



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பினாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

Websites:
www.consumer.org.my

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Press Statement

23 July 2019

Boba milk tea: A bubble of health concerns

The Consumers' Association of Penang cautions the people to refrain from drinking the boba milk tea which is also known as bubble tea or boba juice for health reasons.

A study conducted by the Temasek Polytechnic in Singapore found that a 500ml cup of brown sugar boba milk tea can contain about 92g of sugar. This is about three times as much sugar as in a 320ml can of Coca Cola.

Forty-three grammes of sugar was the least that the study found and that is 1.7 times more sugar than the regular teh Tarik which is already considered unhealthy. Sugar is not only the concern, there are sweeteners and artificial flavours that rob the drink of nutritional value. The 'tapioca pearls' are high in carbohydrates but low in nutrients such as fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals.

The total daily amount of added sugar recommended by the World Health Organization and the Malaysian Dietary Guidelines is a quantity not exceeding 50g. This means that drinking a cup of boba tea can be anywhere between a maximum to almost twice the amount of sugar you needed for the entire day, excluding the fact of your additional intake of sugar found in food and drinks.

We often forget that our body can breakdown complex carbohydrates into simple sugars. Rice and white flour are in the list, and not forgetting the boba pearls that contain tapioca starch.

In other words, the high sugar level in the boba tea is bad news to health, increasing heart disease risk factors such as obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, and inflammation. A number of cancers are also influenced by diet, weight change, and body fat distribution together with physical activities.

What concerns us most is that Malaysia has the obesity prevalent rate of 13.3% while overweight was at 38.5% and the conditions had cost the country between RM4.26 billion and RM8.53 billion in healthcare cost in 2016. It was estimated that one in every five Malaysian adults would be obese in 2025.

If the boba milk tea fad continues, the Taiwanese innovation of the 1980s would have a global market value of approximately USD11,000 million (RM45,208 million) by 2025 from USD5,370 million (RM22,070 million) as of 2018.

We urge consumers to stop drinking the boba tea to stay healthy because it is cheaper to cut down on sugar intake than to treat for diseases related to it. Some studies have shown that sugar is as addictive as cocaine and the symptoms of sugar craving include irritability, emotional lows, fatigue, anxiety and other conditions.

Mohideen Abdul Kader
Acting President
Consumers Association of Penang