

- Brain—diseases / Youth

## Stroke becoming common among youngsters, say doctors

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CHENNAI: It is not just the elderly, even youngsters are now reporting stroke, said doctors, who attributed the increased number of cases among the youth to changed lifestyle patterns and increased consumption of tobacco and alcohol. However, if treated at the right time, it does not cause lifelong disability anymore, they added ahead of World Stroke Day on Friday.

Noting that there are incidences of stroke in many who are as young as 20 years old, Dr S Karthikeyan, consultant interventional neurologist at Apollo Hospitals, said there were several lifestyle factors that contribute to this.

“Alcohol consumption has increased manifold among youngsters in the past five years. Alcohol leads to dehydration, which causes thickening of the blood that forms clots. Irregular sleep patterns and low intake of healthy food, high blood sugar levels and high blood pressure add to the risk of stroke,” he said.

Dr Karthikeyan added that the time between warning signs and suffering stroke is inadequate. “Loss of balance or vision, drooping of arms or loss of speech are symptoms of stroke, so a person who suffers these would need early intervention,” he said.

However, he added, it no longer causes disability for life if treated properly at the right time. “We have advanced treatment available to treat the clot, just like how a clot in the heart is removed using a stent,” he said.

Neurologists said that it was important to read the signs and symptoms of a stroke. “If a person is diagnosed early... and if there is no haemorrhage, she/he may be given a drug to dissolve the clot. Blood thinners called anti-platelet drugs such as aspirin, clopidogrel, dipyridamole may be given if there is no haemorrhage. Statins, which reduce cholesterol, may be added and diabetes and blood pressure level will be optimised,” added Dr K Bhanu, director of neurology and neurosurgery at Dr Mehta’s Hospital.

But it should be noted that symptoms of stroke may vary from person to person depending on the region of the brain that is affected, she said, adding that identification of the symptoms at the right time was crucial.

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