

Vigilance and prevention against diabetes urged on World Diabetes Day

The Department of Health (DH) today (November 14) urged members of the public to support World Diabetes Day (WDD) with continued vigilance and prevention of diabetes mellitus (diabetes) by following a healthy lifestyle, which can effectively reduce the risk of developing diabetes.

The International Diabetes Federation and the World Health Organization designated November 14 every year as the WDD to address growing concerns about the escalating health threat that diabetes poses to the public. The theme of the WDD for the period 2021 to 2023 is "Access to Diabetes Care".

Diabetes is a common chronic condition marked by high levels of glucose in the blood. It may cause kidney failure, blindness, amputation, cardiovascular diseases, stroke or even death. In 2020, diabetes was the 10th commonest cause of mortality in Hong Kong with 586 registered deaths. It is also one of the most important risk factors causing severe disease from COVID-19 infection.

Among the main types of diabetes (type 1, type 2 and gestational diabetes), type 2 diabetes is the most common form (making up about 90 per cent of all diabetes cases). The Population Health Survey conducted by the DH in 2014/15 observed that 8.4 per cent of persons aged 15 to 84 had diabetes in Hong Kong. Among them, more than half did not know that they had diabetes.

"Since type 2 diabetes is often asymptomatic in early stages, patients can remain undetected for many years until complications develop. Thus, screening those at higher risk for type 2 diabetes or recognising prediabetes is a crucial component of preventing the disease," a spokesman for the DH said.

"The purpose of diabetic screening is to identify asymptomatic individuals who are likely to have the disease, so that early intervention or treatment can be initiated to prevent or delay disease progression. As recommended by the Hong Kong Reference Framework for Diabetes Care for Adults in Primary Care Settings, screening for type 2 diabetes should begin at age 45. Based on the presence of diabetes risk factors and previous results, screenings should be conducted every one to three years. Members of the public are encouraged to consult their doctors if they have any questions about diabetes or the relevant screening methods," the spokesman added.

To lower the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, members of the public are encouraged to be physically active, maintain a balanced diet, refrain from alcohol consumption, avoid smoking, and keep a healthy body weight.

The DH will continue to work in close partnership with other government departments and community partners with a view to increasing public awareness about the importance of healthy living in diabetes prevention, and building a

healthy living environment.

A designated page for WDD has been set up at website of the DH's Centre for Health Protection (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/103647.html). Members of the public can read the latest Non-Communicable Diseases Watch (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/ncd_watch_november_2021.pdf) issued by the DH for more information about diabetes and get to know more about the Government's initiatives and actions to prevent and control non-communicable diseases including diabetes at the thematic website (www.change4health.gov.hk/en/saptowards2025).