



Egypt celebrated World Health Day 2013 under the theme of “Control your blood pressure – control your life” under the auspices of His Excellency the Minister of Health and Population Professor Mohamed Mostafa Hamed, in collaboration with WHO represented by Dr Henk Bekedam, the WHO Representative for Egypt.

A large group of health stakeholders attended the event, including representatives of the Ministry of Education, civil society, nongovernmental organizations and celebrities. All participants promised to continue working in collaboration with the Ministry of Health in this priority area of public health – high blood pressure, otherwise known as hypertension.

High blood pressure, often referred to as the “silent killer”, has no obvious symptoms. If not detected early and controlled, high blood pressure leads to stroke, heart diseases, kidney failure and blindness.

It affects the lives of more than one in three adults, or about one billion people, and every year causes around 9 million deaths globally due to heart disease and stroke; about 13% of all deaths.

Egypt is not an exception. Nearly 40% of adults have high blood pressure in Egypt. And our message to you on World Health Day is “Control your blood pressure - Control your life”. It can be prevented and it can be treated.

How can we prevent it? The major factors causing high blood pressure relate to our lifestyle; they are unhealthy diets, smoking, excessive salt consumption, overweight (and obesity), and physical inactivity. Egypt faces some specific challenges. About two thirds of adult Egyptians are overweight, nearly 50% are physical inactive, and 46% of men are smokers. These challenges are easy to overcome by simply eating healthier, exercising more and stopping smoking.

How do we control high blood pressure? The first step is to know your blood pressure level. On this year's World Health Day, WHO is calling on all adults to have their blood pressure measured. When people know their blood pressure level, they can take steps to control high blood pressure.

We are also calling upon governments to provide adequate and quality services to ensure early detection, and appropriate treatment with affordable and effective medicines. Preventing high blood pressure, detecting it early and treating it lowers the risk of heart attack and stroke. Families can enjoy longer, healthier and happier lives together.

Of course, we know that asking people to change their lifestyles is not enough; we have to create an environment conducive to healthier living. This requires the support and action of governments, policy-makers, civil society, and other stakeholders, including the food industry. Reducing salt in processed foods, providing facilities for exercise and ensuring accessible services for the control and treatment of high blood pressure are just some of the measures that need to be taken. All sectors of government and the private sector have to be involved; it is not just the responsibility of the Ministry of Health alone.



