Immunisation saves millions of lives

Fazenna Saleem
The Peninsula

M any countries, including Qatar, are making significant progress in the fight against vaccine-preventable diseases. The World Immunization Week Week marks its 36th anniversary this week, and Qatar is among the countries that are making strides in vaccination programmes.

Qatar’s vaccination programme has been always leading in the region. We are getting most of the vaccinations free for everyone. As of now, we have 99 percent coverage and aim to reach 100 percent with the implementation of 2017-2022 public health strategy,” said Dr. Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani, Director of Public Health at the Ministry. “We make sure that everybody is protected by taking the vaccination. It is also co-ordinated by the World Health Organization (WHO).”

Immunization saves millions of lives and is widely recognized as one of the world’s most successful and cost-effective health interventions. However, according to the World Health organization (WHO), there are still 14 million unvaccinated and under-vaccinated children in the world.

According to the US-based Centers for Communicable Diseases (CDC), vaccine-preventable diseases include cervical cancer, diphtheria, hepatitis A & B, Hib, leptospirosis, meningococcal disease, mumps, rubella, and yellow fever. Most of these diseases can be prevented if women get vaccinated and also stick to their children’s immunization schedule right after their birth.

The recommended immunization schedule is designed to protect infants and children early in life, when they are most vulnerable and before they are exposed to potentially life-threatening diseases.

Basic vaccines are given at an early age and each of them has a specific time for starting example, measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine is not effective till one year of age.

Each of the vaccines have to be spaced by a defined interval to ensure their effectiveness and the immunization schedule of Qatar has been proposed according to the World Health Organization (WHO) and Ministry of Public Health (MOPH). The National Immunisation Committee makes changes in the schedule according to the trends of disease prevalence in Qatar.

Qatar is following World Health Organization’s vaccine schedule and in accordance with child’s age. A total of 14 vaccines including BCG, Hepatitis B, Hexavalent, Polio, Pneumococcal and Haemophilus Influenza Type B (Hib), Oral Polio, Meningococcal Meningococcal A, B, C, Y and Acute Haemorrhagic Pneumococcal and Haemophilus Influenza Type B (Hib). The MOPH’s Department at the MoPH has been prepared accordingly. The MOPH’s Department at the MoPH has been prepared accordingly.

The main goal of the 2017 immunization campaign is to raise awareness about the critical importance of full immunization throughout life, and its role in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

As part of the 2017 campaign, WHO and partners aim to highlight the importance of immunization as a top global health investment priority, promote understanding of the action steps required to achieve the Global Vaccine Action Plan and improve immunization’s role in sustainable development and global health security.

During 2015, 163 million children worldwide received three doses of Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (DTP3) vaccine, protecting them against infectious diseases that can cause serious illness and disability.

In Qatar, in addition to the childhood vaccination an annual adult national vaccination begins in 2016. The number of vaccines in Qatar have dropped rapidly during the last few years, from 160 confirmed cases in 2012 to 18 cases in 2015. Also 21 cases of Shumps and seven cases of Rubella have been detected in 2015.

Regarding Polio, the number of cases have decreased globally by more than 99 percent since 1988. As of now only three countries (Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan) remain polio-endemic, down from more than 125 in 1988.

Besides the vaccines that are administered in children in Qatar, there are also travel vaccinations programmes including for Haj and Umrah pilgrims as well as to protect from seasonal and other infectious diseases for adults. Such vaccinations are recommended to get before ten days of travel either from health centres or at the travel clinic at HMC’s Communicable Diseases Centre. Also Influenza vaccine is recommended for children starting from two years as well as adults.

The World Immunization Week is marked annually in the last week of April, and aims to promote the use of vaccines to protect people of all ages against diseases.

Vaccines given to children

BCG and HBV: given at birth. 6-10 in 1 vaccine known as Hesvax, vaccy given at two months, three doses, and HBV given at birth, one at six months and two at 1 and 2 months.

MMR protects against measles, mumps and rubella (two recommended doses at 12 and 18 months).

Hexavalent vaccine given at 24 months, 14, 15 and 18 months.

Pneumococcal vaccine (given at two, four, six and 15 months) protects against common bacterial infections and meningitis (a brain infection).

Hepatitis B series vaccine given at 12, 15 and 18 months.

Cholera (bacterial) vaccine given at 12, 15 and 18 months.

Pneumococcal vaccine (given at two, four, six and 15 months) protects against common bacterial infections and meningitis (a brain infection).

Rotavirus vaccine (given at 2 months, protects against rotavirus diarrheal disease in infants and young children.)

Meningococcal ACWY135 (given from two years protects four strains of the bacteria that cause Meningococcal: A, C, W, and Y135).

Influenza vaccine is recommended for children starting from two years.
PHCC honours employees at annual awards ceremony

Primary Healthcare Qatar hosted an annual employee appreciation and recognition ceremony celebrating a record of employee successes, corporate contributions and achievements.

The annual award ceremony hosted at the Qatar National Convention Center brought together employees from various departments to recognize them for their outstanding contributions in the workplace. PHCC honored individuals, groups and health centers for their exemplary service efforts.

Dr Mariam Abdul Malik, Managing Director of the Primary Healthcare Corporation, opened the ceremony by highlighting PHCC achievements and congratulating employees for their dedication and hard work, which has been the driving force behind PHCC’s success.

"PHCC's Award Ceremony is presented annually to recognize employees who show an outstanding demonstration of company values and who make a significant difference with their achievements and milestones throughout the year,” she continued. "The employees’ continued dedication to provide excellence in service is a great reflection of the Corporation’s commitment to promoting a motivating working culture that will drive forward PHCC’s goals and inspire success in achieving our vision."

The following categories were honored:
- The Outstanding Health Centers Award for excellence recognizes the outstanding achievements of PHCC Health Centers, who continue to strive for excellence, best practice management and improvements in the workplace.
- The Corporate Anniversary Award honors PHCC’s 25-year corporate anniversary.
- The National Health Strategy team Award acknowledges the work of PHCC employees who work in partnership with other stakeholders to improve and contribute to Qatar National Health Strategy.
- The Star of the Year Award rewards the successes and achievements of individuals within PHCC. The honored employees expressed their appreciation and enjoyed an engaging ceremony followed by a private dinner for employees and their families.

The fifth Patient Forum at Um Salal Health Center

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) Fifth Patient Forum took place for the first time at Um Salal Health Center on Tuesday, March 28, 2017.

A multidisciplinary team including Um Salal Health Center management and leaders successfully created a fruitful platform of discussion that gave the opportunity to engage patients in a constructive dialogue. The vast majority of patients were Qataris and actively involved in the interactive workshop forum that will contribute to the development of the Corporation and improvement of services provided by Um Salal Health Center to the public. Key messages and requirements shared by the patients were acknowledged by Um Salal Health Center and will be considered to promote patient engagement and empowerment through patient involvement in the decision-making process of planning, design and delivery of healthcare services.

The Patient Forum initiative is part of PHCC’s Patient Consultative Council Project, which aims at providing additional support to patients and enhancing service user participation. The collaborative partnership between PHCC and the patients truly reflects the voice of the community and its views that are vital in visualizing the impact on the public opinion, and paves the way for better healthcare achievements.
In Qatar, and worldwide, awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is increasing, and so are the numbers of children and adults being diagnosed. The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) is continuously supporting the development of integrated pathways for people suffering from ASD. Since 2012, PHCC has been fully involved in the screening for ASD. PHCC has developed two cycles of screenings for ASD to be done for all babies that visit PHCC Well-Baby Clinic by the age of 18 months and 30 months. “We are honored to be a part of this national collaborative leadership to develop and implement a national strategy for high standard services targeting people with autism spectrum disorder in Qatar. This will be done through raising awareness, promoting the utilization of screening and early identification services, referral to appropriate care and high quality research for achieving optimal health outcomes across the lifespan,” said PHCC Head of Child and Adolescent Department, Dr. Sadriya Al-Kohji.

PHCC will provide community-based services which are individual-centered, safe and efficient toward achieving national goals and add great value to patient care across Qatar,” she added.

In addition, PHCC works very closely with Hamad Medical Corporation for the early diagnosis and detection of ASD. Children identified as “at risk” of developing ASD at PHCC Level are referred to the Child Development Centre at Rumailah hospital.

During National Autism Awareness Month, PHCC is hosting the following series of activities to engage the public in taking action to support people on the spectrum. This year, PHCC wishes to expand awareness towards a full acceptance and inclusion of people suffering from Autism.

- A Qatar Autism Event, which was held at Al Shaqab Arena. PHCC professionals were at hand sharing useful information and consultative advice about autism and autism-specialized services.
- A lecture on Autism Awareness will be held at PHCC Al Thumama and Rawdat Al Khail health centers and led by Dr. Madeeha Kamal, a Senior Pediatric Consultant.
- Through its School Health Program Initiative, PHCC will take the opportunity to educate students about Autism.
- Online engagement through messaging has already commenced, design panels as well as through creating conversations in PHCC Health Centers, social media, and, on the PHCC website. It is also a great opportunity for the public to share PHCC awareness messages on their social media.

What is a health walk?

A health walk is a led walk lasting between thirty minutes and an hour and a half.

It should be led at a pace which is brisk for the individual.

It should take place over easy ground with leveled surface and no barriers.

It should start at a slow pace to allow warm up, speed up for the main part of the walk, and then slow towards the end once more to allow cool down.

It should make the individual feel warmer and sweat a little, increase their rate of breathing and raise their pulse, but not so fast that they cannot talk.

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Prominent role at Gulf cancer conference

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) Breast and Bowel Screening Program entitled ‘Screen For Life’ participated in the recent high-profile Conference entitled: “The First Combined Gulf Cancer Conference in Kuwait”, where Dr. Shaikha Abu Shaikha, Cancer Program Manager at PHCC, introduced the National Program and its key achievements to leading oncologists and healthcare professionals.

In line with the conference theme ‘Awareness, Strategy, Reality and Ambition’, Dr. Abu Shaikha hosted a session introducing the program’s vision, mission, values and key achievements that included the inauguration of three dedicated spa-like breast and bowel cancer screening units staffed by highly qualified doctors, the launch of first of its kind mobile screening unit and a bespoke call center with a personnel reaching proactively to eligible people encouraging them to register for free of charge breast and bowel screening.

In tandem with the operational success of the program, ‘Screen For Life’ also increased awareness levels by initiating a dedicated team working to engage with Qatar society and elevate level of awareness across local community.

Dr. Abu Shaikha completed her address by emphasizing how ‘Screen For Life’ plans to expand its reach moving forward and further enhance awareness of the benefits of early cancer detection through screening.

The Primary Health Corporation is particularly proud of its participation in The First Combined Gulf Cancer Conference. Participation in major events, such as this conference, are hugely important to help widespread the message, share ideas and receive health sector updates as the corporation continues to provide Qatar with world-class cancer care,” Dr. Abu Shaikha said.

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The Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department at the Al-Ahli Hospital is one of the busiest clinics in which diversified services are provided. From routine gynaecological care to high-risk pregnancies, from fibroids to clinical trials, it offers a range of obstetrics and gynaecology services to care for every woman’s needs.

The Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department presently performs procedures at an average of 2,500 deliveries a year and 1,500 to 2,000 gynaecological surgeries. Each day consultants and specialists see between 25 to 25 guests per day.

“Two consultants. But it is now becoming well known as a centre in Doha,” said Dr Barghouthi.

While Gynaecology services at the Al-Ahli Hospital includes regular check up clinics and services for disorders such as fibroids and endometriosis.

Dr Barghouthi advises women to do regular screening for cervical cancer every three years, as well as for Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection which is the most important cause of the cervical cancer.

“Regular screening will help early diagnosis and treatment of any disorder. Also women should watch their menstrual cycle. If it’s regular then a good sign of hormonal balance. If the menstrual cycle is irregular and abnormal, they must consult a gynaecologist and get advice,” he said.

With the available services at the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department at the Al-Ahli Hospital is also aiming to improve and expand its services according to the demand and needs of the country.
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Solving summer skin problems

Summer is the time when we experience all kinds of hard-to-reach itches in various parts of the body. They often get transformed into ugly-looking lumps, bumps, rashes, scabs, swellings and fluid-oozing pustules after several minutes of constant scratching, picking and touching.

Itching and other kinds of skin irritation could be the results of causes like bug bites, dry skin, allergies, reactions or sweat-induced infections. However, whatever it is, if it continues for a long time a rash can become hard to figure out and treat. Here, we’ll discuss the common summer skin conditions and how they can be treated.

Sun allergy

Sun allergy is a common summer skin problem for people with high skin sensitivity. Unlike sunburn, sun allergy can affect you even if you choose to stay indoors when the sun is high. This is a skin condition caused as an allergy to the sun rays and heat. Sun allergies can be of different types and they can be of different extent.

Contact dermatitis

Contact dermatitis is a skin condition that occurs due to contact with something that leads to a rash or an allergic response. It can cause itching, redness and some amount of skin flaking. More severe cases can even cause blisters, hives and swelling.

Folliculitis

Folliculitis is a condition called anaphylaxis. Keep on the lookout for symptoms like dizziness, tongue or face swelling, shortness of breath, tightening of the throat or wheezing.

Hives

Hives are raised red welts with clearly defined edges - appear in reaction to different kinds of allergens like animal dander, insect bites, medica-
tions, pollen, certain types of foods, infections, or as reaction to stress, heat, cold as well as excessive sweating. Hives can appear anywhere on the body and can expand, spread and merge with other welts, changing shape and size.

Rashes

Hot and humid weather is the prime time for heat rashes. These appear when perspiration gets trapped under the skin due to clogged sweat ducts. Heat rashes surface as small itchy bumps or blisters, usually seen within cap folds or in places that frequently get divided by clothes.

How to treat Heat Rashes?

In the usual course, a heat rash will disappear on its own within a few days. However, as a preventive measure, one can wear light, breathable garments that allow for perspiration to get evaporated. One should also stay clear of heavy creams, make-up or other ointments that can end up blocking the sweat ducts. In a few exceptional cases, if the rash lasts for more than three to four days or gets worse with time, one should immediately consult a doctor as it could indicate a bacterial, fungal or viral infection.

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While most cases of hives disappear on their own within a few hours, some can last longer. One should try to consult the urge to scratch, as that could worsen the hives, and take OTC antihistamines for relief. It’s also recommended to avoid hot showers and body-hugging clothing.

If there’s no improvement with antihistamines, one should immediately contact the doctor. Left ignored, in some rare cases, hives can blow up into a much serious condition called anaphylaxis. Keep on the lookout for symptoms like dizziness, tongue or face swelling, shortness of breath, tightening of the throat or wheezing.

Folliculitis

Don’t be lazy and change out of your workout clothes as soon as you’re done with your fitness session for the day. Folliculitis is bacterial infection that develops easily in the warm, dark, humid environment provided by a sweaty skin. It is, therefore, particularly easy to contract Folliculitis in summer. Folliculitis appears like red bumps or pustules and is usually seen on shoulders, thighs and buttocks. These bumps could itch or burn or both.

Light clothing is a common cause of folliculitis. Such clothes compress hair follicles, which makes it easier for bacteria to grow there. Also, people who love taking hot baths need to ensure that their tubs are properly chlorinated.

To prevent the occurrence of Folliculitis, one should take a shower immediately after workout and also carry an antibiotic. athletes’ foot

Athlete’s foot is a skin condition that can take hold of anybody. This fungal infection is contracted in reasons like sweaty feet and closed shoes.

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Hearing loss is often permanent, so do what you can to protect one of your most valuable natural assets. Wear earplugs when you're around loud sounds, or loud or louder than traffic. Listen to music, read books, watch videos, and most concerts are all loud and can cause hearing loss. Make sure you can hear someone you're talking to. The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) recommends that employers install barrier walls or mufflers in noisy plants to protect their workers' hearing.

Treatments

It depends on the type and source of your hearing loss. Prominent medical treatment for sudden hearing loss may require prompt medical attention. Surgery may reverse hearing loss caused by otosclerosis, scar tissue or infection. Other treatments include antihistamines and antibiotics.

Hearing loss caused by infection can often be cleared up with antibiotics. If you think your hearing loss stems from medication use, talk to your doctor about drug options.

Most people with permanent hearing loss can benefit from a hearing aid — yet only one in five people who could benefit do. You typically wear these tiny instruments in or behind your ear to make sounds louder. Things do sound different through a hearing aid, though, so you should talk with your doctor to set realistic goals.

Other sound-enhancing technologies include personal listening systems that allow you to tune in to what you want to hear and mute other sounds. TV-screening systems make it possible for you to hear the television or radio without turning the volume way up. Different kinds of phones-amplifying devices as well as captioned telephones that let you read what your caller is saying make conversations possible on home and mobile phones.

Cochlear implants are used mainly with young children, but they’re becoming more popular among older adults with profound hearing loss. Living With Hearing Loss For starters, set up your home so your rooms are well lit and places to sit face each other. When people talk, watch their mouths move as well as their facial expressions. Avoid noise-avoidance problems of background noise. For instance, turn off the TV when no one’s watching it. Let people know what they can do to help you understand them better.

Get your attention before they start talking.

Make sure you see their lips moving.

Speak clearly, but don’t shout.

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WEDNESDAY 26 APRIL 2017

Hearing loss: Don’t take your ears for granted

You can lose your hearing for lots of reasons: Age, genetics — and all those blaring rock concerts you attended in your youth. For many people, auditory loss happens so gradually that they barely realise it. Others find that their ears seem to be working fine one day and not so well the next.

C ertain conditions, including age, illness, and genetics, may play a role in hearing loss. Modern life has added a host of ear-damaging elements to the list, including some medications and plenty of sources of loud, ongoing, unfiltered noise. With so many treatable cases of hearing loss, prevention is the best way to keep hearing long-term if you’ve already some hearing, there are ways to stay connected and communicate with friends and family. You can lose your hearing for lots of reasons: age genetics — and all those blaring rock concerts you attended in your youth.

What Causes Hearing Loss?

Advanced age is the most common cause of hearing loss. One out of these people age 65 or more has some degree of hearing loss. After age 75, that goes up to about one in every two people. As our hearing reduces with age, it could be that lifetime exposure to loud noises is the culprit.

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Audiology in New York. “People can lose their hearing for lots of reasons,” says Anna Elie, director of the Osteo Science Foundation, a research organization in Philadelphia. “When they die,” she adds, “at least 90% of people have had hearing loss. It is a common condition that affects about 40 million Americans. In 1975, we estimated it occurred in about 400 million Americans.”

Dizziness accom-

Hearing loss fluctuates — and is accompanied by dizzi- ness, nausea or trouble with balance. Why it happens: You may have Ménière’s disease, an uncommon disorder that affects about 40 million Americans. In 1975, we estimated it occurred in about 400 million Americans.”

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Acid reflux is a condition that points towards symptoms caused mainly due to an imbalance of the acid secretions within the stomach and other organs. When the gastric glands of our stomach produce excess quantity of acid, it results in acidity. It can be a dangerous health condition that can cause symptoms such as heartburns and ulcer formation.

Acidity can be managed very easily and effectively through making a few lifestyle modifications. Food that we eat plays a major role in managing the acidity levels in our body. Nutraceuticals. Taking up certain muscle relaxants, or blood pressure medicines

What are the symptoms of gastric reflux disease?

Common symptoms of acid reflux are:

Heartburn: a burning pain or discomfort that may move from your stomach to your abdomen or chest, or even up into your throat.

Regurgitation: sour or bitter-tasting acid backing up into your mouth.

Other symptoms of acid reflux disease include:

Bloating

Blood or black stools or blood in your stool.

Dysphagia — a narrowing of your esophagus, which can cause pain.

Hiatus hernia: a hernia in the chest.

Wheezing, dry cough, or vocal changes.

Bloody or black stools or diarrhea.

Nausea and vomiting.

Weight loss for no known reason.

Regurgitation: a sour or bitter-tasting acid backing up into your throat or mouth.

How is acid reflux disease diagnosed?

It’s time to see your doctor if you have acid reflux symptoms two or more times a week or if medications don’t bring lasting relief. Symptoms such as heartburn are the key to the diagnosis of acid reflux disease. If lifestyle changes, antacids, or acid-blocking medications help reduce these symptoms, if these steps don’t help or if you have frequent or severe symptoms, your doctor may order tests to confirm a diagnosis and check for other problems. You may need one or more tests such as:

Barium swallow: If the X-ray

Endoscopy: a tube inserted into the stomach. This test involves inserting a long, flexible, lighted tube with a camera down your throat. First, the doctor will spray the back of your throat with anesthetic and give you a sedative to make you more comfortable. A biopsy may be taken during this test to check for abnormalities under a microscope for infection or inflammation.

Can the disease be treated with medications?

In many cases, lifestyle changes combined with over-the-counter medications are all you need to control the symptoms of acid reflux disease. Antacids, such as Alka-Seltzer, Maalox, Mylanta, Rolaid, or Brogan, can neutralize the acid from your stomach. But they may cause diarrhea or constipation, especially if you overuse them. It’s best to use antacids that contain both magnesium hydroxide and aluminum hydroxide. When combined, they may help counteract these gastrointestinal side effects.

If antacids don’t help your doctor may try other medications. Some require a prescription. Your doctor may suggest more than one type of medication, especially if you overuse them. It’s best to use antacids that contain both magnesium hydroxide and aluminum hydroxide. When combined, they may help counteract these gastrointestinal side effects.

Other considerations include:

1. Avoiding the foods and beverages that trigger symptoms. Here is a list of foods and beverages that may cause heartburn:

   - Good diet choices: No fats, foods high in fiber, low in sodium.
   - Watch your portion sizes.
   - Avoid spicy, greasy, or fried foods.
   - Avoid alcohol or beverages that irritate your throat.

2. Changes in lifestyle:

   - Quit smoking.
   - Put blocks under the head of your bed to raise it at least 4 inches to 6 inches.
   - Don’t eat at least 2 to 3 hours before going to bed.
   - Try sleeping in a chair for daytime naps.
   - Eat small meals more frequently throughout the day.
   - Quit smoking.

3. Professional treatments:

   - Endoscopy: a tube inserted into the stomach. This test involves inserting a long, flexible, lighted tube with a camera down your throat. First, the doctor will spray the back of your throat with anesthetic and give you a sedative to make you more comfortable. A biopsy may be taken during this test to check for abnormalities under a microscope for infection or inflammation.

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