

DH encourages public to enhance health awareness against hypertension

In support of World Hypertension Day, which is held on May 17 every year, the Department of Health (DH) today (May 13) encourages the public to be aware of and regularly monitor their blood pressure level and lead a healthy lifestyle to fight against non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including hypertension.

"According to the World Health Organization, one in five adults worldwide has raised blood pressure. Globally, it is a major public health challenge because of its high prevalence," a spokesman for the DH said.

"The Population Health Survey 2014/15 conducted by the DH revealed that the prevalence of hypertension for persons aged between 15 and 84 was 27.7 per cent locally, and of these about half were unaware of their own condition but were found to have raised blood pressure during the survey," the spokesman said.

"Though hypertension is common, some measures can reduce its risk. The risk of developing raised blood pressure can be reduced by maintaining a healthy lifestyle such as reducing salt intake as part of a balanced diet, engaging in regular physical activity, maintaining an optimal body weight, refraining from smoking and drinking, keeping a healthy state of mind and alleviating stress, as well as getting enough sleep and rest," the spokesman said.

The spokesman added that people should choose food low in salt, sugar and fat, and consume at least two servings of fruit and three servings of vegetables a day. Healthy adults should consume less than 2 grams of sodium (approximately one level teaspoon of salt) per day. They should also engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity every week.

Hypertension occurs when the pressure exerted on the walls of arteries is persistently elevated. If hypertension goes untreated or blood pressure is not well controlled, the arteries and vital organs may be damaged, leading to severe complications such as coronary heart disease, stroke, aneurysm, retinal disease and kidney failure, which may result in premature death or a huge drop in a person's ability to care for himself or herself.

While very few patients may suffer from headache, dizziness and shortness of breath, hypertension does not usually give rise to obvious symptoms. As the first presenting symptom can be angina or coma, hypertension is often called the "silent killer".

"It is important to measure blood pressure regularly for early detection of the problem. Adults should have their blood pressure checked at least once

every one or two years. If hypertension is suspected, seek a doctor's advice as soon as possible to arrange proper management," the spokesman said.

Blood pressure is presented as two numbers. The first number (systolic pressure) represents the pressure in the blood vessels when the heart contracts to pump blood, whereas the second or bottom number (diastolic pressure) represents the pressure when the heart relaxes between beats.

An adult is said to have hypertension if systolic pressure is persistently at 140 millimetres of mercury (mmHg) or above, or diastolic pressure is persistently at 90 mmHg or above. The person should pay more attention to his or her lifestyle and eating habit and continue with blood pressure monitoring if the systolic pressure is persistently between 130 mmHg and 139 mmHg or diastolic pressure is between 85 mmHg and 89 mmHg, which is considered "high normal blood pressure".

The spokesman reminded members of the public that if hypertension is diagnosed, medication should be taken as directed by a doctor. They should understand what the medication is for and how and when to take it. Regular medical follow-up is also needed for appropriate management.

To combat the threat of NCDs, the Government announced "Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong" in May last year, setting out nine local targets to be achieved by 2025, which include halting the rise in prevalence of raised blood pressure. The DH will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach to promote the adoption of a healthy lifestyle by the public to achieve the targets. The public can visit the DH's [thematic page](#) to learn more about hypertension.