

World Hypertension Day heightens public vigilance against hypertension

The Department of Health (DH) today (May 17) urged members of the public to support World Hypertension Day, held on May 17 every year, by paying attention to their blood pressure level with regular checks and leading a healthy lifestyle to fight against non-communicable diseases including hypertension.

Hypertension is a major public health challenge because of its high prevalence. A local survey has observed that the prevalence of hypertension for persons aged between 15 and 84 was 27.7 per cent locally. Of those affected, about half were unaware of their own condition but were found to have high blood pressure during the survey.

"Hypertension seldom causes symptoms. Most patients are unaware of having such a silent disease until a complication develops. It is therefore important to measure blood pressure regularly to detect the problem early. Adults should have their blood pressure checked at least once every one or two years," a spokesman for the DH said.

An adult is said to have hypertension if systolic blood pressure is persistently higher than or equal to 140 millimetres of mercury (mmHg) and/or diastolic blood pressure is persistently higher than or equal to 90 mmHg. If hypertension is suspected, a doctor's advice should be sought as soon as possible to arrange proper management.

Hypertension is preventable and treatable. The spokesman said that the risk of developing high blood pressure can be reduced by maintaining a healthy lifestyle, such as lowering salt intake as part of a balanced diet and engaging in regular physical activities. Maintaining an optimal body weight and waist circumference, refraining from smoking and drinking, keeping a healthy state of mind and alleviating stress, as well as getting enough sleep and rest, also help.

Reducing salt intake has been recognised as one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of high blood pressure and cardiovascular diseases. According to the World Health Organization, healthy adults should consume less than 5 grams of salt per day. However, a local survey revealed that the average daily salt intake for persons aged between 15 and 84 in Hong Kong was 8.8 grams.

Regular exercise can bring about numerous health benefits, including reducing blood pressure. People should also engage in at least two and a half hours of physical activities of moderate intensity (such as brisk walking) or one hour and 15 minutes of vigorous physical activities (such as jogging) 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 and kidney failure.

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-ups are also needed for appropriate management.

More information on hypertension is available on the DH's thematic page at www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/25/35390.html or Non-Communicable Diseases Watch at www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/ncd_watch_may_2022.pdf.