Preparing for an ageing population

Fact sheet: August 2019

Key facts

The population of the WHO Western Pacific Region is ageing rapidly.

More than 290 million people aged 60 years and older live in the Region, and older people make up the fastest growing age group.

Within the Region, 80% of older people live in middle-income countries.

To ensure health and well-being for older persons, a transformation of society overall – not just health systems – will be essential.

Across the world and the WHO Western Pacific Region, the population of adults over 60 years is the fastest growing age group. Meeting older people’s needs requires rapid changes to many areas of society.

While populations differ across the Region, all countries will face the challenges of an ageing population. These challenges will be most significant in developing economies, where rates of ageing are fastest. Early preparation is critical.

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are the biggest health issue for adults over 60. Stronger efforts are needed to prevent NCDs, so that older people can benefit from improved quality of life and can continue contributing to society.

Age-friendly environments are also very important for ensuring older people can enjoy good health and participate actively in society. Creating such environments requires coordinated action across multiple sectors, including transportation, housing, labour, social protection, information and communications.

Through early planning, countries will build greater community engagement for an ageing society. Action is needed now to ensure that everyone is able to live as healthily as possible while growing older.

WHO response

Based on consultations with Member States, WHO has identified ageing as a top priority for the Organization’s work in the Region over the next five years.

WHO established the Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities to foster the exchange of experience and mutual learning across communities worldwide. To date, cities and communities from five nations in the Region have joined the network.

Member States adopted the WHO Regional Framework for Action on Ageing and Health in the Western Pacific (2014–2019) and endorsed the Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health. Since then, WHO has supported Member States to gather more evidence and work towards stronger policies on ageing.

WHO gathers the latest evidence on ageing and NCDs, engages in policy dialogue, conducts training and provides technical support to countries.

WHO will continue to support countries to plan well ahead for the ageing of their populations.