

#BreakTheHeartAche: Early screening is the key to heart disease prevention

Our heart functions as the engine in our body as this organ pumps relentlessly from the day that we are born and doesn't stop beating even when we are asleep. This complex network is truly a marvellous wonder.

However, the prevalence of heart disease in Malaysia is ever increasing. What used to be a disease of the elderly is now seen much earlier. According to the **Department of Statistics of Malaysia 2021**, ischemic heart diseases (heart problems caused by narrowed heart arteries) remains as the principal causes of death, with 17 percent of the 109,155 medically certified deaths in 2020.

Some symptoms don't even happen in your chest and it's not always easy to tell what's going on. That's especially true if you are 60 and older, overweight, have diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure. The more risk factors you have, the more likely you are to have heart-related problems.

#BreakTheHeartAche

#BreakTheHeartAche is a public education campaign that focuses on driving awareness on heart diseases in Malaysia. Jointly organised by Cardiac Vascular Sentral Kuala Lumpur (CVSKL) and Viatrix Malaysia, this campaign highlights the importance to allow early heart early detection of heart problems if any and seek relevant treatment to the general public.

According to Host, Podcaster and Fitness Entrepreneur Maggy Wang who is also the campaign ambassador , #BreakTheHeartAche is a campaign that predominantly highlights the issue of heart disease, such as hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol.

"Looking healthy and being healthy are not the same thing as heart disease can affect ANYONE. For instance, if we take a look at today's lifestyle, the majority of us prefer to consume a lot of processed food and fast food that are readily available. Consuming too much of this would increase your saturated fat intake, which causes a higher risk of heart attack, cholesterol, stroke and many other complication"

How much do you really know about your heart's health?

It's easy to be fooled by misconceptions. After all, heart disease only happens to elderly people, right?

The reality is that heart disease can affect people of any age, even those who eat right. Some people have the perception that if my body looks fit or if I exercise everyday, I would not be facing heart issues. We have to take note that relying on false assumptions can be dangerous to your heart.

"This is the reason why I have been an advocate for regular health check-ups and the importance of early detection and screening. Our goal is to create as much awareness as possible on the importance of early screenings for better treatment and diagnosis," she explained.

According to Dr Fazir, cardiovascular disease (heart disease) refers to a group of diseases that affect the heart and blood vessels of your body. A person may be symptomatic with chest discomfort or shortness of breath, however some patients may not present with any symptoms at all.

Several risk factors, such as diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol or family history and lifestyle can increase your risk for heart disease and heart attack. The more time that passes without treatment, to restore blood flow, the greater the risk of damage to the heart muscle.

Signs of an individual having heart problems

Dr Fazir pointed out that heart disease symptoms can vary depending on the cause. Some of the symptoms includes :

1. Left sided / central Chest pain.
2. Sweating.
3. Lightheadedness.
4. Shortness of breath
5. Back pain
6. Left arm pain and occasional radiates to the jaw

How is cardiovascular disease diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will perform a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms, personal health and family health history. They may also order tests to help diagnose cardiovascular disease, as appropriate.

Dr Fazir further explained that there are some common tests to diagnose cardiovascular disease which include:

1. Blood test to assess your baseline blood readings such as measuring your cholesterol sugar and kidney levels.
2. Electrocardiogram (ECG) records the electrical activity in your heart.
3. Echocardiogram - Ultrasound (something like a baby scan) which uses sound waves to visualise your heart structure
4. Exercise stress test / stress echocardiogram
5. Advance tools to assess your heart in detail when it is required such as Cardiac CT and Cardiac MRI.
6. Coronary angiogram, when the patient has evidence of significant coronary artery disease or unstable symptoms

A heart screening test is useful to detect the most common cause of heart disease. Knowing about your condition early gives you the heads up for the need for lifestyle changes and medications if appropriate to reduce the risk of heart problems.

The campaign theme #BreakTheHeartAche was born to educate people on breaking the stigma of heart diseases and curb the severity of this illness.

How do Viatris support sustainable healthcare initiatives?

According to the Country Manager of Viatris Malaysia, Jeff Bote, all healthcare industries have a role to play in creating sustainable initiatives. At Viatris, they strive on 3 pillars which are Access, Leadership and Partnership.

Hence, through this partnership with CVSKL, #BreakTheHeartAche campaign will surely bring the message of the importance of early screening to the community. As we all know "Prevention is better than Cure!"

Collaborating together in the #BreakTheHeartAche campaign?

Untreated hypertension can lead to serious consequences such as heart attacks, strokes and other cardiovascular diseases. With the latest data from National Health Morbidity Survey 2019, it shows that 3 in 10 or 6.4 million people in Malaysia have hypertension. Out of this, half of them are unaware that they have the disease.

"This is why we see the need to educate on the importance of heart health among the community, especially in the younger peers. Through this collaboration, we believe it will enhance the public awareness on the danger of cardiovascular diseases and its complications. Most importantly, this campaign will encourage everyone to get early screenings and treatment," he further explained.

This is in line with Viatris mission of empowering people worldwide to live healthier at every stage of life.

Take charge of your body

When it comes to your body, remember you're in charge. If you've noticed any unusual symptoms, immediately speak to your doctor. Don't put it off or ignore it. It might not be related to heart disease – but if it is, finding it early can make a real difference!

Equipped with the latest and most advanced facilities, CVSKL is a dedicated centre of excellence for cardiovascular care. Visit <https://www.cvskl.com/> to make an appointment with CVSKL's team of experienced specialist doctors and cardiologists today.

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