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Diabetes becoming more common in younger Malaysians

FINDINGS from the 2025 Blood Glucose Screening Programme by Sun Life Malaysia, shows that one in three Malaysians have elevated blood sugar readings, indicating diabetes or prediabetes.

The survey, conducted from August to October 2025 involved nationwide screenings of 5,373 participants. Nearly one in five individuals with elevated blood sugar were also aged 18 to 40.

"Diabetes is hitting Malaysians at a younger age. The trend is linked to lifestyle habits such as sweetened drinks and physical inactivity. We believe early detection saves lives," says Sun Life Malaysia president and country head Ho Teck Seng.



Diabetes and prediabetes are increasingly common among younger adults and are no longer confined to older age groups. The results of the survey highlight the need for targeted screening and prevention efforts among younger age groups.

LIFESTYLE HABITS FUELLING THE RISE

The pre-screening survey and subsequent blood glucose results strongly linked common lifestyle habits to metabolic risk. Over half (55.8 per cent) of all participants consumed sweetened beverages three or more times per week.

Among daily consumers of sweet-



The trend is linked to lifestyle habits such as sweetened drinks and physical inactivity, says Sun Life Malaysia president and country head Ho Teck Seng. PICTURE CREDIT: SUN LIFE MALAYSIA

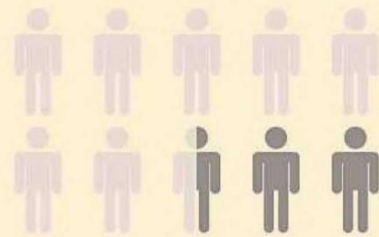
ened beverages, more than 65 per cent reported having elevated blood sugar levels. Conversely, over 70 per cent of those who consumed sweetened beverages less than twice per week or none at all maintained normal blood sugar levels.

Low physical activity was also common among those with elevated blood sugar. Around three in four respondents reported doing physical activity less than three times a week. Among participants with elevated blood sugar, more than seven in 10 reported no physical activity or only one to two times a week.



1 in 5 Young Malaysians Show Signs of Diabetes*

*Sun Life Malaysia 2025 Blood Glucose Screening Programme



26% of adults aged 18–40 had prediabetic-level blood sugar

Nearly one in five individuals with elevated blood sugar were aged 18 to 40. PICTURE CREDIT: SUN LIFE MALAYSIA

In contrast, daily physical activity was associated with a higher likelihood of maintaining normal blood sugar levels, as nearly two in three daily exercisers reported normal blood sugar levels.

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 per cent) anticipate managing the cost of potential diabetes treatment primarily through their personal savings or family support.

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