

Public urged to pay attention to stroke signs and lead healthy lifestyle in support of World Stroke Day

The Department of Health (DH) today (October 29) urged members of the public to support World Stroke Day by paying attention to stroke signs and leading a healthy lifestyle to fight against this major public health threat.

The World Stroke Organization established World Stroke Day on October 29 every year to increase awareness and drive action on strokes around the world.

"Stroke is a medical emergency, which occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off, usually because the artery of the brain is blocked by a clot or ruptures. Without the oxygen and nutrients carried by blood, brain cells die and it can lead to brain damage with various degrees of disability (such as limb weakness, speech impairment, memory loss, paralysis on one side of the body), and even death," a spokesman for the DH said.

"In Hong Kong, stroke is a major cause of morbidity and mortality. Thematic Household Surveys conducted by the Census and Statistics Department reported that the number of persons who were diagnosed with having a stroke increased by 52 per cent from 37 800 in 2009/10 to 57 500 in 2018/19. In 2020, stroke was the fourth commonest cause of death in Hong Kong with 3 164 registered deaths and a crude death rate of 42.3 per 100 000 population," the spokesman added.

An international study reported that 90.7 per cent of strokes worldwide were collectively attributed to 10 risk factors, including smoking, alcohol consumption, unhealthy eating habits, physical inactivity, psychosocial factors, abdominal obesity, hypertension, hyperlipidaemia, diabetes and heart problems.

Stroke risk can be reduced by adhering to a healthy lifestyle. Quitting smoking, refraining from alcohol consumption, keeping a balanced diet and being physically active are some good examples. To further reduce the risk of having a stroke, members of the public should regularly check for "triple H" conditions (high blood pressure, high blood glucose and high blood lipids), which seldom cause symptoms in their early stages. Screenings help to identify asymptomatic individuals who are likely to have these health problems, so that early intervention or treatment can be initiated to prevent disease progression and complications. Regular check-ups of blood pressure and periodic screening for blood glucose and blood lipids should be conducted for adults, with varied frequencies depending on age, previous results and

presence of other risk factors. Members of the public can consult doctors about the said screenings.

The spokesman reminded that, when stroke occurs, the earlier the person takes heed of the symptoms and receives treatment, the better result they would get. Members of the public are urged to be familiar with the warning signs of stroke, and act fast for help if stroke is indicated. The warning signs of stroke include:

- Numbness/weakness of the face, arm and leg (especially on one side of the body);
- Sudden occurrence of a distorted mouth and drooling;
- Sudden slurring of speech or trouble with understanding;
- Sudden and severe headaches;
- Trouble seeing out of one or both eyes;
- Sudden difficulties in swallowing; and
- Dizziness, loss of balance or co-ordination, nausea and vomiting with no known cause.

The DH will continue to step up efforts in enhancing public awareness about the importance of healthy living in stroke prevention and working in close partnership with other government departments as well as community partners to build a health-enhancing environment.

Members of the public can get more information about stroke at the latest Non-Communicable Diseases Watch (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/ncd_watch_october_2021.pdf) issued by the DH. For more information about the Government's initiatives and actions to prevent and control non-communicable diseases including stroke, please visit the thematic website at www.change4health.gov.hk/en/saptowards2025.