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**MS. MONIKA GAUTAM, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
AMITY INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
AMITY UNIVERSITY, LUCKNOW**

MODERN LIFESTYLE AND ITS IMPACT ON OUR HEALTH

In 1948, World **Health** Organization (WHO) **defined health** as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

There are a number of factors that affect our health. **P**opulation, **P**overty and **P**ollution are the 3 Ps that play a very significant role in the health status of individuals. But in today's world, in addition to these there are a number of factors that greatly influence our health. The proportion of income being spent on health matters has risen considerably. But still the health of majority of persons is not very satisfactory. This is largely due to the changing lifestyle of the modern world. Lifestyle is the way of living of 'individuals, families and societies'. It is influenced by culture, society, peers, changing trends in the world. The modern world has brought many changes in the lifestyles of individuals that has affected our health status.

We all have heard the poem 'Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy wealthy and wise.' We have always been told that a good sleep is necessary for good health. But now so many people do not get the required amount of sleep every day. We all are aware that internet has invaded into our lives. A study by the doctors at National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru, has shown that nowadays people are so hooked on the internet for Facebook and WhatsApp that 'they are going to bed 1.6 hours later on an average and waking up 1.5 hours later.' A study in 2015 by a private hospital in Gurgaon has also revealed that about 90% of young persons who suffer from heart attacks are those who did not sleep well. Present lifestyle has become such that we take less than the daily need of our sleep. This adversary affects our mental, physical health. According to this study, about 3-5% people

gave more importance to using ‘internet than to their work, meals, personal hygiene, sleep and even interaction with their family members.’ Addiction to WhatsApp and Facebook is actually harming our health.

Now with the increase in the use of smart phones, we regularly feel a compulsion to check messages and updates on our mobiles. Some people ‘check their mobiles about 4 times even after going to bed’. We are addicted and we still do not feel the dangers and implications of this. Extensive use of mobiles negatively affects our span of attention and concentration.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), ‘mobile phones emit radiofrequency (RF) fields a 1000 times greater than what is emitted from base stations’. Excessive use of mobiles may lead to cardiovascular disorders also. Some studies have also indicated that prolonged usage of mobiles may even lead to decreased sperm cell count. Mobiles are now being extensively used to read different content and messages, surf internet etc. Our eyes become strained when we continuously look at the screen for significant length of time. Gradually our eyes become dry and we develop the tendency to blink lesser number of times while glaring at the mobile nonstop leading to eye strain, double vision and temporary short-sightedness.

Often the people who are regular users of mobiles feel pain, stiffness, cramped fingers and wrists. This is called ‘Text claw’ and is caused due to excessive typing and scrolling on mobiles or laptops. ‘Text neck’ or ‘texter’s neck’ is used to describe the neck pain and damage that is caused by continuously sustained from looking down at your cell phone, tablet, or other wireless devices too frequently and for too long. We sometimes put our mobiles near our ears and support it on the neck in a manner that we can attend the call and also keep our hands free to do some work. This position may help in multi tasking but actually is a wrong posture and may create problems if done repeatedly. According to the National Cancer Institute, the use of mobile phones could potentially pose a risk of brain cancer also.

Youngsters today love to enjoy music on their mobiles with earphones on. This may lead to hearing problems. Often we hear of cases of accidents caused due to the person driving a vehicle or crossing a road or railway line with earphones on. In 2014, about 379

people were killed in Old Delhi railway station due to irresponsible people crossing the line with headphones on. Around 600 deaths have been reported from Chennai due to people talking or listening to music on phones and crossing the railway line. In spite of news of so many such accidents people still continue with this thereby putting their lives and the lives of so many others at risk.

Besides we all know we are so addicted to internet connected devices that we love to remain confined to a place with limited exercise and interest in physical health. This is leading to the problem of obesity and increase in cases of heart related diseases. Problems like metabolic diseases, joint and skeletal problems, cardio-vascular diseases, hypertension, overweight, violence etc are often caused by unhealthy life style. We prefer vehicles even for short distance and avoid walking. Earlier people did a lot of physical labour in their daily routine but today the availability of electronic devices , vehicles etc has reduced our physical exercise. We have our mobiles close to us and do not even need to walk to a small distance to attend a call on the landline. We have all the world of information on our computers/laptops and avoid moving around. Sedentary lifestyles have led to an increase in health problems from a very young age.

Sedentary lifestyle coupled with wrong eating habits play havoc in our lives. The old saying “We are what we eat” is true today also. The food habits and unhealthy lifestyle are the main contributors to problems like diabetes, respiratory infection, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, cardiovascular diseases, cancer and osteoporosis. Nowadays we all are so busy that we have no time for any physical exercise. Our lives are full of stress. There has been a tremendous increase in the use of ready to eat food and junk eatables. These foods consist of high calories and often contain artificial coloring and preservatives. They lack the important and healthy nutrients and lead to health problems like acidity, gastroenteritis, obesity, high cholesterol and high blood pressure, juvenile diabetes, heart problems associated with increased levels of cholesterol in their blood.

The market is flooded with junk food and ready to eat food items that are packed attractively. These products are so well advertised also that people especially children are attracted towards them easily. New varieties are being introduced every day. Huge amount of

money is spent on TV advertisements by the manufacturers to attract consumers especially children. Without any nutritional value such food items only lead to obesity at a young age. They are low in fibres, vitamins and minerals but very high in fat, sugar and salt. Packed foods like potato chips, burger, candy, carbonated drinks, pizzas often contain ingredients like caffeine, Phosphoric acid, MSG or Monosodium Glutamate, or free glutamic acid, trans fats (hydrogenated oils), artificial colors, artificial flavors or preservatives etc. MSG commonly called Ajinomoto is an important ingredient of Chinese food. It is a taste enhancer and nowadays it is present not only in the Chinese dishes but also in wafers, quickly cooked soups etc. Ajinomoto is believed to be an excitatory neurotransmitter that stimulates our nerve cells. Pancreas are also believed to release more insulin under the influence of MSG. Thus we constantly feel hungry and eat more than required. MSG is addictive and creates an excessive urge to eat food items that contain them. It is believed to be present in ready to eat food items, powder soups, instant cup noodles, wafers etc. It causes headaches, nausea, weakness, change in heart rate, breathing problems etc.

Junk food makes us feel satiated but actually they lack important nutrients. Thus they lead to weakness in our body. Due to the presence of high level of hydrogenated vegetable oil in junk food, our digestive system finds it difficult to digest it. Thus we feel lazy and drowsy after eating junk food.

Consumption of alcohol and tobacco has become kind of a status symbol. People are fully aware of the health hazards associated with these but still continue their consumption just because they believe that this will keep them with the high society. Tobacco smoking can cause lung cancer, chronic bronchitis, leukemia, pneumonia and emphysema. It increases the risk of heart disease and can lead to heart attack. Individuals know that alcohol and tobacco will always negatively impact their lives but still spend so much of money on these things and then gradually become so addicted that they just cannot come out of the web of these unhealthy habits. Another area of concern is the increase in the number of cases of substance abuse in the young generation and creating health problems for youngsters. According to a report of UN about one million addicts of heroin are found in India, and unofficially this figure is supposed be around

five million. In addition to heroin, the use of intravenous drugs, pharmaceutical products containing narcotic drugs is also increasing. Drug abuse has a negative impact on the development of a society. It often leads to increase in crime in society. The codeine-based cough syrups continue to be diverted from the domestic market for substance abuse.

Vicks Action 500, cough syrups like Phensedyl and Corex have been banned in India by the Health Ministry in 2016. Nowadays cases of self medication are also increasing. Many of us take pain relievers, eye drops and antibiotics without ever reading what is written on them regarding their side effects. Self medications have a negative impact on our overall health and the immune system. There are many dietary supplements available in the market and they are marketed in a way to create an impression that they are nourishing but they are in no way a substitute for natural healthy food items

Another area of concern is the increase in the use of cosmetic products and toiletries. We are so influenced by the western world that fair skin is considered to be the best. The market is full of extremely well marketed products that promise to provide fair skin, long and black hair. But majority of these products are full of harmful chemicals. The advertisements of these products have such a strong impact that we readily believe that they are good for us. We easily buy products that are said to aloe vera, haldi, neem, tulsi etc but rarely use these natural and easily available things directly.

In the modern world there are so many pressures on all of us from different sides that we always feel burdened to struggle to prove ourselves better than others. There is cut throat competition in almost all walks of life lead to unceasing and ever increasing stress. This creates psychological and physical problems. Thus there is a significant increase in cases of depression, frustration and even suicides.

We have been making great strides in the 21st century. On the other side, there has been a significant increase in people of all age groups committing suicides, cases of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart attacks etc which are often related with our modern lifestyles. Thus it is high time that we modified our lifestyles in a way to save ourselves from the negative impact of the electronic devices. We need to realize that our health is extremely important. Therefore we

have to make changes in our lives so that we exercise regularly, develop good food habits and use natural products. We need to modify our lifestyles so as to stay 'healthy, wealthy and wise.

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