

## Back pain could be pancreatic cancer's first sign: Expert

Working from home is very different from working in an office.

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**New Delhi:** Working from home has become the new norm in the pandemic, which means work is not restricted to office hours alone. Prolonged sitting in wrong posture in front of laptops and computers is leading to several problems including back-pain, eye strain during this pandemic period. While, back pain itself can be discomforting, it could be related to more implications, including even pancreatic cancer, says an expert.

A study published in the monthly medical journal JAMA Internal Medicine found that there is a strong link between sitting for long hours, leading a sedentary lifestyle and death due to cancer.

Working from home is very different from working in an office. At home, we tend to sit on bed, use unsupportive chairs while working but infrastructure in the office is set up to support long working hours,

**Dr Saurabh S Mukewar, Consultant Gastroenterologist, Midas Multispeciality Hospital, Nagpur** told IANSlife.

However, there are few things that one can take care of while working from home including finding time out from a busy schedule to stroll for at least half an hour after work. If that is also not possible then we need to get up in between and walk around the house a bit; maintaining an ideal height of the laptop and their work screen and adjusting the height of the computer screen at or slightly below the eye level; keeping a hard pillow on the chair for back support, he suggests.

In some cases, however, back pain could also mean a serious health issue such as pancreatic cancer. Pancreatic cancer develops in the tissues of the pancreas – an organ in the abdomen that lies behind the lower part of your stomach.

According to a report by All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), the cases of pancreatic cancer in India is on the rise. The incidence of pancreatic cancer in India is 0.5-2.4 per 100,000 men and 0.2-1.8 per 100,000 women. It is the 11th most widely prevalent cancer in the country and has an extremely low survival rate if undetected and unoperated at the initial stage, says the doctor.

The cancer starts to develop in the pancreas which can lead to development of cellular abnormalities when the underlying cells multiply abnormally. A variety of lifestyle choices such as, drinking alcohol, smoking and dietary habits can trigger the growth of cancer.

Genetics and family history of cancers also play an important role in development of pancreatic cancer. In majority of the cases, the symptoms can be as mild and generic like abdominal pain, weight loss or development of diabetes etc making it difficult to diagnose at the initial stage. This can also be asymptomatic at early stage while jaundice may appear in advanced stage of the disease. In such cases, when patient suffer from jaundice they can feel itchiness all over the body due to the deposit of bile salt crystals under the skin.

It is believed that there is no reliable test available to diagnose pancreatic cancer in early stage. Diagnosis on pancreatic imaging can be done through USG, CT scan, MRI, etc. However, to treat cancer and confirm it one needs to get a biopsy done. It is very difficult to approach & biopsy it via conventional methods because pancreas is located deep inside our abdomen behind various vital organs. This is where medical advancement like endoscopic ultrasound (EUS) immensely helps to make the job simpler and easier so that the disease is diagnosed at a very early stage, said Dr Saurabh.

A minimally invasive procedure known as cholangioscopy which allows direct visualization of the pancreatic ducts is used now. Combining cholangioscopy with endoscopic ultrasound helps a gastroenterologist to get a clear understanding of the pancreatic duct. It is an important diagnostic tool for confirming as well as ruling out cancer of the pancreas.

The minimally invasive procedure also helps to prevent the spread of cancer in surrounding organs without undergoing complex biopsies.