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Malaysia

## Living with Diabetes During the Pandemic

🕒 2 days ago Amanda Chew



As we stepped into 2021 with hopes for a better year, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to ravage the world with over 67 million cases globally and more than 1.5 million deaths. This alarming situation has added anxiety for many who are already facing financial hardships and underlying health issues.

When taken together with the overall diabetes landscape, these numbers are even more troubling. This is down to the simple fact that diabetics are at significantly higher risk of contracting and succumbing to COVID-19.

Globally, approximately 463 million adults or one in 11 people are living with diabetes according to the International Diabetes Federation. Here in Malaysia, those numbers are even more severe and nerve-racking with 3.9 million adult diabetics with an incidence rate of 18.3% according to the National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2019. This means that almost one in five Malaysians have a significantly higher risk of contracting COVID-19.



Dr. Raymond Tso, Medical Director, AVP, Sun Life

Dr. Raymond Tso, Medical Director, AVP, Sun Life stressed this concern, "Diabetics are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Comorbidities such as hypertension and cardiovascular disease, obesity, a pro-inflammatory and pro-coagulative state all contribute to heightened risk."

Dr. Raymond believes the most pressing issue when it comes to diabetics and COVID-19 is that many people simply do not know that they have diabetes. "One in two adults with diabetes go undiagnosed. This means that they may be even more vulnerable to COVID-19 without even knowing it."

He recommends that those in high-risk groups be especially vigilant about diabetes symptoms such as weight loss, lethargy, excessive thirst or hunger and frequent or excessive urination.

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"The best way to diagnose is to have regular health checks, including fasting sugar and glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) tests," Dr. Raymond added.

When it comes to precautions during the pandemic, Dr. Raymond suggests that diabetics maintain good social distancing, wear a mask and ensure good hand hygiene. They should also look out for potential COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, dry cough, shortness of breath as well as abnormal glucose and ketone reading.

"Diabetics should avoid visits to hospitals during the pandemic. As such, they need to ensure they have good supply of medication and seek help from clinics or other smaller medical facilities where possible.

Your risk of getting serious complications from COVID-19 is likely to be lower if your diabetes is well-managed. Control your "ABC" – A1c, blood pressure and cholesterol. Maintaining your A1c levels below 7% can help reduce the risks."

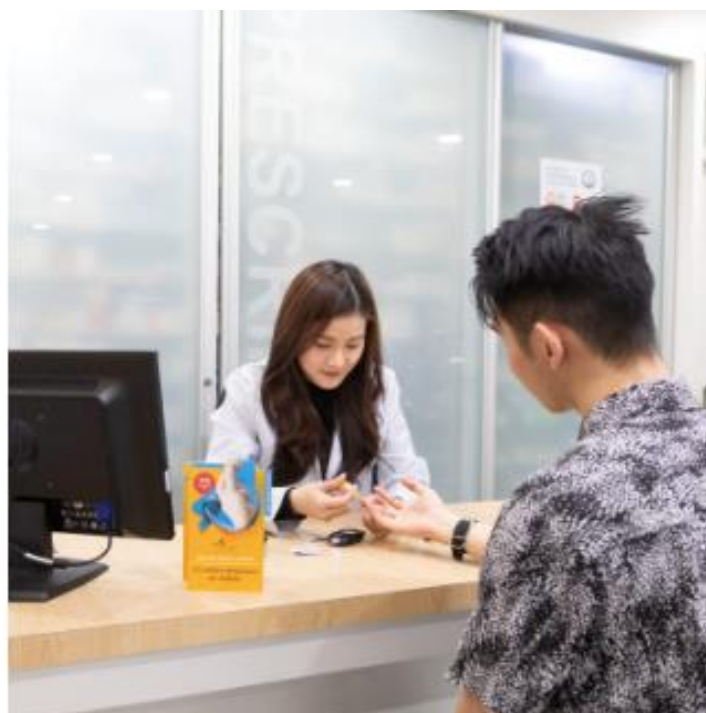
To tackle this issue at its roots as part of its business purpose to help Malaysians to live healthier lives, Sun Life Malaysia has long been an advocate in the fight against diabetes in Malaysia with numerous initiatives over the past few years.



Raymond Lew, CEO and President/Country Head of Sun Life Malaysia

Commenting on Sun Life Malaysia's commitment, Raymond Lew, CEO and President/Country Head of Sun Life Malaysia said, "We are firmly invested in the wellness and protection of Malaysians where we supported them through every life stage with our comprehensive range of product solutions. Even during the challenging year of 2020, we continued to extend a helping hand to those at risk and living with diabetes."

These efforts include the Brighter Health Screening Programme that provided blood glucose screenings to 12,949 Malaysians to raise awareness on the importance of early diabetes detection.



One of the 12,949 finger-prick blood glucose tests being conducted at a pharmacy branch during the Brighter Health Screening Programme.

Sun Life Malaysia also donated a total of RM110,000 to support the vulnerable communities including diabetics through the provision of essential daily supplies during the challenging pandemic period. In conjunction with World Diabetes Day, 1,000 nutrition care packs were distributed to the underprivileged and diabetics to help them lower the disease risk with proper nutrition.



Sun Life Malaysia's donation of nutrition care packs to National Diabetes Institute (NADI) to aid the livelihoods of those affected by diabetes.

Raymond continued, "While this pandemic has been tough, there are silver linings too. As people have been spending more time staying in and cooking at home, this is a good opportunity for diabetics to maintain a healthy diet. I also urge them to undertake regular cardiovascular exercises for three to five times a week for at least 30 minutes each time."

Sun Life Malaysia commits to continue to extend a helping hand and make a difference in the lives of those impacted similar to how it has been safeguarding the long-term well-being of Malaysians throughout the years.

To learn more about Sun Life Malaysia, visit [sunlifemalaysia.com](http://sunlifemalaysia.com) or follow its [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages for the latest updates.