

'Non-communicable diseases account for 73% of deaths'

➤ Heart attacks, strokes the biggest contributors

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SUBANG JAYA: Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), or “silent killers”, account for an estimated 73% of deaths in Malaysia, said Health Minister Datuk Seri Dzulkefly Ahmad.

Cardiovascular diseases, including heart attacks and strokes, are the biggest contributors of NCDs.

“One of the main risk factors for several NCDs is obesity and it has become a global health issue,” said Dzulkefly during the launch of the “Kurangkan Gula. Hidup Sihat” (Cut Sugar. Live Healthy) campaign at a hypermarket yesterday.

Recent statistics revealed that Malaysians were the most obese in Southeast Asia, with nearly one in two being overweight or obese. One of the main contributing factors is excessive sugar intake.

A survey by the Institute of Public Health and Health Ministry showed an increase in the average daily intake of sugar among Malaysian youths, from seven teaspoons in 2012 to 10 teaspoons in 2017, which is a cause for concern as the recommended maximum daily sugar intake for adults is 10 teaspoons.

“From a government perspective, we are committed to instituting the right regulatory



Dzulkefly visiting a dialysis centre in Petaling Jaya yesterday.
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interventions to ensure we try to combat this (rise of NCDs),” he said.

One of the efforts undertaken by the government was introducing sugar tax for sweetened beverages on July 1.

“So far, enforcement of the tax has been effective, soft drink companies have reduced sugar content in their products to 4.6g per 100ml, which is below 5g per 100ml (threshold for excise duty) to avoid duty.”

He also said the bubble tea phenomenon among Malaysians could contribute to higher sugar intake, well in excess of the regular intake.

“Bubble tea (brown sugar milk tea) contains 20 teaspoons of sugar per 100ml, when the recommended daily intake is eight teaspoons.”

He urged food and drink manufacturers to be responsible and practise self-regulation when selling sugary products.

Meanwhile, Dzulkefly also commended a corporate social responsibility effort aimed at helping chronic kidney disease patients from the low-income group.

The National Kidney Foundation (NKF), in collaboration with Roche Malaysia, is providing erythropoietin-stimulating agents, medications that stimulate bone marrow to produce red blood cells, at an affordable price through an innovative co-payment model.

Non-NKF patients from government hospitals, private and NGO dialysis centres can sign up for the treatment in Klang Valley starting Aug 1 and nationwide from Jan 1 next year.