

Breast cancer day feb 4

New Delhi, February 03: In India, almost 80 percent of breast cancer patients are in an advanced stage when they come to a hospital, say doctors. Among the prime factors fuelling the disease in the country, especially among urban women, are fast-paced lives and delayed reproductive activity, they add.

No time for fitness, bad food, increased tobacco and alcohol consumption and lifestyle changes like late marriage are the perfect recipe for breast cancer.

"The cancer registries' data shows that urban women are at almost double the risk of breast cancer than rural women. The incidence of breast cancer is much more in urban areas," P.K. Julka, senior oncologist from the department of radiation oncology at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), told IANS.

According to the Delhi Cancer Registry data, the number of cancer cases in rural areas is 14.5 per 100,000, whereas in urban areas, it is 26.9 per 100,000.

With breast cancer growing at alarming rates among urban women in India, lifestyle changes such as delayed reproductive activity, prolonged reproductive period playing hormonal havoc and lack of physical work are being cited as key factors.

Julka said the psycho-social taboo regarding breast cancer is a major cause why the majority of women never come for treatment in early stages.

"In India, almost 80 percent of patients are in advanced stages when they come to hospitals, whereas in the West the number is just 20 percent. Many times social taboos regarding breast cancer prevent women from talking to their friends and families, let alone doctors," he said.

"The need of the hour is to create awareness and bring out a media campaign on this disease so that there's an acceptance and awareness about the disease and its cure," Julka added.

Doctors point out that treatment techniques are also reaching new dimensions.

"The treatment of breast cancer has developed greatly these days. For similar-sized lumps in different patients, we could give different medications these days," Anupama Hooda, chief medical oncologist at Max Healthcare in Saket, told IANS.

"Even the treatment has become highly specific. Earlier we used techniques like restructuring, but now we do breast conservation, where we try to conserve as much of the tissue as possible," Hooda added.

For women over 40, doctors advise an annual checkup by a doctor and self-examination every month. But for women with a genetic history of cancer, regular checkups are a must once they turn 35.

The good thing is breast cancer is one of the few forms of the disease that can be cured completely.

"Breast cancer is one among the few cancers that can be cured completely. But the treatment needs proper planning," said Anshuman Kumar, surgical oncologist at the Dharamshila Cancer Hospital and Research Centre.

"The major issue pertaining to the treatment of breast cancer is that it is considered a simple form of cancer that can be treated in every hospital by any physician - and that is a misconception. It should be handled by an oncologist," Kumar said.

"The facilities available at health centres from where a patient receives treatment is also very important," he said.

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