



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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

Websites:
www.consumer.org.my

Press Statement

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Promote Healthy Eating to Combat Diabetes

Diabetes has become a condition of epidemic proportion worldwide prompting the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) to declare November 14 as World Diabetes Day.

The theme for World Diabetes Day 2018 and 2019 is The Family and Diabetes.

Diabetes spares no group — attacking men, women, children, the elderly and people from every racial background.

In spite of many campaigns, Malaysia has the highest rate of diabetes in Asia and one of the highest in the world. This is not surprising as Malaysia has the most number of overweight and obese people in Asia. 54% of the adult population is either obese or overweight, compared to only 24.1% 10 years ago. Obesity is a main cause of diabetes. According to the International Diabetes Federation, there were nearly 3.5 million cases in Malaysia in 2017 and the prevalence rate of diabetes in adults here is 16.9%.

The high sugar intake (which also causes obesity) among Malaysians is one of the contributing factors to the high incidence of diabetes. We consume 21 teaspoons of sugar a day and are one of the highest sugar users in the world.

Diabetes is dangerous as it can affect the patient's vital organs like the heart, kidneys, nerves and eyes. If diabetes is not well controlled, it can lead to many complications. High blood glucose levels over a period of time, coupled with the features of metabolic syndrome, cause damage to the blood vessels, which in turn, result in damage to many organs.

Diabetes causes severe damage to our organs. For example it affects the limbs (amputation), eyesight (blindness), kidney (failure), heart (failure) and nerve (damage) of its sufferers.

Somewhere in the world every:

- 10 seconds two people develop diabetes
- 10 seconds 1 person dies of diabetes
- 30 seconds a limb is lost to diabetes

All families are potentially affected by diabetes and so awareness of the signs, symptoms and risk factors of diabetes are vital to help detect it early.

Diabetes is expensive to treat and can drive families into poverty. Managing diabetes effectively requires daily treatment, regular monitoring, a healthy diet and lifestyle changes. In many countries,

the cost of insulin injection and daily monitoring alone can consume a large percentage of the income of diabetics.

According to the survey, Type 2 diabetes is more prevalent in people aged between 18 and 29, however there are also children below 10 years inflicted by the disease.

Doctors found that the young diabetics are usually obese, and their condition could be traced to eating too much unhealthy food and having a sedentary lifestyle.

A senior consultant pediatrician said that the children's bad dietary habits of eating burgers, nuggets, fried chicken, fries and carbonated drinks are contributing factors to obesity. Long hours of homework, watching television and playing computer games added to the problem.

It is time to find a more holistic approach to solve the problem of obesity among the population, and the answer lies in the kitchen of every home. Nothing can match the food cooked at home, as one can make a healthy choice of the ingredients.

Diabetes in Malaysia is expected to climb at an increased rate due to our unhealthy lifestyle and not eating a healthy balanced diet.

The alarming increase in Malaysia's prevalence of diabetes needs strong measures by the Government to stem this epidemic.

The Consumers Association of Penang urges the Ministry of Health to:

- Educate Malaysians on the dangers of obesity and diabetes
- Have the traffic light system of food labels to indicate the unhealthy levels of sugar, salt and fats
- Impose tax on white sugar and junk food
- Provide adequate recreational amenities in all residential areas
- Stop issuing 24 hours licenses to eating outlets
- Stop night shifts in factories
- Ban vending machines in schools, hospitals and other public places
- Mandate clear labelling on fat content of all foods, including fast foods
- Run education campaign for parents and children on the dangers of obesity and diabetes
- Stop entertainment outlets from operating after midnight

The Ministry of Education should introduce cooking classes in schools irrespective of gender. Students should be thought to cook so that they will have the skills to feed their family healthy meals.

Unless drastic actions are taken by the government to curb obesity and diabetes, Malaysia may end up becoming a nation of diabetics.

S.M. MOHAMED IDRIS

Presiden

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