cancer Center, Goyang, South Korea

Everyday health

Plain soap halved pneumonia cases in young children



Many parents ask why their child keeps getting diarrhoea and coughs, and part of the answer may be sitting next to the wash basin.

In a 2005 Lancet study by the US CDC, families in crowded Karachi neighbourhoods were given plain soap and taught handwashing, and their children's health was recorded every week for a year. Pneumonia cases in children under five fell by half, while diarrhoea fell by 53% and skin infections by 34%. Antibacterial soap did no better than plain soap.

Note: the benefit came from the habit itself, not from an expensive soap.

Do this: wash hands properly with soap before eating, before feeding a child, after using the toilet and after changing a diaper.

Source — Lancet 2005;366(9481):225-233, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta (trial in Karachi, Pakistan)

Myth vs fact

You never drink, so why is your liver fatty?



Myth — Fatty liver means you drink alcohol.

Fact — About one in three Indian adults has fatty liver, and alcohol is not the commonest cause.

Many patients are alarmed when their sonography report says “fatty liver”, because they have never touched alcohol in their lives.

In India, though, alcohol is not the commonest cause. Researchers at AIIMS Delhi pooled 50 studies covering about 26,500 people (Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hepatology, 2022) and found that roughly one in three adults has fatty liver.

It goes hand in hand with belly fat, sweets, a sitting lifestyle and diabetes, and since most people have no symptoms, it is usually found by chance on a sonography or blood test.

Straight talk: in most people it never becomes serious, but in a few the liver becomes inflamed and then scarred. Treatment starts not with a tablet but with a smaller waist and a daily walk.

Source — J Clin Exp Hepatol 2022;12(3):818-829, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi

Words for this issue

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः

May everyone be happy; may everyone be free from illness.

— Traditional prayer for the wellbeing of all

A light moment

Patient: Doctor, I have been walking half an hour every evening, just as you said.
Doctor: Very good! So how much weight have you lost?
Patient: None yet — but every pani-puri wala on the way now knows me by name!

Soap on your hands, a daily walk, a chair to hold on to;
small habits, kept up, keep big illness away from you.

Pass it on
If this could help someone, forward it.

The information in this issue is for general health awareness. It is not a substitute for your doctor's advice. Before starting any medicine, test or treatment, please see your doctor.