

Public urged to adopt healthy lifestyle in support of World Cancer Day 2024

The Department of Health (DH) today (February 4) urged members of the public to support World Cancer Day 2024 by adopting a healthy lifestyle and initiating early detection of cancer through screening.

World Cancer Day has been designated on February 4 every year by the Union for International Cancer Control since 2000 to raise worldwide awareness of cancer and unite the world in the fight against the global cancer epidemic. Under the theme "Close the Care Gap", World Cancer Day 2024 is about prioritising cancer, creating innovative strategies designed to confront inequity and investing resources to achieve a just and cancer-free world.

A spokesman for the DH said that cancer is a major public health issue. In 2021, more than 38 000 new cancer cases were diagnosed in Hong Kong, and the five most common cancers were lung, colorectal, breast, prostate and liver cancers. Cancer is also the top killer locally causing nearly 15 000 deaths registered in 2022. Given the ageing population, the number of new cancer cases and the related healthcare demands are expected to further increase.

Prevention is better than cure. About 40 per cent of all cancers can be prevented through the adoption of a healthy lifestyle and the reduction of exposure to major risk factors. "We urge the public to avoid tobacco smoking, refrain from alcohol drinking, be physically active, have a balanced diet and maintain a healthy body weight and waist circumference to reduce the risk of developing cancer," the spokesman advised.

In addition to primary prevention by advocating a healthy lifestyle, the Government adopts an evidence-based approach in regard to the implementation of cancer screening to achieve early diagnosis of cancer for initiating early treatment and thus improving treatment outcomes.

The Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme (CRCSP) subsidises asymptomatic Hong Kong residents aged between 50 and 75 to undergo screening tests for colorectal cancer. To prevent cervical cancer, women aged 25 to 64 who have had sexual experience should receive cervical screening regularly. Under the Cervical Screening Programme (CSP), the Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) of the DH provide subsidised cervical screening to eligible women. In addition to the CRCSP and the CSP, Phase 1 of the Breast Cancer Screening Pilot Programme (BCSPP) has been rolled out to provide risk-based breast cancer screening services for eligible women in the three Women Health Centres and the 18 Elderly Health Centres of the DH since 2021. The DH has been actively preparing the next phase of the BCSPP and details will be announced in due course.

The spokesman reminds the public to talk to their doctors to understand the benefits and limitations of screening tests before making an informed decision to undergo cancer screening. For more information, the public may visit the websites of the CRCSP (www.colonscreen.gov.hk) and the CSP (www.cervicalscreening.gov.hk). Women who wish to receive cervical screening at the MCHCs can schedule an appointment through their 24-hour hotline 3166 6631. Details of the BCSPP are available on the websites of Family Health Service (www.fhs.gov.hk) and Elderly Health Service (www.elderly.gov.hk). Health advice on cancer prevention and relevant screening is also available on the website of Centre for Health Protection (www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/25/102972.html).

To know more about World Cancer Day, please visit www.worldcancerday.org.