

Myanmar warned against unhealthy lifestyles as hypertension and high cholesterol rise

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Myanmar's leading heart doctors have warned against unhealthy lifestyles as nearly one in three citizens are reported to have hypertension and half have high cholesterol. The call comes as the ASEAN Federation of Cardiology Congress 2016 (AFCC 2016) is held in the nation's capital of Yangon from 14 to 16 October.

"Poor lifestyle choices are unfortunately becoming the norm in Myanmar," said Dr Nwe Nwe, scientific chair of AFCC 2016 and head of [cardiology](#) at Yangon General Hospital. "The result is that more people have [coronary artery disease](#), stroke and [renal failure](#) than ever before."

Hypertension affects 25-30% of people over the age of 40 in Myanmar. Half of adults have high cholesterol, 12% have diabetes, and 15% are smokers. Risk factors are higher among patients with [hypertension](#), of whom 30% have diabetes and 60% have high cholesterol.

"Consumption of salt is high in Myanmar, with people preferring to eat preserved food with a high salt content," said Dr Nwe Nwe. "People do not exercise regularly, and the intake of fruits and vegetables is low even though they are readily available in Myanmar."

She continued: "On top of that, many patients do not take their hypertensive medication or keep their diabetes under control by keeping an eye on blood sugar levels."

The most up-to-date evidence for the management of hypertension and [high cholesterol](#) will be discussed at AFCC 2016. Experts will present the latest information on how to prevent initial and recurrent heart attacks. Current management and surgical interventions of heart diseases including valve disease, heart failure and arrhythmias will be examined. Sessions will be held on congenital heart diseases in children.

Leading figures from the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) will present a special programme which includes highlights from the European cardiovascular prevention guidelines.^{1,2}

Professor Michel Komajda, a past president of the ESC and course director of the ESC programme in Myanmar, said: "Cardiovascular disease is the world's number one killer and many deaths could be prevented with healthy lifestyles and adherence to medical treatment."

He continued: "The best way to stop heart disease is to quit smoking, do regular physical activity, eat healthy food, and take prescribed medications to control blood pressure and cholesterol."

The theme of AFCC 2016 is "Working Together for Heart Health". Dr Nwe Nwe said: "ASEAN countries are working together to improve the prevention and management of cardiovascular disease through advocacy and research."

More information: Massimo F. Piepoli et al, 2016 European Guidelines on cardiovascular disease prevention in clinical practice, *European Heart Journal* (2016). [DOI: 10.1093/eurheartj/ehw106](https://doi.org/10.1093/eurheartj/ehw106)

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