

1 in 5 Young Malaysians Face Higher Diabetes Risk While Many Remain Unprepared for Treatment Costs

- **Rising Diabetes Risk for Younger Malaysians:** Nearly 1 in 5 younger Malaysians (26%) aged 18 to 40 was detected with prediabetes or diabetes.
- **Financial Gap:** 71% of those at-risk plan to rely on personal savings or family support for treatment, with only 18% covered by insurance or takaful.
- **Sugar Intake and Risk:** Over 50% consumed sweetened beverages three or more times per week; 67% of them had elevated blood sugar.
- **Inactive Lifestyle:** Over 70% of those with high blood sugar exercised less than twice a week, while 65% of daily exercisers maintained normal blood sugar.

Kuala Lumpur – 6 January 2026 – Sun Life Malaysia, a life insurance and takaful company, today released the findings from its 2025 Blood Glucose Screening Programme, conducted from August to October 2025. The nationwide screenings of 5,373 participants found that 1 in 3 Malaysians (32.1%) recorded elevated blood sugar, indicating prediabetes or diabetes, while nearly 1 in 5 (19.8%) with elevated blood sugar were aged 18 to 40 driven by higher sugar intake and low physical activity.

Mr Ho Teck Seng, President and Country Head of Sun Life Malaysia, said, “Diabetes is hitting Malaysians at a younger age, and our programme’s findings show why early detection matters. The trend links to lifestyle habits such as sweetened drinks and physical inactivity. Sun Life Malaysia want to change this through education and regular screenings. We believe early detection saves lives, and we will keep driving preventive action for a healthier, more sustainable Malaysia.”

Diabetes Striking Younger Malaysians

Nearly one in three participants (32.1%) showed elevated blood glucose levels (indicating prediabetes or diabetes), similar to the 2024 findings of 30% and consistent with Malaysia’s growing national diabetes prevalence trend.

However, while elevated blood glucose remains more prevalent among older adults (approximately 74% of those with elevated blood sugar were aged above 41 years), the data reveals a worrying upward trend among younger populations.

1 in 5 Young Malaysians at Risk: Approximately 26% of participants with elevated blood glucose levels were aged between 18 and 40 years. Within this specific younger age group, 19.8% recorded elevated blood glucose levels, showing an upward trend from the previous year. This alignment with the NHMS report¹ reinforces that diabetes and prediabetes are increasingly common among younger adults and are no longer confined to older age groups. These results highlight the need for targeted screening and prevention efforts among younger age groups.

Lifestyle Habits Fueling the Rise

The pre-screening survey and subsequent blood glucose results strongly linked common lifestyle habits to metabolic risk:

Sweetened Beverages: Over half (55.8%) of all participants consume sweetened beverages three or more times per week. Among daily consumers of sweetened beverages, more than 65% reported having elevated blood sugar levels. Conversely, over 70% of those who consume sweetened beverages less than twice per week or none at all maintained normal blood sugar levels.

Physical Inactivity: Low physical activity is common among those with elevated blood sugar. Around three in four respondents (76.01%) reported doing physical activity less than three times a week. Among participants with elevated blood sugar, more than 7 in 10 (71.8%) reported no physical activity or only 1-2 times a week. In contrast, daily physical activity is associated with a higher likelihood of maintaining normal blood sugar levels, as nearly 2 in 3 (64.8%) of daily exercisers reported normal blood sugar levels.

Most Malaysians are financially unprepared for Diabetes Care

The screening report also highlighted a significant gap in financial preparedness for chronic disease management.

Among participants identified with elevated blood sugar, a significant majority (71%) anticipate managing the cost of potential diabetes treatment primarily through their personal savings (56%) or family support (15%). Only 18% of these individuals would rely on their existing health insurance or takaful plan. This pattern aligns with broader Malaysian trends where out-of-pocket spending dominates chronic disease management.

Sun Life Malaysia remains committed to helping Malaysians take proactive steps toward better health. Through initiatives like the Blood Glucose Screening Programme, the company aims to raise awareness, promote healthy habits, and provide tools and guidance for early detection and prevention, empowering individuals and families to manage their health with confidence.

The Sun Life Malaysia Blood Glucose Screening Programme 2025 offered participants free blood glucose screening at Health Lane Family Pharmacy locations across Malaysia, complimentary eye consultations at MOG Eyewear, to address the link between diabetes and vision health, a free 3-month enrollment in the BookDoc Health Coaching Programme, providing personalised dietitian guidance and digital health tracking and a special discount of RM10 off the Accu-Chek Guide Me blood glucose monitoring kit, courtesy of Roche Malaysia.

PRESS ASSETS

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As a life insurance and Family Takaful provider, Sun Life Malaysia offers a comprehensive range of products and services to Malaysians across the country and is focused on helping Clients achieve lifetime financial security and live healthier lives. Sun Life Malaysia distributes its products through a range of distribution channels including bancassurance and bancatakaful, agency force, direct marketing and telemarketing, corporate and government business and e-distribution.

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