

A leading cause of disability and fatality

STROKE is a clinical entity characterised by sudden disruption to the brain functions through disturbance in the brain's blood supply. With the sudden cessation of blood supply, the brain cells receive neither adequate oxygen nor the necessary nutrients to function, and eventually they die.

Consultant neurosurgeon at MSU Medical Centre Prof Dr Badrisyah Idris explains, "There are two types of stroke – ischaemic and haemorrhagic. Occurring in 80% of stroke cases, ischaemic stroke is owed to a narrowing of blood vessels by fat deposits or blood clots, disrupting blood supply to the brain. The 20% more, owed to ruptured blood vessels, can be caused by uncontrolled high blood pressure or a weakened blood vessel wall.

"Stroke survivors suffer different deficits according to the affected brain area. They may suffer from memory and emotional disturbances, or be challenged by speech, vision, sensory, or movement difficulties.

"In a transient ischaemic attack, commonly called a mini-stroke, the symptoms hit for only a few minutes or hours and then disappear. Mini-strokes happen when blood supply to the brain is interrupted only momentarily, though the

chance of getting a permanent stroke within 48 hours raises tenfold and the risk remains high within three months.

"With increasing age, the likelihood of getting an ischaemic stroke rises with the increased narrowing of the blood vessels. Other factors leading to stroke include smoking, obesity, alcoholism, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and high blood sugar.

"Lifestyle changes and treatment optimisation may reduce the risk of getting a stroke."

Anyone who has had a stroke must receive treatment at a hospital within three hours of the onset of stroke signs to reduce further damage to the brain.

Tools such as "BE FAST" help make an informed society and enable them to seek early stroke treatment:

- B – Balancing difficulties
- E – Eye and vision disturbances
- F – Facial weakness
- A – Arm and/or leg weakness
- S – Speech difficulties
- T – Time to call ambulance

When a person with stroke reaches the hospital, a brain scan will be performed to determine whether the stroke is ischaemic or haemorrhagic and which part of the brain is involved. Another scan or investigation called an angiography may be performed to assess the brain's blood flow pattern and blood vessel structure.

For ischaemic strokes, restoring blood flow to the affected area is crucial and should be carried out within four hours of the stroke's onset. This can be done by injecting a blood-thinning medication called alteplase into a vein in the arm to dissolve blood clots inside the brain's blood vessel.

Another technique called endovascular therapy dissolves blood clots inside the blocked brain vessel by directly injecting alteplase through a small catheter placed inside the affected blood vessel; or removes the blood clot by retrieving it with a special device through a catheter placed inside the affected blood vessel.

For haemorrhagic strokes, the main goal of treatment is to control bleeding and to reduce the increased pressure in the brain. The high blood pressure has to be controlled by antihypertensive drugs, and the effect of the blood-thinning medication has to be



Prof Dr Badrisyah Idris.

reversed to reduce further bleeding.

Ruptured blood vessels caused by cerebral aneurysms or arteriovenous malformations need to be treated by surgical intervention or endovascular therapy.

Following stroke treatment, the majority of patients need to undergo physical therapy to regain limb functions or prevent severe limb spasticity. Some need to undergo speech therapy to be able to speak and understand conversation.

Prevention of stroke involves lifestyle modifications such as controlling one's high blood pressure and blood sugar level; consuming low-fat diet, fruits, and vegetables; and avoiding smoking and/or tobacco use; and practising active physical activities such as exercise, jogging or hiking.

Stroke: Myths versus Facts

Myth: Stroke cannot be prevented	Fact: Up to 80% of strokes are preventable
Myth: There is no treatment for stroke	Fact: Call the ambulance immediately at the onset of stroke for early treatment
Myth: Stroke only affects the elderly	Fact: Anyone can get a stroke
Myth: Stroke recovery takes only a few months	Fact: Stroke recovery is a lifelong process
Myth: Stroke is rare	Fact: Stroke is the third leading cause of death in Malaysia
Myth: Stroke is not hereditary	Fact: A family history of stroke increases one's risk of also getting a stroke
Myth: If stroke signs go away, there is no need to see a doctor	Fact: Transient ischaemic attack or 'mini-stroke' increases the chance of getting a permanent stroke

Herbal remedy for joint pain and inflammation

SIXTY-YEAR-OLD Carol had been having a tough time dealing with her worsening joint pains. She only managed a couple of hours of sleep at night, waking up to a stiff, immovable knee. She had not been able to go for her morning walks for many months, which only made her feel worse.

Although she had tried various joint supplements, Carol has had to resort to painkiller medications more and more often. As much as she dislikes using painkillers, having some pain relief feels better than feeling like an invalid all the time.

Joint pain and flare-ups can happen even while on regular joint supplements such as glucosamine and chondroitin. These flare-ups point to an underlying chronic inflammation mechanism which worsens with ageing, trauma (over exercise) or any underlying inflammatory conditions such as having high cholesterol, blood pressure or diabetes. Left uncontrolled, this inflammation can worsen joint degeneration.

While regular joint supplements help build damaged cartilage, joint pain and inflammation are better managed by the use of herbal remedies.

Herbal medicines have been used for thousands of years to treat pain during times when painkiller pharmaceuticals and anaesthesia were non-existent. Today, these herbal remedies are making a comeback as science and technology is enabling these botanical extracts to be produced with high precision, standardised qualities and proven results.



Joint pains and flare-ups point to an underlying chronic inflammation mechanism which worsens with ageing, trauma (over exercise) or underlying conditions such as having high cholesterol, blood pressure or diabetes. The pains and inflammation can worsen if left uncontrolled.

One formula caught the attention of scientists as its rapid joint pain-relieving benefits were found to be comparable to pharmaceutical painkiller drugs minus the side effects. A study titled *Effect of E-OA-07 on improving joint health and mobility in individuals with knee osteoarthritis: A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, parallel group study* was published in *Journal of Pain Research* 2019.

In this clinical study, the herbal formula was given to patients aged between 40 and 65 with moderate to severe joint pain. The

treated group experienced joint pain relief in as early as three hours. Daily treatment for over two months resulted in continued improvements where patients went on to experience significant improvements in their joint pain, joint stiffness, mobility and joint functionality.

This herbal formula is made up of seven Ayurvedic herbs – *Pluchea lanceolata* (key herb with pain-relieving properties), *Commiphora mukul*, *Boswellia serrata*, *Withania somnifera*, *Oroxylum indicum*, *Smilax china* and *Zingiber officinale*.

What makes this formula work is its content of herbs derived from specific parts of the plant that possess pain-relieving, anti-inflammatory and joint healing benefits. The seven herbs are also used in precise ratios which enables it to be effective.

This special herbal formula easily complements any other joint care regime, especially if pain or stiffness is still present. It is also suitable for patients who are allergic to or experiencing the side effects of NSAIDs painkillers, or those who are vegetarian.

Patients with joint pain who are on multiple medications should also consider its use as taking multiple medications with painkillers increases the risks of drug interactions. Importantly, for best results, be sure to take a dose of two capsules twice daily after food.

Within days, Carol noticed that her knees and even finger joints no longer felt as tight and painful. Within a week, she could even manage a careful morning walk.

Now, Carol is certainly happier having found a natural remedy that is enabling her to do more things without being dependent on anyone else. Best of all, she has peace of mind not having to worry about any side effects.

Discover this patented herbal formula at selected pharmacies nationwide.

■ For more information, email pharmacist@nuvanta.com or call 1300 881 712 or 03-5636 3758.

New gel-based disinfectant sticks

THE use of the right type of disinfectant is crucial in preventing the spread of diseases like influenza and now, Covid-19.

Since there are many types of disinfectant on the market, it is important to understand the efficacy of such products to protect yourself and others in various settings.

With Dr Clo becoming a globally trusted brand and being a household name in South Korea, the gel-based disinfectant stick is now available in Malaysia through its exclusive importer and distributor Clotech Sdn Bhd.

Known as an "all-round" disinfectant stick, this is the sixth variant of the product that provides 24-hour disinfection, and is easy to use and convenient. It is the world's first and only gel-based chlorine dioxide (ClO₂) disinfectant stick from South Korea.

Invented, manufactured and directly imported from South Korea's NON Corporation, Dr Clo disinfectant stick has been proven to eliminate 99.9% of airborne and surface-dwelling viruses and bacteria in a room-sized range, without causing any harm to the users.

This is achieved by its breakthrough, globally patented nanotechnology filter and gel-based ClO₂ formula which, upon activation by bending the stick, combine to emit the antibacterial and antiviral ClO₂ at a safe and stable rate.

Clotech chief operating officer Jimmy Tan



The Dr Clo product range for every nook and corner at home and workplaces.

said that Dr Clo's latest variant, which could withstand temperatures up to 80°C, would be available at about 800 Malaysian outlets this month.

"Our role is to promote Dr Clo to become a healthy lifestyle device that can keep our environment safe.

"We brought in five variants of Dr Clo in July last year, and started marketing in

September. The response was overwhelming," he said.

There are variants of Dr Clo designed for the refrigerator, pets, bathroom, households and automobile, and could be used for certain temperatures.

"This is the only disinfectant stick that is portable and environment-friendly. It is odourless," said Tan.

"Dr Clo products are for disinfecting, sterilising, deodorising and removing harmful gas," he said at a press event at Wisma Huazong in Seri Kembangan, Selangor.

Tan shared that a surface experiment conducted by Konkuk University in Seoul had shown that Dr Clo is effective against the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19.

"The experiment was followed up by a test by Seoul National University against airborne Covid-19 and Influenza A within an environmental testing chamber, and Dr Clo was proven yet again to be effective," he pointed out.

He said Clotech would educate the public

through its website and social media, and hold regular programmes, including with retailers, on the proper usage, safety and efficacy of Dr Clo.

Clotech director Ng Lyp Hau said that Dr Clo was founded by NON Corporation in 2015, and is now available in over 30 countries including South Korea, Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, France, Germany and the United Arab Emirates.

Ng said Dr Clo disinfectant sticks, priced at RM63 each, works 24/7 for up to 50 days upon activation.

Clotech exclusive distributor Eric Choong added: "All six variants of Dr Clo are fully supported by the Korean government because it is a technology breakthrough product. The manufacturer of Dr Clo was also awarded for its design in South Korea."

At the product launch event in Seri Kembangan, Choong said that Dr Clo has 18 safety and efficacy certificates (www.drcl.com.my/certificates) from agencies and regulators across the globe, proving its ability to eliminate 99.9% of viruses and bacteria in a room without causing any harm to the people.

Meanwhile, dP Fluiteq Sdn Bhd managing director Dev Menon said: "The World Health Organization (WHO) only recommends 0.1ppm of ClO₂ exposure for eight hours time awaited average.

"The new product, including all five variants of Dr Clo, emits 0.01ppm to 0.02ppm (10 times lower than industry safety guideline), which is safe for everybody, including pets," Dev added.

Chemist Peter Chang said that the people should not have any misconception of the efficacy of the product, and that its usage can be adjusted according to the room's space.

"If the room is ventilated, the concentration of gas emission will be reduced, which is much safer," he added.

■ For enquiries, contact Eric Choong at 012-2161 481 or email clomartsb@gmail.com.

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Lifesavers at old age

LIKE fine wine, we get better with age. Unfortunately for many, this saying cannot be applied to health.

As years are added to your life, health becomes a big concern as the body's systems start to slow down and grow vulnerable to diseases.

Diet becomes a huge game changer and many foods we indulged in during our younger years can no longer be enjoyed because of common health complications. Health checks start to become routine and the doctor's office familiar.

While cholesterol and blood pressure tests are often carried out, the elderly should be extra vigilant for diseases that are not easily detected. Here are some tests that can be taken to stay on guard and prevent life-threatening diseases.

Skin checks

Moles and random skin growths are not a rare sight. Although mostly harmless, keeping an eye on them is vital as the clock ticks on.

What may have been a regular mole during your spirited teenage years could develop into something more sinister – a rare form of skin cancer called malignant melanoma.

This skin cancer is linked to the accumulation of sun exposure over a lifetime, so the disease is more likely to hit in old age. With Malaysia's year-round tropical sun, this certainly sets some alarms ringing.

Spotting new moles developing or noticing any changes in colour, size or shape of existing ones are common symptoms of melanoma and should be immediately followed by a visit to the doctor.

Eye tests

This may be an obvious one, but many

with no history of wearing glasses use never visit the optometrist.

Undergoing a yearly eye test can help detect early signs of medical conditions such as diabetes and glaucoma, which the elderly are more susceptible to.

Ageing can also result in reduced eyesight. Those who previously did not wear glasses could benefit from having a pair prescribed.

Breast cancer screening

This one is for all the fine mothers and grandmothers. Having a mammogram taken could detect breast cancer in its early stages, making it easier to deal with.

As it is the most common cancer among women, a yearly mammogram is recommended. Self-checking for lumps or tangible inconsistencies between screenings is also wise.

Cervical screening

For women, this smear test detects abnormalities in the cervix that could lead to cervical cancer. However, since cervical cancer is rarely diagnosed through this test, it needs only be done every few years.

Bowel cancer screening

Eight out of ten people who get bowel cancer are above the age of 60, with men being at a greater risk.

As the early symptoms of bowel cancer are difficult to detect, noticing that something is wrong could already be too late. Bowel cancer screening detects potential problems and symptoms and should be done every one to two years.

Age brings wisdom. Be wise and schedule these appointments today.

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THERE is a deadly infection that targets the brain and surrounding tissues (meninges) of young children and sometimes adults.

It is a nightmare scenario that brings chills to every paediatrician because it strikes rapidly with little warning and if unrecognised and not treated urgently, will cause death within hours or permanent brain damage.

This disease is called meningitis. It is unforgiving and strikes especially young infants and preschool children, teenagers and sometimes in large groups living in very close quarters.

Meningitis is usually caused by an infective agent such as bacteria, viruses, fungi and even toxic chemicals but the worst and deadliest cause is the bacteria named *Neisseria meningitidis*, also known as meningococcus.

Meningococcus can live undetected in our nose and throat for many years without detection, but sometimes it can suddenly become invasive, spreading rapidly to vulnerable people such as young infants.

As it invades the unfortunate victim from the nose and throat cavities, it enters the outer membranes covering the brain (meninges) where it causes severe infection and swelling to the fluid and tissues surrounding the brain (meningitis).

The bacteria does not stop there. It can invade the brain itself causing the brain to swell (encephalitis) or spread through the blood stream (septicaemia) to the whole body, causing the body to be poisoned by its toxins and leading to multiple organ failure. Sometimes, it spreads through the body with septicaemia before it reaches the brain.

Meningitis and its threat to brain damage and life



Dr Salehuddin Samsudin.

“Patients may develop dark red or purple rashes that do not disappear with pressure (glass test) and cold, pale or mottled skin.”

Symptoms in the early phase resemble a mild nasal congestion or sore throat, but once invasive, it may cause headaches, neck stiffness, light sensitivity (photophobia), drowsiness and fever. Any one of these symptoms could be a sign of meningitis and fever is not always present in the early stages.

In meningococcal septicaemia, patients may develop dark red or purple rashes that do not disappear with pressure (glass test) and cold, pale or mottled skin.

At this point, their heart rate would be very high and their blood pressure could drop very quickly.

This is a state of medical emergency. Do not delay taking the patient to the nearest hospital emergency department for urgent medical treatment.

Do not waste any time as every minute counts.

Invasive meningococcal disease must be stopped immediately with intravenous antibiotics that can penetrate through the blood brain barrier before it's too late.

The septicaemia must be treated aggressively with intravenous fluids and other medications with close observation in the intensive care unit.

To confirm a diagnosis of

meningitis, a few drops of fluid (cerebrospinal fluid or CSF) is taken from the back of the lower spine and collected through a safe and minimally invasive procedure called lumbar puncture.

Antibiotics treatment should not be delayed and is best given even before the lumbar puncture is performed, especially if the patient is very unstable.

The fluid is usually clear and colourless but may become cloudy and thicker due to the presence of meningitis.

A normal blood test does not exclude the presence of a serious infection like meningitis especially in the early stages.

Meningococcal meningitis should be treated urgently with intravenous antibiotics such as Ceftriaxone or Cefotaxime as soon as possible for as long as two to three weeks.

Some survivors have long-term complications such as permanent brain damage or fluid accumulation in the brain (hydrocephalus) which may need surgical treatment.

Fortunately, there is hope. An effective vaccination programme introduced in the UK in 1999 (Meningococcal C) led to a dramatically reduced incidence of invasive meningococcal disease within a year.

The UK, EU, United States and

many other countries have also introduced Meningococcal B vaccine in their infant vaccination programmes, as well as Meningococcal ACWY in their teenage population with great success.

The best way to prevent meningitis in Malaysia is also by vaccination. The meningitis vaccine is available as an additional vaccine which can be given to infants as early as six weeks old and even in adults. There are four different serotypes – ACW and Y which are covered by the meningococcal vaccine.

This vaccine is also compulsory for all Muslims who are performing the haj or umrah as well as students planning to study in certain countries like the United States.

In summary, invasive meningococcal disease is a deadly disease that would kill in hours without prompt medical treatment. As a responsible parent, I urge you to speak to your child's paediatrician about taking the meningococcal vaccine as early as possible. – **By Dr Salehuddin Samsudin, consultant paediatrician and neonatologist at ParkCity Medical Centre, Kuala Lumpur.**

■ For more information, call 03-5639 1212.



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Parenting tips for breast milk storage

BREAST milk is the best food for newborns and babies. The Health Ministry, World Health Organization and UNICEF have strongly recommended that babies should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life. Complementary foods should be introduced at the age of six months while continuing breastfeeding until two years of age.

Expressing breast milk for storage

For most mothers and babies, direct breastfeeding is the easiest and most efficient way. Expressing and storing breast milk provides flexibility and conveniences for parents, especially when mothers are out of the house, away, or mothers' breasts are too full and uncomfortable.

Mothers who are returning to work can try to get into the routine of expressing and storing breast milk too. This will keep their breast milk supply up and their baby can continue to get the benefits of breast milk.

Mothers can express breast milk by hand or with a breast milk pump. Different pumps suit different women, so ask for professional advice before you buy it. Parents must always make sure that the container or pump has been sterilised before using it.

Container for breast milk storage

Parents should choose a safe,



Dr Lai Eng Meng.

clean, sterilised and suitable container to store breast milk. It can be made of glass or plastic that can be kept covered or sealed. If a bag is used, avoid using ordinary bags, use only bags specially designed for breast milk storage.

Each container should be labelled with the date and time. Some babies have sensitive tummies, thus avoid combining breast milk in the same container from different pumping sessions.

Wash your hands before expressing and handling breast milk for storage. Keeping everything as clean as possible will make it less likely that bacteria will grow in your stored milk.

If you are not sure of the temperature of your refrigerator, it is best to use the breast milk within three days. Otherwise, it should be stored in the freezer.

“There is no evidence that babies need their milk heated, but most babies may prefer milk at body temperature.”

Avoid freezing breast milk that has been kept in the refrigerator for more than a day. If parents want to freeze the breast milk, do it as soon after expressing as possible.

Breast milk containers should be placed in the coldest part of the refrigerator or freezer, best at the back away from the fridge door. Most refrigerators do not keep a constant temperature, especially when the fridge doors are opened frequently. Items stored towards the front and closer to the fridge door are more susceptible to changing temperature when the fridge door is opened.

Thawing or warming of breast milk

Nutritionally, it makes no difference and there is no evidence that babies need their milk heated, but most babies may prefer milk at

Method and duration of breast milk storage	
Method of storage	Duration of storage
Room temperature (25 - 37 degrees Celsius)	4 hours
Air-conditioned room (15 - 24 degrees Celsius)	8 hours
Cooler box with ice packs (< 15 degrees Celsius)	24 hours
Refrigerator (2 - 4 degrees Celsius)	5 days
Freezer compartment inside a one-door fridge	2 weeks
Freezer part of a two-door fridge	3 months
Separate deep freezer	6 months
Frozen breast milk that is thawed in refrigerator	24 hours (don't refreeze)
*Breast milk should not be stored above 37°C.	

body temperature. This can be tested by shaking out a few drops of milk onto your wrist to test the temperature before feeding the baby.

Frozen breast milk can be safely defrosted and warmed by placing the sealed bottle or bag in a bowl of lukewarm water, and used within an hour. It may be thawed slowly in the refrigerator; however, it must be used within 24 hours and not refrozen.

Breast milk should not be heated on the stove or in a microwave oven. This will destroy antibodies and nutrients, and it can burn the baby's mouth.

Breast milk cannot be stored or refrozen once it has been warmed, so parents should only warm the

amount of breast milk for one feeding according to the baby's needs and appetite.

The fat component of breast milk may separate out in small globules. Parents can shake it gently to mix the fat layer with the rest of the breast milk. Once your baby has drunk the breast milk, anything left over an hour should be thrown away.

Have fun breastfeeding your baby. Discuss with your doctors and get their professional advice for any further information. – **By Dr Lai Eng Meng, consultant paediatrician at ParkCity Medical Centre, Kuala Lumpur**

■ For more information, call 03-5639 1212.

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