

# SEHAT CHECK



NOVEMBER  
2022

A monthly roundup of  
news articles on  
women's health in  
Pakistan

A Joint Project of



# EDITOR'S NOTE

## HELLO THERE!

We hope this SehatCheck finds you in the best of health. Improving women's health continues to be a daunting challenge for Pakistan. This newsletter is our attempt to provide you with a monthly summary of what is happening with women in healthcare.

The volume of reportage on various health topics fluctuates dramatically in the media. November had two international health days: Mental Health Day and World Prematurity Day. While World Prematurity Day received ample media coverage, Mental Health was generally ignored by the media. This was surprising given that a global mental health crisis is underway and the issue needs urgent attention in Pakistan, especially when it comes to women.

By drawing attention to women's health wins and challenges, SehatCheck is helping to increase the autonomy of one-half of the population. Better health for women will not only lead them to become more productive members of society, it will also help increase their autonomy and influence within their families.



# FLOODS



**Source:**

Daily Times

**Date:**

2-11-2022

## INADEQUATE HEALTH FACILITIES MAKE SITUATION WORSE IN FLOOD-HIT AREAS

As part of the ongoing efforts by the government and international relief organizations towards providing relief to over 33 million flood-affected people, Transparent Hands is holding flood relief camps in the most impacted areas of South Punjab, KP, and Sindh to address the major problems faced by the affectees. They have a large team of male and female doctors, nurses, and pharmacists who are dispensing first aid, life-saving medicines, and Hepatitis B & C screenings free of charge. Fresh statistics reveal that the flood victims include a large number of pregnant women, babies, and elderly people who are more vulnerable to diseases like diarrhea, dengue, and malaria.

## FAMILY PLANNING

The floods may have exposed how inadequate healthcare is for Pakistani. This is hardly a surprise. Pakistan's maternal mortality ratio (the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births) of 186 (it was 276 in 2006-07) is way too high, as are the four million unplanned pregnancies each year. The use of contraceptive methods is a dismal 34.5 percent. 'Approximately 25pc use some modern methods, but 9pc still use the withdrawal method,' said gynaecologist and obstetrician Dr Azra Ahsan, president of the Karachi-based non-profit Association for Mothers and Newborns. Dr Nighat Shah, a Karachi-based obstetrician, said that having a captive audience in the form of displaced people provided the perfect opportunity for counselling couples about contraception and spacing, especially for those who had several children.



**Source:**

Dawn

**Date:**

2-11-2022



# FLOODS

## MEASURES FOR HEALTH OF FLOOD VICTIMS URGED

Project Director of Balochistan Health Support Programme Dr. Tahira Kamal Baloch and Executive Director of FDI Pakistan, Uzma Yaqoob agreed to take multi-faceted measures for the public health of flood victims, including women and children. In an informal consultative meeting of the two organizations, the MHM Working Group and FDI Pakistan expressed deep concern over the inadequate health facilities for women and children in the flood-affected areas. She noted that the provincial government has provided all medical support including medical equipment and technical support to the people of flood-hit areas. "As many as 25 community health workers have been trained in seven districts besides providing them with modern delivery kits and mobiles," she said adding that using a special mobile app "Hope" data is maintained that helps reaching out to the affected masses. She maintained that under the project, 25 delivery/birth stations would be established in these districts where safe maternity facilities would be provided to the mother and child. By taking these steps maternal mortality rate would be significantly reduced. Besides, as part of government steps for womenfolk, multivitamins would be provided to 180,000 women for six months.

**Source:**

Daily Times

**Date:**

11-11-2022

## MEASURES TAKEN TO CUT NEONATAL MORTALITY RATE

Health authorities in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa have formally launched the "New-born Survival Strategy" in order to reduce neonatal mortality ratio in the province, with special focus on the healthcare of expecting mothers in the flood affected areas of the province. Under the strategy, according to sources in the health department, the province is upgrading its 250 health facilities. The health department has said that it is monitoring all the district health officers, who have been tasked with taking measures to bring down the mortality rate. The provincial strategy envisages reduction in the number of deaths during pregnancy and childbirth from 41 per thousand births to 35 in the first phase, while the target of further reduction in infant mortality would be achieved in phases.



**Source:**

The Express Tribune

**Date:**

11-11-2022

# FLOODS

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Source:

The News

Date:

16-11-2022

## AT RISK

Children and women are the most vulnerable group during any disaster. This has been especially noteworthy during the recent floods, with the most vulnerable affectees being pregnant women who are having to give birth without proper facilities. According to reports, over 4,000 women have delivered babies in relief camps set up for flood victims in the past two months. Displaced people are in general at the mercy of the elements but even more hapless are those who have come to this world under circumstances that are unhealthy and unhygienic. Health experts have been warning about this impending challenge as pregnant women are completing their gestation period and babies are born without proper care and in the absence of qualified and trained medical professionals. With the winter already descending on the relief camps, there is hardly any warm place to go for women and their newborns.

# PREGNANCY

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**Source:**  
The News

**Date:**  
2-11-2022

## 'IMPROVED MATERNAL NUTRITION REQUIRES COUNSELLING'

Women's health and well-being have been placed at the heart of planning for social service plans by the current government, said Special Assistant to PM/Convener National Parliamentary Taskforce on SDGs Romina Khurshid Alam. She was speaking at the technical session "Role of healthcare providers for improving maternal nutrition" organized by Nutrition International at the 12th Annual Public Health Conference. Evidence suggested that pregnant women who received nutrition advice from healthcare providers showed positive changes in their dietary behaviour as compared to those who did not.

## RISING RATE OF PRE-MATURE DELIVERIES IN PINDIGHEB (TRANSLATION)

The premature birth rate has risen in Pindigheb. Inflation-hit people are facing difficulties in bearing the higher expenses of private hospitals and commuting to big cities for deliveries and treatment, so the need to establish nurseries for newborn babies in Tehsil Headquarter Hospital, Pindigheb has increased.



**Source:**  
Daily Jinnah

**Date:**  
3-11-2022

# PREGNANCY

## ART OF LISTENING

It has been conclusively observed that fertility rates are closely linked with the status of women, female education and employment. Pakistan Health and Demographic Surveys have also established this connection. 'How can Pakistan's runaway population be controlled?' is an experimental project of the Akhter Hameed Khan Foundation (AHK Foundation), Islamabad, it had been demonstrated that the population growth rate could be reduced through intelligent and dignified intervention. Dr Ayesha Khan set up a resource centre in 2010 to propagate her father's philosophy. It transitioned in 2016 into an urban research and action lab to test models for economic health pilots. The secret of success of the AHK Foundation's project is that women are treated with great dignity and their voices heard with sensitivity. When given a choice in the matter of contraceptives, couples/women respond that they are willing to plan their families if their needs are met. For this, the foundation has initiated the 'Aapis' – sisters – programme in Rawalpindi (funded by a Punjab government grant).

Source:  
Dawn

Date:  
4-11-2022

## INFANTS' LIVES AT RISK DUE TO NEGLIGENCE OF DOCTORS IN GYNAE DEPARTMENT (TRANSLATION)

Negligence of doctors in gynae department is posing a threat to lives of infants in Polyclinic Hospital. Misbehaviour of doctors with poor patients is a daily routine. A citizen has lodged a complaint against administration of a polyclinic where due to negligence of gynae doctors, his new born child has sustained leg and arm injuries and fractures in other parts of body. Doctors regularly misbehave with pregnant women and poor patients as well as their attendants in the department. Administration and authorities are reluctant to take any action as the head of the department is the wife of a senior politician.



Source:  
Daily  
Ausaf

Date:  
10-11-  
2022



# PREGNANCY

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**Source:**

The Express Tribune

**Date:**

10-11-2022

## MATERNITY HOSPITAL STILL A PIPE DREAM

While an exclusive gynaecology hospital, with a focus on pre and postnatal care, was promised to Rawalpindi more than a decade ago but it is still under construction with no timeline on when the project will actually end up benefiting residents of the city. The 200-bed mother and child hospital that was to be built in the federal capital's twin has once again been halted due to political instability and change of government. Consequently, the 3 existing large public health facilities in the garrison city are overburdened and women facing gynae issues are forced to turn to pricey private hospitals. Due to the high influx of patients, many pregnant women are turned away. Muhammad Ishtiaq, who took his pregnant wife for a check-up at Holy Family Hospital, said that the number of patients in the gynaecology OPD was so high that it was impossible to get a slot.

## DIFFERENCE AND OBLIGATIONS

SUPPOSE you were pregnant and the doctors told you that some tests were showing that your child had certain chromosome configurations that would likely result in significant differences in your child as compared to other children. Would you continue with the pregnancy? Or would it depend on the degree of challenge the child would be likely to face – the quality of life, the extent of support available to her, and your own wealth level? What is the role of the state? This is not a hypothetical situation. Many parents are confronted with similar questions. Or they 'choose' not to have tests done, when pregnant, to not know if a deviation is to be expected. One overwhelming sense, across all kinds of disabilities, is that, as a society, we are badly failing children with disabilities. The government is able to offer few services. And across many of these, quality is a big issue. The private sector provision of services – though quality may be less of an issue here – can be very expensive if offered on cost or on the basis of profit, and so is available only to children from richer households. If these services are offered under a philanthropic arrangement, the programmes are much smaller and very difficult to scale.

**Source:**

Dawn

**Date:**

11-11-2022



# PREGNANCY

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**Source:**

Daily Times

**Date:**

14-11-2022

## NO FOOD, TONIC BETTER THAN MOTHER'S MILK AGAINST PNEUMONIA: EXPERTS

There is no food and tonic better than mother's milk for the health and physical development of newborns. Postgraduate Medical Institute Principal Professor Dr. Al-Fareed Zafar said this while addressing the participants of a seminar on Pneumonia diseases at Lahore General Hospital. He said that mothers should breastfeed their infants for at least 6 months to develop immunity and they can protect against seasonal influences, pneumonia, respiratory disease, flu and chest infection. Medical experts said that according to the WHO, every year 26 lac children in the world lose their lives due to pneumonia.

## INFANT MORTALITY RATE DROPS TO 56PC

Pakistan has performed well in bringing down the infant mortality rate from 75.2 percent to 56 percent, as the Pakistan Demographic Survey 2020. The Pakistan Demographic Survey has been released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics after a gap of more than a decade. The number of deaths of infants under the age of one per 1,000 live births, which was 75.2 per cent in 2007, is reduced to 56 per cent. Pakistan's fertility rate stands at 3.7. The report also shows that most women choose private hospitals and clinics to give birth instead of government facilities or at home. Life expectancy in Pakistan has moved down a few points for women from 68 years (2007) to 65.5 years (2020).



**Source:**  
The News

**Date:**  
16-11-2022

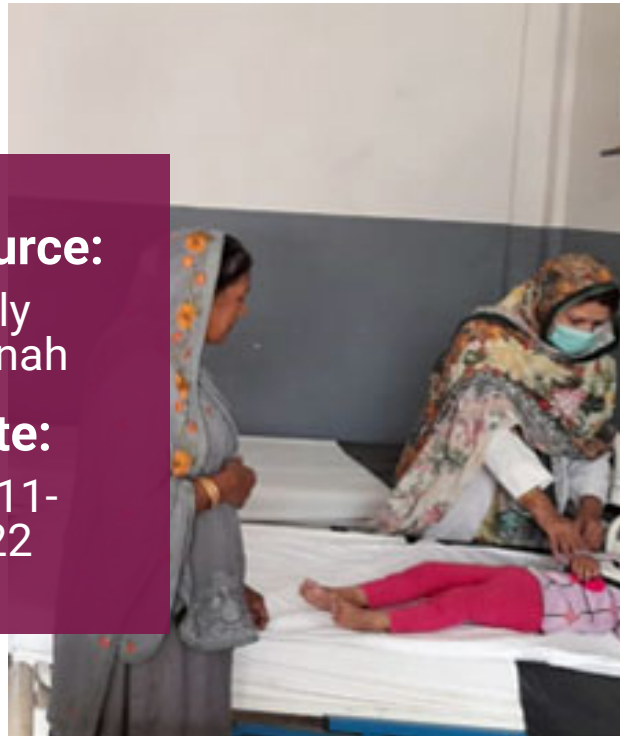
# PREGNANCY

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## OVER 1600 BALOCHISTAN'S HOSPITALS LACK GYNAECOLOGISTS (TRANSLATION)

Balochistan's 1600 hospitals of 22 districts are lacking gynecologists. Pasheen's resident Ameenullah said that his wife died while delivering a child due to the unavailability of a gynecologist in nearby BHU and DHQ Pasheen. He said that private doctors charge heavy fees for deliveries while government hospitals are lacking gynecologists. According to the website of Balochistan Finance Dept, Balochistan's 22 districts' hospitals are lacking gynecologist, while 13 districts have the facility of 13,000 doctors.



**Source:**

Daily  
Jinnah

**Date:**

23-11-  
2022

## WOMAN REFERRED FROM DIR HOSPITAL TO TIMERGARA DELIVERS ON THE WAY (TRANSLATION)

A pregnant woman from Dir Hospital was referred to a hospital in Timergara. The woman who wasn't provided an ambulance was traveled in a passenger coach and delivered the baby on the way to the hospital. The baby died of cold due to unavailability of facilities and resources. The family of the woman has appealed to higher authorities to take notice of the incident.



**Source:**

Daily  
Mashriq

**Date:**

24-11-  
2022

# DISEASES & INJURIES



**Source:**  
The  
Frontier  
Post

**Date:**  
1-11-2022

## BREAST CANCER MOST COMMON FORM OF CANCER IN PAKISTANI WOMEN: BEGUM ALVI

Begum Samina Arif Alvi has said that Breast Cancer is the most common form of cancer found in women, adding that 90 thousand cases of breast cancer are being reported in Pakistan every year. At a seminar organized by Memon Professional Forum, she said that almost 50% of breast cancer patients in Pakistan died due to late diagnosis, adding that the mortality rate could be reduced by creating awareness among women about its early symptoms, and conducting self-examination for every five minutes every month.

## WHEN PINK STANDS FOR STRENGTH AND HEALTH

The WHO (World Health Organisation) disseminated information regarding breast cancer, which remains one of the two most common kinds of cancers prevalent in the world today. Pakistan has the highest rate of breast cancer incidence in the Global South, which makes it extremely important for Pakistanis to equip their hospitals with treatments featured by advanced technology for treatment and protection, and the latest research to battle the disease. In 2020 in Pakistan, approximately 26,000 women were diagnosed with breast cancer, and over 13,500 women died of the disease. And most recent demographic trends suggest that this rate is likely to escalate in the coming years.



**Source:**  
Daily  
Times

**Date:**  
3-11-2022



# DISEASES & INJURIES

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## MANAGING OSTEOPOROSIS

Osteoporosis is one of the common age-related diseases. Bones become porous, fragile or less dense and fracture easily. It is a preventable and treatable condition. . A systematic review published on JSTOR in 2021 indicated that the global prevalence of osteoporosis among women was 23 percent; in men it was more or less half that, i.e. 11.7 percent. In Pakistan, approximately 9.9 million people have osteoporosis out of which 7.2 million are females (JPMA, Aug 2013). In Pakistan, investigations and treatment of osteoporosis in a patient presenting with fragility fracture is not well documented. A potential barrier could be the cost of therapy, time, cost of investigations and side effects of medication etc.



**Source:**  
The News

**Date:**  
6-11-2022

## ESTABLISHMENT OF BREAST CANCER SCREENING CENTRES FACES DELAY

The establishment of screening centres for early diagnosis of breast cancer is facing delay because the relevant authorities are yet to examine and send the PC-I of the project to department concerned, according to sources. The health department has decided to establish seven screening centres in the province for detection of breast cancer. The government has also approved Rs1 billion in the current Annual Development Programme for setting up the screening centres at the divisional level. The planned establishment of the screening centres is meant to increase detection rate of breast cancer but the PC-I of the project has been lying at health secretariat for the last two months, according to physicians at teaching hospitals. Health Secretary Amer Sultan Tareen told Dawn that in the initial PC-I, only equipments were demanded but now dedicated staff was also included in it to ensure screening of maximum people. "We require dedicated staff," he added.

**Source:**  
Dawn

**Date:**  
7-11-2022



# DISEASES & INJURIES

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**Source:**

Dawn

**Date:**

14-11-  
2022

## 3,500 MORE LHWS TO BE POSTED IN SEVEN KP DISTRICTS TO IMPROVE HEALTHCARE

The health department will deploy 3,500 more lady health workers in Peshawar, Mardan, Tank, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and North and South Waziristan to improve primary health coverage, immunisation and women and child health scenario. Officials said that finance department sanctioned Rs500 million for new recruitments and strengthening further the Lady Health Workerythe programme in areas where health indicators were not up to a desired level. Dr Saeed Rehman, the provincial coordinator LHW programme, told Dawn that those districts also required more staff in view of circulation of poliovirus. "LHWs play key role in immunisation," he added.

## FIRST LADY OPENS GENETIC SCREENING CENTRE AT LGH

First Lady Samina Alvi said that awareness about breast cancer and its timely diagnosis were highly important to minimise the harm from this disease. She said this at the inaugural ceremony of Genetic Screening Centre of breast and ovarian cancer at Lahore General Hospital on Monday. Mrs Alvi said that genetic screening facility would help in getting high quality screening for women in the country and ultimately enable timely diagnosis of this cancer. "There is a dire need of getting mammograms done, but affordability is not possible for all sections in a developing country. Therefore, it is necessary for all women to carry out self-examination on monthly basis as it is vital for early detection of the disease", she added. Samina Alvi said, "We have started breast cancer awareness campaign for the last four years and it has really helped in creating awareness."



**Source:**  
The News

**Date:**  
15-11-  
2022

# DISEASES & INJURIES



**Source:**

Dawn

**Date:**

15-11-  
2022

## GB GOVT PLANS REFORMS TO PREVENT SUICIDES

Gilgit-Baltistan government has decided to undertake reforms to overhaul health, education and police departments to prevent the rising cases of suicide in the region, officials have said. A steering committee, chaired by GB Chief Secretary Mohiyuddin Ahmad Wani, deliberated upon the "one-year action plan" to prevent suicides and address mental health issues in the region. The committee has decided to establish forensic laboratories, improve data sharing between health and police departments, reform the curriculum to add mental health and its allied components, appoint medico-legal doctors, crack down on unlicensed weapons and regulate the sales of sedatives, hypnotic drugs and poisons. The facilities for autopsies will be made available in each district within three days and medico-legal doctors will be notified within two days.

## PUNJAB GOVT APPROVES PLAN TO TREAT BREAST CANCER PATIENTS FREE OF COST

Punjab Chief Minister Ch Parvez Elahi has approved a plan to treat breast cancer patients free of cost in Punjab in collaboration with Roche company. The CM said that centers of excellence would be established in major hospitals along with special counters in government hospitals for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer. Cancer may be diagnosed at any stage but the patient would be treated free of charge; he said and announced that lung cancer patients would also be provided with the best treatment facilities. The CM said that 37,000 lady health workers were being trained in collaboration with the private sector as LHVs could best work for the diagnosis of cancer in women.



**Source:**

The  
Nation

**Date:**

18-11-  
2022

# DISEASES & INJURIES



**Source:**  
The News

**Date:**  
20-11-  
2022

## PRIORITISING CHILD MENTAL HEALTH

Parents of a thirteen-year-old girl brought her for consultation recently, following episodes of repeated self-harm. She had become noticeably withdrawn from both family and friends in the past several months. She was moody and had become pessimistic in her outlook toward life. She had also developed a short fuse; got irritable often; and talked of feeling worthless. She had stopped engaging in activities she once enjoyed. Alongside difficulties at school, there was a significant negative change in her mood and thinking. Her family reported that that she had less interest in her physical appearance. These difficulties worsened over a month with repeated self-harm episodes. These were related to parental conflicts and her academic/social difficulties at school. This presentation is only one of the steadily increasing number of children presented with mental health difficulties in recent years.

## MAKING MENTAL HEALTH A PRIORITY

According to WHO figures, in developing countries like Pakistan, one percent of the population suffers from severe and 10 per cent from mild mental disorders. At some workplaces, women go through mentally traumatic experiences. In a country like Pakistan, where survival is barely managed and economic conditions are stifling, women have to deal with the additional burden of gender-based violence, child labour, child marriages, unwanted pregnancies, drug addiction, political turmoil, and frequent changes in the social fabric of the country. A lot of unpaid labour by women in rural areas is also a cause of depression, substance and alcohol misuse, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and general worsening of psychological wellbeing.



**Source:**  
The News

**Date:**  
21-11-  
2022

**World Health  
Organization**



# DISEASES & INJURIES

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**Source:**  
Bol News

**Date:**  
25-11-  
2022

## DENGUE TAKES WOMAN'S LIFE IN KARACHI

Dengue fever has claimed a woman's life in Karachi city, taking the death toll from this mosquito-borne disease to 61 in the Sindh province. The Vector-Borne Diseases (VBD) Department of Directorate General Health Services Sindh confirmed the death of a female in District Central Karachi and death was reported in a private hospital in Karachi. In Sindh, a total of 61 people lost their lives due to dengue-related complications this year to date out of them 49 were reported in Karachi.





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Gender Watch