

TOUCHPOINTS 2018 BUDGET



[Touchpoints 2018 Budget \[view link\]](#)

...the budget that has never been crafted so well, even during the last 22 years, or the past 60 years of our own nation, and marked in history, making this Budget **“THE MOTHER – OF ALL BUDGETS...”**.

YAB DATO' SRI MOHD NAJIB TUN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FINANCE

27 OCTOBER 2017

BUDGET 2018 HIGHLIGHTS by TheEdge, 27 October 2017

- **Najib: Malaysia has created 2.26 million jobs, representing 69% of the 3.3 million target by 2020**
- **Budget 2018 allocates a sum of RM280.25b, up from RM260.8b in 2017**
- **Per capita income expected to rise to RM42,777 in 2018, from RM40,713 now, says PM**
- **Federal government's revenue collection projected at RM239.86b in 2018**
- **Budget 2018 to see RM234.25 billion allocated for operating expenditure, RM46 billion for development expenditure**
- **Additional RM200m allocated to Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia in Budget 2018, raising fund size to RM2.7b**
- **Budget 2018 allocates RM6.5b to assist farmers, fishermen, smallholders and rubber tappers**
- **Budget 2018 allocates RM200m to SMEs for training programmes, grants and soft loans under the SME Corp**
- **Najib declares 2020 as Visit Malaysia Year with APEC, WCIT, CHOGM being held**
- **Najib: Works on ECRL to start by January 2018**
- **Budget 2018 allocates RM2b to SME Tourism Fund to provide soft loans to tour operators with interest subsidy of 2%**
- **Najib: Listing Pulau Pangkor as tax free island, except for alcohol, cigarettes, motor vehicles**
- **Najib: New airport in Tioman is being planned**
- **Penang International Airport and Langkawi International Airport to be upgraded**
- **Upgrade of international airports in Penang, Langkawi, Kota Baru, Sandakan with new airport in Mukah**

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- **Najib: Alternative trading system will be introduced**
- **Feasibility study to be conducted for the building of a bridge from Labuan to mainland Sabah**
- **Construction of MRT3 to be expedited, with completion by 2025 instead of targeted 2027**
- **BNM to monitor payments of salaries to foreign workers (except maids) via accounts registered with local banks**
- **MRT2 project to cost about RM32b, says Najib**
- **Amanah Dana Anak Malaysia 2050 – Malaysian child born between Jan 1 2018 to 2022 to be awarded starting fund of RM200 via Amanah Saham PNB Units**
- **Tax incentives for new four- and five-star hotel investments extended until Dec 31, 2020**
- **Govt to build 14 sports complexes in the country at cost of RM112m**
- **RM61.6b allocation for education sector in 2018. Malaysia's education expenses is twice as high than that of other countries in Asean on average**
- **Govt aid of RM100 for students from low-income families continues in 2018, with RM328m allocation which will benefit 3.2 million students**
- **RM550m allocation for the maintenance and upgrading of schools in 2018**
- **PTPTN discounts until Dec 31, 2018: 20% discount for full settlement, 15% discount for 50% outstanding settlement, 10% through direct debit from salary**
- **RM4.9 billion allocated for TVET Malaysia Plan**
- **Najib: MRT is a 'success story' as it was completed ahead of time and RM2b less than originally projected**
- **Exemption of stamp duty on contract note for transaction of Exchange Traded Fund and Structured warrant over three years from Jan 2018 onwards**
- **Budget 2018: RM6.5b allocation for rural development**

- **RM300m to be allocated for National Blue Ocean Shift, including for the building of new Urban Transformation Centres**
- **Over RM14b to be allocated for the Malaysian Armed Forces, of which close to RM9b for the Royal Malaysian Police and RM900m to the Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency**
- **Najib: To increase equity holdings and investment in strategic sectors, RM150m to be allocated to Pelaburan Hartanah Bhd and RM150m to Ekuinas**
- **Najib proposes that private sector increase paid maternity leave for employees from 60 days to 90 days, to be in line with the public sector**
- **12-month income tax exemption for women returning to workforce (after minimum 2-year break) proposed**
- **Personal income tax cut for all 2.3m tax payers, with 2% cut in the RM20,000 to RM70,000 tax income bands**
- **BR1M to continue in 2018, with 7 million BR1M recipients to receive a maximum payout of RM1,200 each in 2018**
- **Toll collection on Federal Highway (at Batu Tiga, Shah Alam and Sungai Rasau, Selangor); Bukit Kayu Hitam (Kedah) and Eastern Dispersal Link (Johor) abolished from Jan 2018**
- **Civil servants to get RM1,500 special payment: RM1,000 in early-Jan 2018 and remaining RM500 towards Hari Raya 2018**
- **Government retirees to receive RM750 special payment each in 2018: RM500 to be paid in January 2018 and remaining RM250 towards Hari Raya next year**
- **Civil servants who retire early due to health reasons to get retirement benefits similar to their retired counterparts**
- **RM2.5 billion allocated for MARA higher education scholarships, which is the highest ever allocation and to benefit 90,000 students**
- **50 Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia outlets to be transformed to KRAM 2.0 in 2018, with 3,000 outlets set up within 3 years**

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- **Domestic helpers can now be sourced directly from country of origin or online with Immigration Dept, at existing levy and processing fee rates**
- **Cost of hiring foreign domestic helpers to be reviewed, with a view on reducing it in future**
- **Tax exemption on 50% of home rental income up to RM2,000 per month to Malaysians residing in Malaysia. Exemption given from Year Assessment 2018 to 2020**
- **To encourage more affordable housing, Step Up Financing Scheme for PR1MA homes to be extended to private developers, based on criteria to be set**
- **RM1.5b allocated for PR1MA over two years to build 210,000 housing unit priced under RM250,000 per unit**
- **RM27b allocation for healthcare, of which RM1.4b to maintain and upgrade facilities, RM50m for Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme**
- **No GST for reading materials, including magazines, comics and journals, from Jan 1, 2018**
- **GST exemption for O&G firms that import rigs, floating structures from Jan 1**
- **RM5b to be allocated under Green Technology Financing Scheme to boost green technology investments**
- **Capital allowances on ICT equipment to be eligible for full claims between 2018 and 2020**

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ABOUT MEMBERS

FREE TO ALL : ARCHITECT-MEET-THE-PUBLIC SESSION

This free public service by Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM) is to help members of the public who may need advice regarding housing and property matters.



PAM PERTUBUHAN AKITEK MALAYSIA
MALAYSIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS



ARCHITECT-MEET-THE-PUBLIC SESSION
This free public service by Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM) is to help members of the public who may need advice regarding housing and property matters.

This public service will be held on:

Date	4thNOVEMBER 2017 (Saturday)
Time	9:30am to 12:30pm
Venue	Level 3 @ PAM Centre, No 99L, Jalan Tandok, Bangsar 59100 Kuala Lumpur (next to NSTP Building)
Contact	+603 2202 2866 / Email: madelineham@pam.org.my

Members of the public who need advice, on a one-to-one basis, are to contact PAM at Tel: 03-2202 2866 OR email to: madelineham@pam.org.my for an appointment to meet our Architects

This Architects-Meet-The-Public service is part of PAM's Community Programme and contribution towards the public. Representatives from the Association of Consulting Engineers Malaysia (ACEM) will also be present to answer your queries

This public service will be held on:

Date : 4th November 2017 (Saturday)
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SOIL FUN RUN 2017

DATE/DAY : 11th November 2017, Saturday

VENUE : Faculty of Science, University of Malaya

ORGANIZER : Institute of Biological Sciences, University of Malaya and Malaysian Society of Soil Science (MSSS)



Organized by:
 UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA 

In collaboration with:
 UMEC 

SOIL FUN RUN 2017 **5KM**

Bukit Cinta, UM | 11.11.2017 | Saturday
7.00 am - 10.00 am

The banner features three photographs at the bottom: a group of people holding a 'SOIL FUN RUN 2017' banner, a building with a sign for the Institute of Biological Sciences, and a white container labeled 'RESEBOX' used for soil storage.

MIP: REVIEW CONSTRUCTION PROCESS TO AVOID TRAGEDIES

TheEdge, 26 October 2017



MIP: Review construction process to avoid tragedies

PETALING JAYA (Oct 26): The construction industry system and processes should be reviewed on the basis of responsibility and accountability of various parties, instead of the expediting of approvals, said the Malaysian Institute of Planners...

THEEDGEMARKETS.COM

PETALING JAYA (Oct 26): The construction industry system and processes should be reviewed on the basis of responsibility and accountability of various parties, instead of the expediting of approvals, said the Malaysian Institute of Planners (MIP).

“MIP strongly thinks that the existing policies and guidelines for developments on hill slopes/hill sites need to be reviewed immediately, to address the crucial issues of Disaster Risk Reduction. We need to move forward and find ways to reduce the possibility of recurrence of this tragedy,” said its president Ihsan Zainal Mokhtar.

He noted that Tanjung Bungah is a reflection of the existing challenges and needs between economic and environmental sustainability.

“This site tragedy has to be seen from various aspects. We will focus on two important ones — the approval process, planning permission (Kebenaran Merancang) as stated in Town and Country Planning Act 1976 (Act 172), and the construction process on site.

Ihsan added that the process on site has been fully explained by Institution of Engineers Malaysia (IEM).

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MIP concurs with IEM that implementing all safety and engineering requirements are necessary, said Ihsan.

Moreover, the institute also urged all parties to support the strengthening of the process of planning permission as it is the key approval needed for all developments and should thus be reinforced by the contributions of all experts and professionals.

“Calls for the process to be expedited should not be at the expense of safety, the environment, the impact on liveability and the general interest of the public at large. This tragedy has reminded us of the need to review existing approval processes and be more stringent and complete in our guidelines and legislations,” said Ihsan.

Besides this, MIP also hoped that the decision-making process will include public objections, views and all planning decisions be made transparent and accountable.

“The possibility of uploading decisions of the local authority for public scrutiny should be seriously considered,” he said.

Ihsan noted that MIP is willing to work closely with all quarters and all levels of government, professionals, consultants as well as stakeholders in assisting and providing professional expertise and input in achieving a safe, healthy, comfortable and sustainable environment.

Eleven workers perished when a landslide happened at the Granito @ Permai 50-storey affordable housing construction site at Tanjung Bungah on Oct 11.

The Penang state government and local authorities had said it was a construction site incident, noting that the site was not on a hillslope.

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng had formally announced a commission of inquiry into the incident.

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CURRENT ISSUES

REHDA CALLS FOR EXEMPTION OF GST ON CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

The Star, 29 September 2017

KUALA LUMPUR: The Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association (Rehda) is calling for the exemption of the GST on construction materials for the development of affordable housing as part of the association's wish list for the upcoming Budget 2018.

While Rehda supports the introduction of the GST to make taxation more comprehensive, efficient, transparent, and business-friendly, the imposition of the GST has resulted in increased input prices.



Rehda president Datuk Seri FD Iskandar Mohamed Mansor (filepic) said at a luncheon yesterday that this was the first time Rehda had proposed for a GST exemption on construction materials for houses priced RM500,000 and below.

As residential properties are categorised as an exempted supply, the disallowance of input tax credits has added on to the cost of development.

Rehda president Datuk Seri FD Iskandar Mohamed Mansor said at a luncheon yesterday that this was the first time Rehda had proposed for a GST exemption on construction materials for houses priced RM500,000 and below.

“What I want to request from the Government is to please waive the GST on construction materials for the affordable housing category.

“This move would then attract more developers to build affordable homes, addressing the undersupply.

“Currently, developers are paying the 6% tax on cement, tiles, bricks and roofing materials, among others,” he said, adding that it would be a matter of enforcement to ensure that the GST waiver goes to affordable developments.

“From the advertising permit and developer licence obtained by developers, there will be a price range of the properties sold.

“The GST waiver or exemption should not be given to developers whose properties are priced above RM500,000,” said FD Iskandar.

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Themed *Negaraku: Shaping the Future*, the Budget 2018 wish list includes several proposals by Rehda to the Government.

It is seeking measures to facilitate home ownership such as stamp duty exemption, special end-financing schemes, increasing the affordable housing supply and the establishment of more incentives for the adoption of industrialised building systems.

To facilitate home ownership, Rehda proposes the disbursement of the 10% downpayment from the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) to be channelled directly to the developer, without buyers having to pay the amount from their own savings or other sources.

Although EPF contributors are allowed to utilise funds in their Account II to cover the 10% downpayment, buyers will have to currently use their own money first for the downpayment.

Rehda has also proposed that the MyDeposit scheme be continued, with a higher allocation to benefit more first-time buyers in addressing the issue of high entry costs.

HER HEART WILL GO ON

The Star, 2 October 2017

KUALA LUMPUR: Your baby will probably not be normal.

These ominous words struck like a hammer at Rohana 21 years ago when she went for her prenatal check-up, just two weeks before she was due for birth.

“Can you imagine how I felt? There was nowhere to turn to. I couldn’t even share it with others as I felt *malu*,” said Rohana, 55.

When Nabila Abdul Raes was born, doctors confirmed that she had Down syndrome as well as an imperforate anus (see *Anatomy of an imperforate anus*).

Baby Nabila had to go under the knife when she was just two days old as part of the procedure to correct her imperforate anus.

Then further bad news hit – when Nabila was three weeks old, doctors diagnosed her with atrioventricular septal defect.

An atrioventricular septal defect affects the heart valves between the heart’s upper and lower chambers, as well as the walls between the chambers.



Staying strong: Abdul Raes, Rohana and Nabila at IJN

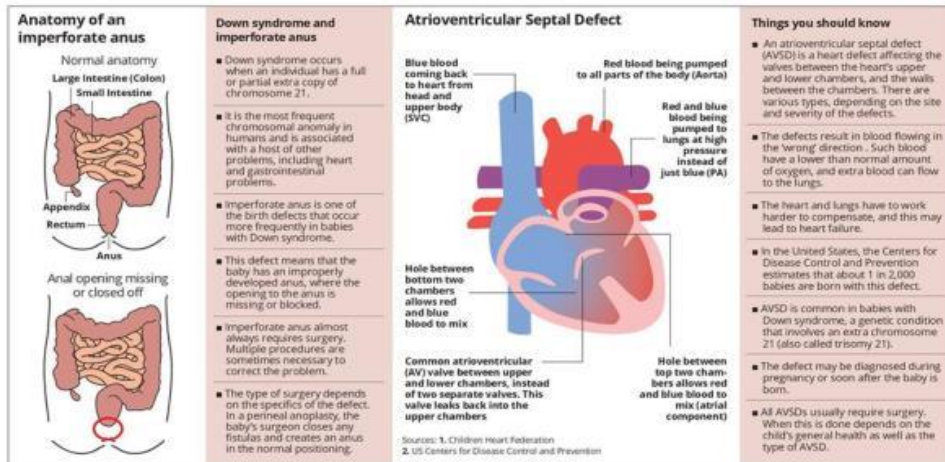
Congenital heart disease and gastrointestinal problems are, unfortunately, more common in babies with Down syndrome, as well as a host of other difficulties.

It is estimated that about half of all affected Down syndrome children are born with a heart defect.

Digestive abnormalities, such as a blockage of the intestine, also occur, but are less common than heart problems.

For Nabila, she would eventually have eight operations altogether – for the heart, for correcting the imperforate anus, cardiac catheterisations and operations for her hip.

Today, Nabila is a healthy, shy 21-year-old young lady with a beautiful smile.



She was with her mother and father, Abdul Raes, 63, at Institut Jantung Negara (IJN), taking part in an awareness event on congenital heart disease at the centre's Paediatric & Congenital Heart Centre.

"Her last major heart operation took place in 2010. Now, she just needs regular follow-up once every two years at IJN to ensure that everything is okay," Rohana said.

On the day she received the news that not all was well with her unborn child, Rohana and Abdul Raes were understandably in despair.

"But through the despair, I kept praying that everything would turn out well," remembered Rohana.

"For a mother, when a doctor diagnoses that something 'bad' is going to happen, you must have faith and remind yourself that there must be a reason why God has given us this test.

"I take this as proof that God loves me. Yes, there are times when I get very down, but I recover, I move on.

"After what happened, I resolved to do my part to help other parents in similar

situations. My aim now is to help spread awareness about congenital heart disease."

For Rohana and Abdul Raes, the support community has been a source of strength.

"Years ago, one of my friends helped me with an event at Wisma MCA. She helped arrange for a 'Save adik Nabila' day, and we raised RM68,000 from generous donors to help with surgical fees," she said.

It's one of the reasons Rohana emphasises the importance of support groups.

This is not the first time the family has faced adversity. Rohana and Abdul Raes had another daughter with congenital heart disease 27 years ago. The baby died at seven months of age. They also had a son who was stillborn.

Today, Rohana and Abdul Raes are grateful that all their other children, six of them, including Nabila, are well.

"These days, Nabila is gaining quite a bit of weight because of all the good food we give her. We'll have to start controlling her weight," she grinned.

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He said only Group B poisons required prescriptions, adding that these were hard to come by because most doctors refuse to release prescriptions for them.

“This puts the patient at a cost disadvantage and leaves the pharmacist in a situation of having to decline service to patients with chronic diseases on long-term medication.” Amrahi said there was also a lack of clarity on the term “over-the-counter” (OTC) medication.

“The term over-the-counter (OTC) medicine is defined as medicines that are not controlled under the Poisons Act 1952.

“Examples of OTC medicines are non-poison cough preparations, sore throat preparations, anti-diarrhoea preparations and anti-constipation preparations, among others.

“These types of medicines are available at department stores, convenience stores, clinics and pharmacies, and sundry shops. It is possible that due to the vast amount of places to get these medications, clinics may be feeling the pinch.”

In Malaysia, unfortunately, there was no separation of dispensing from prescribing at the private primary community level, despite the fact that this had been proven at the worldwide level to provide additional patient safety, he said.

“The Poison Act 1952 does give doctors the full freedom to dispense medication by themselves after examining a patient.

“However they do not have the freedom to supply medicines by retail from their clinics without providing consultation to the patient first. This legislation is in place to prevent harm to the person seeking treatment.

“Patients not only have the right to request for a prescription, they also have the right to know the name (brand/generic) of the medicinal product they have been provided, and finally the medication needs to be handed over to the patient by the doctor and not the clinic staff who may or may not have the correct pharmaceutical training.”

He agreed with those who said a separation in the roles of doctors and pharmacists would save doctors a large amount of expenditure in terms of medication procurement and management of stock.

“Separation of dispensing happens in the public hospital, private hospital, and public health clinic setting. Almost three quarters of the health care system practises separation of dispensing except for the quarter that does not, namely the primary healthcare clinics,” he said.

HOW TO MONITOR BLOOD SUGAR

The Star, 4 October 2017

NAUSEA, vomiting, dehydration, even coma can occur if glucose levels get too high or too low.

Hence, it's vital that people with diabetes control their blood sugar levels. The key to helping with controlling glucose levels is regular monitoring.

It's important to keep blood glucose levels at the specified range to avoid short-term effects, as well as reduce the risk of long-term complications (See "Poor glucose control leads to major problems").

Glucose monitoring also helps with tailoring treatment to ensure that levels are tightly maintained to within a specific range.

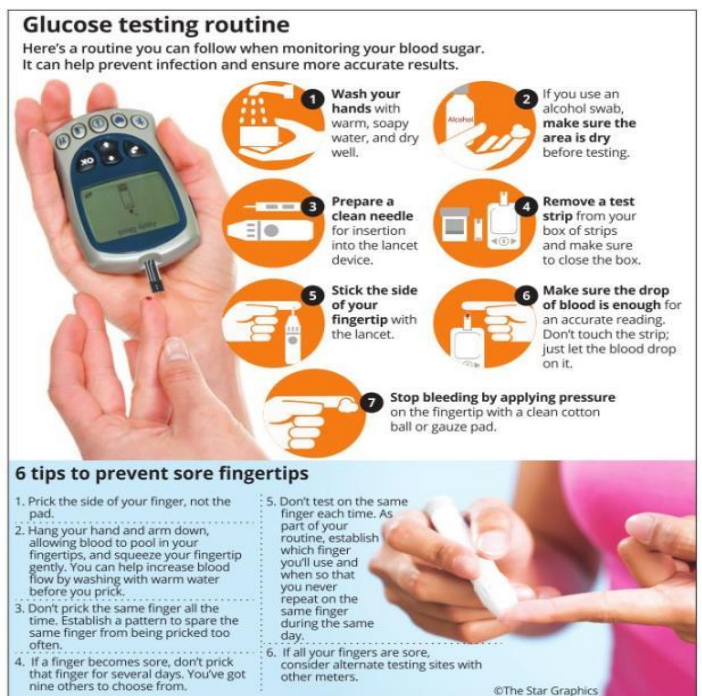
Fortunately, monitoring blood glucose is fairly straightforward and easy. Though some may be wary of needing to prick fingers several times a day, modern technology (such as spring-loaded lancet monitors) has rendered the process virtually painless.

How do I test blood sugar?

• Home glucose monitoring

You prick your finger with a lancet, drip a drop of blood to a test strip and place the strip into a meter, which then gives you a reading.

There are various types of meters around, depending on function (some can calculate an average blood sugar level over a span of time, others have fancy charts and graphs) and cost.



Glucose testing routine
Here's a routine you can follow when monitoring your blood sugar. It can help prevent infection and ensure more accurate results.

1. Wash your hands with warm, soapy water, and dry well.
2. If you use an alcohol swab, make sure the area is dry before testing.
3. Prepare a clean needle for insertion into the lancet device.
4. Remove a test strip from your box of strips and make sure to close the box.
5. Stick the side of your fingertip with the lancet.
6. Make sure the drop of blood is enough for an accurate reading. Don't touch the strip; just let the blood drop on it.
7. Stop bleeding by applying pressure on the fingertip with a clean cotton ball or gauze pad.

6 tips to prevent sore fingertips

1. Prick the side of your finger, not the pad.
2. Hang your hand and arm down, allowing blood to pool in your fingertips, and squeeze your fingertip gently. You can help increase blood flow by washing with warm water before you prick.
3. Don't prick the same finger all the time. Establish a pattern to spare the same finger from being pricked too often.
4. If a finger becomes sore, don't prick that finger for several days. You've got nine others to choose from.
5. Don't test on the same finger each time. As part of your routine, establish which finger you'll use and when so that you never repeat on the same finger during the same day.
6. If all your fingers are sore, consider alternate testing sites with other meters.

©The Star Graphics

• Alternate site testing meters

This means using a part of the body other than the fingertips to obtain a drop of blood for testing – palm, upper forearm, abdomen, calf or thigh.

The results may differ from the fingertip, as levels from the fingertip are more sensitive.

• Continuous glucose monitoring system

These monitor glucose levels in real time throughout the day. A tiny electrode is inserted under the skin (this measures glucose levels in tissue fluid). The electrode is connected to a transmitter, which sends information to a monitoring device.

The device can notify you if your glucose is hitting a high or low limit.

How often should I test?

This depends on the person. Ask your attending doctor how often, and when, you should test yourself daily.

However, as a general rule, if a person is on insulin more than once a day or uses an insulin pump, blood sugar should be checked at least three times daily.

What can affect my results?

Various factors can affect testing – hot, humid weather. If results appear a bit off regularly, recalibrate the meter and check the glucose strips.

Testing for HbA1c

Measuring glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) gives an overall picture of what the average blood sugar levels have been over a period of eight to 12 weeks.

Glycated haemoglobin forms when haemoglobin joins with glucose in the blood (becoming glycated).

The higher the HbA1c level, the greater the risk of developing diabetes-related complications.

The target to aim for is less than 53 mmol/mol (less than 7%).

Keep a record

It's important that you keep a record of your blood sugar results in the long term. Such records can give an indication of any problems or trends with your disease.

The records can also aid in helping with any changes in your meal and exercise plan, as well as help with adjusting medicine dose.

Work with your doctor

It's important that you set a plan of what to do with your doctor. Monitoring blood glucose levels is one thing, preparing a plan of action is another.

Ask your doctor what you should do if glucose levels are too high or low.

If the HbA1c level for two months is not ideal, work out a plan to try and normalise blood sugar fluctuations.

Also, it's important to learn about the symptoms of high or low blood sugar so that you can take action immediately to address the problem. **Things to watch out for**

Remember that many things can affect blood sugar, and these include:

- When you eat
- What you eat
- When you test
- Illness
- Other medications

SIX TIPS FOR MONITORING SUCCESS

1. Keep your supplies with you at all times – meter, lancets, swabs and strips. Ensure testing strips are not expired. Keep strips away from sunlight, avoid moisture and keep at room temperature, or slightly cooler. Do not put strips in the freezer.

2. Establish a daily routine of testing. When and how often this is done, talk to your doctor. As each person's diabetes situation is different, it's not a one-size-fits-all solution. Stick to that routine. Make it a part of daily living. After all, it doesn't take too much of your time.

3. Make sure your meter is accurate. Recalibrate if you have to. To be certain, take your meter with you to your doctor's appointment and compare results with those of their machine.

4. Keep a journal of your results. There are even apps that can help you with this.

5. Get rid of the lancet and strip safely after each use, and be careful to wait until your finger has stopped bleeding to resume activities. And remember, don't reuse a lancet or glucose strip. The duller the lancet, the more painful the finger-prick will be.

6. If you have any questions, no matter how silly you feel they might be, ask your doctor. He or she can help.

POOR GLUCOSE CONTROL LEADS TO MAJOR PROBLEMS

Blood sugar monitoring and control are critical in diabetes management. Poor control will result in complications that may even be life-threatening.

The short-term effects of uncontrolled blood glucose levels include:

- **Low blood glucose** – also called hypoglycaemia, defined as blood glucose level of below 4.0 mmol/l. Symptoms may include nervousness, heavy sweating, weakness, tremors, confusion, seizures and even coma.
- **High blood glucose** – also called hyperglycaemia, defined as blood glucose level above 11 mmol/l. Symptoms include tiredness, blurred

vision, thirst, hunger, passing urine more often. The only sure way to test for this is testing your blood glucose.

- **High blood glucose with ketones** (defined as blood glucose level consistently above 15 mmol/l) – without insulin, the body breaks down fat for energy, releasing ketones into the blood. When ketone levels get too high, ketoacidosis occurs – you may even fall into a coma, which can be very dangerous.

Symptoms include thirst, hunger, passing urine often, fatigue, blurred vision, sweet or fruity smell on your breath, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting.

Usually occurs in those with type 1 diabetes.

- **High blood glucose without ketones** (also called hyperosmolar hyperglycaemic state), is defined as blood glucose levels approaching 40 mmol/l or more – you experience nausea, dehydration, confusion, fever and even coma.

It usually occurs in those with type 2 diabetes.

The long-term complications of diabetes include:

- **Heart problems** – High blood glucose and cholesterol levels can cause the blood vessels to narrow and clog. It has been said that diabetics have two to four times the risk of heart disease compared to someone who doesn't have it.

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Eye problems – diabetic retino- pathy is a serious eye complication of diabetes, and can lead to blindness.

Symptoms of diabetic retinopathy include blurred vision, dark empty spots in vision, difficulty adjusting from bright to dim light, poor night vision and even sudden loss of vision.

- **Nerve damage** – Nerves can be damaged if consistently exposed in a high glucose environment.

This nerve damage can affect the heart, bladder, gut and sexual organs, leading to various problems.

Nerve damage can also affect the peripheral nerves, causing loss of feeling in the feet. This means you can hurt your feet without realising it, and foot sores that develop can become a serious problem very quickly as they are hard to heal.

- **Kidney problems** – the blood vessels in the kidneys can be damaged by high glucose levels. Over time, kidney failure may ensue.

UNDERSTANDING LEGAL TERMINOLOGY

The Star, 5 October 2017

A Federal Court ruling helps explain the difference between a judgment and the grounds of judgment.

LEGAL terminology, while it appears clear and straightforward to lawyers and some legally trained people, can be a source of disagreement and even appeals to the Courts.

A reader asks what is meant by grounds of judgment. With an apology to those already familiar with grounds of judgment, I also deal with another question where the reader asks what is the difference between an order and judgment on the one hand, and grounds of judgment on the other hand.

A judgment or order is the specific decision which can be enforced by the various procedures available within the litigation framework. On the other hand, the grounds of judgment contain the reasons explaining and justifying the decision that has been made. What is enforced is the judgment or order.

There are cases where a judge may deliver a judgment and hand down the grounds of judgement at the same time. On the other hand, the grounds of judgment may be handed down on a later date. These are sometimes also referred to as grounds of decision.

An issue arose in the case of *Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim v Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad* in the Federal Court. A point

raised, as a preliminary objection, was whether the grounds of judgment provided by the High Court and the Court of Appeal could be in the English language? An application was made to this end.

It was contended by the appellant that as the grounds of judgment were not in Bahasa Melayu but English, the grounds were null and void. This was with regard to the provision of Section 152 of the Federal Constitution which stipulates that all proceedings should be in the Malay language.

Counsel for the applicant contended that Section 8 of the National Language Act 1967, which came into effect on July 1, 1971, stated that all proceedings – other than the giving of evidence by a witness in the Federal Court, the Court of Appeal or the High Court or any other court – shall be in the national language.

The situation that arose in this case was whether the grounds of judgment were part of the proceedings of the court.

The appellant contended that it followed that if these were a part of the proceedings, then there had been no compliance with the law.

After analysing, considering and deliberating on the definition of the word “proceedings” in the various dictionaries and lexicons, the court came to the conclusion that the word did not include the grounds of judgment.

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The Federal Court said: “From these definitions, we may conclude that proceedings include amongst others the institution or commencement of action, judgment, execution and the taking of an appeal or writ of error. Therefore, by definition ‘judgment’ forms part of the proceedings. That we think is not in dispute. What is in issue is whether ‘judgment’ includes ‘grounds of judgment’.”

In so deciding, the court also relied on P. Ramanatha Aiyar’s *Law Lexicon* and Black’s *Law Dictionary*, which define proceedings as the regular and ordinary progression of a lawsuit including all acts and events between the time of commencement and entry of judgment. After reviewing various other authorities, the court drew a distinction and went on to say that the judgment is a formal order and therefore different from grounds of judgment which merely contains the reasoning.

“There is, therefore, a clear distinction between ‘judgment’ and the term, ‘grounds of judgment’ or ‘reasons for judgment’. Similarly, our rules of courts draw such a distinction. In view of the foregoing we are of the view that the word ‘proceeding’ could not be interpreted to include ‘grounds of judgment’ as contended by the applicant. This disposes the issue of law raised herein.”

In dismissing the application, the court also referred to the proviso in the National Language Act which gives the court the discretion, either on its own motion or on the application of any

party, to order the proceedings to be conducted partly in the national language and partly in English as the justice of the case demanded.

There was another factor adverse to the appellant.

The court noted that the records showed that at both levels in the High Court and the Court of Appeal, learned counsel for the applicant and respondent had asked for leave of court to conduct the proceedings in the English language.

Leave was granted by the courts. Therefore, quite understandably the learned judges of the High Court and the Court of Appeal delivered their grounds of judgment in the English language.

In fact, the Federal Court could have disposed of the application by the appellant on these latter grounds. However, it chose to go into the language issue.

Actually, it was not even necessary for the Federal Court to dwell on the issue of language as to the grounds of judgment, but it did. This could, however, open the way to other arguments in time to come.

Be that as it may, as an authority for the fact that the grounds of judgment is not part of the proceedings, the decision of the Federal Court stands as good law.

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JITN MAY DUPLICATE MACC'S ROLE

The Star, 7 October 2017

PETALING JAYA: The proposed National Integrity and Good Governance Department (JITN) will duplicate the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) role, said the Malaysian Professional Centre.

Its president John Chang said JITN could also cause confusion over several other existing institutions with similar roles.

"The suggestion that more funds be allocated to existing bodies to strengthen their management and operation would be more productive and deserves consideration," said Chang.

Similarly, MACC chief commissioner Tan Sri Dzulkifli Ahmad had said the allocated budget for JITN could be better used to beef up existing law enforcement units.

The JITN would undertake the same duties as the MACC, he said.

He also said transparency and accountability must prevail as Malaysia continued to embark on social transformation and high-budget infrastructure development in its aim to become a high-income nation by 2020.

"We believe it is essential that high ethical standards and conduct, especially among the authorities, corporate and professional groups, are observed to ensure better efficiency, productivity and safety.

"This is to make Malaysia a respected place with a good business environment to attract more investments and jobs," he said, adding that they would offer their cooperation to promote and strengthen integrity and good corporate governance.

"Perhaps having a National Professional and Integrity Day would be a constant reminder to all our institutions on the importance of its adoption in daily dealings among themselves and with authorities and the public to maintain trust," he said.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paul Low, who announced the setting up of JITN, said it would be an upgrade of the Integrity and Good Governance Division under the Prime Minister's Department.

He said JITN's establishment was being finalised by the Public Service Department, in consultation with all the relevant agencies, to ensure that there was no duplication in functions and to improve the use of resources and manpower.

Low said the setting up of JITN was approved by the Cabinet on July 28.

LEVEL UP YOUR LIFE

The Star, 9 October 2017



Technology has pushed us all into the fast lane so it's important that one finds ways to get things done efficiently and safely.

A few simple tech shortcuts and apps can go a long way in saving time and even helping you sleep better.

The thing about technology is that it makes it possible to get things done more efficiently but it's not always obvious.

It's partly because new services, features and apps get released all the time so it's hard to keep up with our busy lifestyles.

So here's a mix of tech tips and apps that will make your life easier.

Personal scanner

I'll bet a lot of you always wanted to own a scanner or printer but could not justify the purchase. These are two devices that you will need from time to time but never often enough to actually make you go buy one.

But on the occasions that you need them, what do you do? Luckily your smartphone can now double as a scanner and the best app to do the job is Google's free *PhotoScan* for Android and iOS smartphones.

As the name indicates, it's primarily for photos but you can use it to scan almost - anything, including receipts and documents.

What makes it superior to other apps is that it doesn't just capture a single shot but five so that it can stitch them together to remove glare and improve the quality. It also has edge detection and perspective - corrections to boot.



Unlike most apps, Google's *PhotoScan* can eliminate glare when you digitise your old photos. — 123rf.com

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Pro tip: You can choose to store your photos on your device but that would only use up your phone's limited space. So get the *Google Photos* app, which is also available for Android and iOS, and upload them to the Cloud. What's cool about it is that it will let you upload an unlimited number of photos and videos as long as each photo is up to 16 megapixels and each video is up to 1080p.

Digitise your documents

Like I mentioned earlier the printer is another device that many don't own but will need on occasions. And the trouble with inkjet printers – the one that most people buy – is that the cartridges tend to get clogged if you don't use them often enough.

So instead of printing your documents, turn them into PDFs and store them on the Cloud so they're always accessible. PDF is the best format because it's universal so you will be able to access it on many different devices.

Windows 10 has this feature built-in – when you print a file, pick Save as PDF. If you are on older Windows, you will have to get a third-party app like doPDF (www.dopdf.com).

And what if you really need a hard copy? Where there is demand, there is supply – printing shops have started mushrooming in most neighbourhoods so just bring your PDFs there.

Pro tip: Chances are you get your documents, like salary slips and bank statements, as PDFs but they are probably password locked for your own security. While this is good, it also means that you can't share them with, say, your agent when applying for a new credit card, as you wouldn't want to give out your password. The solution is simple – unlock the document with your password and then print it as PDF. This new PDF will no longer be password locked and it'll look more professional than grabbing a screenshot.

Sleep soundly

It's a sad fact but we probably spend more time staring at screens – from phones, TVs to computers – than anything else and this could be making it hard to catch your z's.

Blue light emitted by screens is bad for sleep. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, while there is no evidence that it causes eye damage or fatigue, it can affect your natural wake and sleep cycle, also known as the circadian rhythm.



It's because blue light tends to stimulate or wake you up and while this is okay in the day, too much exposure to blue light at night will make it difficult for you to sleep.

Using your phone a lot at night without a blue light filter could disrupt your natural sleep cycle. — 123rf.com

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Most modern phones have a blue light - filter, but if yours doesn't, you can download the free *Twilight* app which will reduce the blue light emission as the day progresses.

Try it out especially if you tend to use your phone at night. There is also a Pro version with additional features but try the free one first.

You can also turn on this feature on your desktop or laptop as Microsoft introduced it in an update for Windows 10.

Just right click on the desktop and select Display and you'll see the Night Light setting. Click on it and you will see the option to set the time it turns on and off, or better still pick the option to let Windows do it automatically based on real-time sunrise and sunset times.

If you are using an older version of Windows or want more control – like the ability to adjust how “warm” the colour becomes – try out the free *f.lux* app.

Pay with your phone

Instead of whipping out your credit card every time you want to make payment, why not use your phone which is more secure? Samsung Pay is a digital wallet that allows you to securely store your credit, debit or prepaid cards on your smartphone.

So the next time you are at a store you just have to tap your phone on the payment terminal to make a purchase.

It not only supports new terminals that use NFC (near-field communication) but also old magnetic stripe machines, which means it will work pretty much at all the payment terminals.



Samsung Pay lets you pay for purchases using your smartphone. — Samsung

It can also be used to store loyalty cards and we all have many more than can fit our wallets so now is the time to digitise them.

Only selected Samsung smartphones are supported such as the Galaxy S8/S8+/S7/S7 Edge, Note 8/5 and Galaxy A9 Pro/A7/A5. Also, it currently only works with cards from banks like Maybank, CIMB, RHB, Standard Chartered and Citibank.

The best part is that you no longer have to worry about losing your cards and even if you lose the phone, you don't have to worry about your credit card info being stolen. This is because the card number is replaced with a unique alphanumeric identifier that is not mathematically reversible without the original key.

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And if you have the Samsung Gear S3 smartwatch then you are going to love it even more because you can make payments using your watch.

Something stops working

It's bound to happen – at some point your devices or apps will stop functioning - properly or stop working all together. And the solution is simple – restart.

So what do you do when your Internet is slow? Turn the router off and on again. What do you do when the *Facebook* app doesn't play videos properly? Close the app and launch it again. What do you do when your phone slows down? That's right – you restart the phone.

We apologise for repeating but this sage advice is not followed often enough. And while it may not fix all problems, it will - surprisingly solve most issues.

Protect your privacy

Every time you browse the Internet, you are being tracked, from your searches to your spending habits.

If you want better privacy, you need to get a VPN (virtual private network) but the good ones are not free.

Luckily, there is an even easier and free - solution – the *Opera* web browser which comes with built-in VPN. You can also get it on your phone but it's known as *Opera Free VPN* and you are free to use any web browser.

Every time you browse the Net via *Opera*, it will replace your IP address – which can be used to identify you – with a virtual one. It will also reroute your traffic via one of five countries – United States, Canada, Germany, Netherlands or Singapore.

To activate the VPN in *Opera*, go to the browser settings and check the Enable VPN box in the Privacy and security section.

For the mobile version, you just have to download *Opera Free VPN* and turn it on. You can then continue surfing on your favourite browser.

Opera also offers a Gold version for RM99.90 a year which can reroute traffic through many more countries and also block ads.

WhatsApp on desktop

There are many messaging apps today but WhatsApp remains one of the most popular and now you can use it on your desktop or laptop.

Why would you want to do that? Firstly, even though it has become much easier to type on the phone, nothing beats using a keyboard. Now, you'll be able to craft and edit long messages without breaking a sweat.

Also, more often than not you probably have documents on your PC which you need to send out and now you can easily do it from your computer via WhatsApp.

To use WhatsApp on your computer, fire up your browser and type in the link web.whatsapp.com in the address bar and you will see a QR code.

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Now open the *WhatsApp* app on your phone and tap on the three dots on the top right hand corner and select WhatsApp Web. Click on the + icon to turn on the camera and scan the QR code on your computer screen. Now you are good to go.

However, remember that WhatsApp still works off your phone so you can't switch it off.

Handy shortcuts

When using your computer the keyboard is still king so it helps to know a few keyboard shortcuts, especially for tasks you repeat often.

Everyone is likely to accidentally close a tab on the web browser at some point. To bring back a closed tab hit the shortcut Ctrl+Shift+T (which must be pressed all at once). This shortcut works with most browsers, including *Firefox*, *Chrome* and *Edge*. Most browsers will let you open up to 10 previously closed tabs if you keep pressing the shortcut. While we are on the topic of tabs, the shortcut to open a new tab is Ctrl+T.



Learning a few useful keyboard shortcuts can save you a lot of time in the long run. — Bloomberg

Sometimes some websites display photos or text too small. Don't grab your reading glasses yet – press Ctrl and scroll your mouse wheel up to enlarge them. Conversely, scrolling down zooms out. When you are done, hit Ctrl+0 to return the site to the default zoom.

One of the things you should always do is lock your computer when you move away from it, even if it's only for a few minutes, especially when you are in the office. When you forget, you can be the target of pranks or much worse. So remember the shortcut Wins+L as it's the fastest way to lock your PC.

If you want to print something, hit Ctrl+P. This shortcut is almost universal so it works with most apps so you don't have to muck about with the menu bar.

The last tip is not really a keyboard shortcut but is still helpful. When you need to search for an app or setting in Windows 10, just click on the Windows Start button and start typing immediately and the operating system will locate it for you.

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SURVEYOR GROUPS URGED TO RE-EVALUATE ALL BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRY

The Star, 9 October 2017

BAGAN DATUK: The Royal Institution of Surveyors Malaysia (RISM) and the Malaysian Association of Registered Building Surveyors (MyRBS) have been asked to re-evaluate the physical status of all buildings in the country to ensure their safety is maintained.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the move was necessary following the fire tragedy at the Darul Quran Ittifaqiyah tahfiz in Kuala Lumpur last month.

He said the Government had set up a special task force on the matter and several things have also been taken into consideration.

“We have met and reviewed several things that can be improved as soon as possible, including steps to ensure that the standards for each tahfiz and *pondok* school as well as other buildings that house orphans, kindergartens, child care centres and senior citizens are adhered to.

“I want professional bodies, such as MyRBS and RISM, to take the initiative to re-evaluate the physical status of each building to avoid fires,” he said in his speech at the handing over of keys of new houses to fire victims in Kampung Batu 9, Hutan Melintang here yesterday.

Dr Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, said that monitoring and evaluation of safety aspects of the buildings should be carried out on an ongoing basis.

On the arrest of eight suspected militants recently, he said there was information that the suspects were out to cause social anxiety and fear among Malaysians here.

“There are groups which want to destroy religious harmony in our country by targeting our various houses of worship.

“Their aim is to give the impression that Malaysia is a country that does not practise freedom of religion and this issue should be tackled by the police because we want to maintain religious harmony in this country,” he said.

In his speech earlier, Dr Ahmad Zahid said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak was expected to announce some good news for the Indian community during the tabling of the 2018 Budget later this month.

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As such, he called on the Indian community to continue giving their support to the Barisan Nasional-led Government to enable the Indian Community Action Plan for the next 10 years to be implemented.

At a separate function, Dr Ahmad Zahid said he has set a target to retain his parliamentary seat of Bagan Datuk with a five-fold majority in the 14th general election compared to the GE13. In GE13, he won the seat with a 2,108-vote majority.

He said he was confident that the target was achievable, but would require hard work from all Jalinan Rakyat (JR) and JR Plus election machineries. — Bernama

HIGHER HOUSEHOLD INCOME NOT EQUAL TO HIGHER CONSUMPTION

The Star, 10 October 2017

Economist: Rising cost of living offsets household income increase

PETALING JAYA: The increase in the Malaysian household monthly income may not necessarily reflect improved private consumption among Malaysians, largely due to the rising cost of living.

An economist told *StarBiz* that he remains neutral on the latest household income figures as there was no significant improvement in domestic private consumption albeit the increase in household income.

“While households’ median monthly income in Malaysia further improved last year, this does not reflect a much stronger private consumption among the households. This is mainly due to the rising cost of living, which has offset the benefits from the rise in household income.

“Private consumption among locals has not gone up much in line with the said increment in household income.

“I also think that the latest median household income is higher because it is inflated by cash handouts, namely, Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M), which are increased annually,” he said.

To note, BR1M, which was first introduced in 2012, was increased from RM500 for households earning less than RM3,000 to RM1,200 in 2017.



The Malaysian household median monthly income crossed the RM5,000 mark for the first time last year, with the middle 40% (M40) households registering the highest growth in median income, according to the Statistics Department.

In its 2016 Household Income and Basic Amenities survey, the Statistics Department noted that Malaysian households recorded a 6.6% increase per annum in median monthly income to RM5,228 in 2016 compared to RM4,585 in 2014.

Household group-wise, the median monthly income of the bottom 40% (B40), M40 and top 20% (T20) households all rose last year compared to 2014. The B40, M40 and T20 households registered median monthly incomes of RM3,000, RM6,275 and RM13,148 in 2016.

“The household group M40 recorded the highest growth in median monthly income of 6.9% per annum, followed by B40 (6.6%) and T20 (6.2%).

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“The median monthly household income in the urban area increased 6.4% per annum from RM5,156 in 2014 to RM5,860 in 2016. Simultaneously, the median monthly household income in the rural area also increased 5.3% per annum from RM3,123 in 2014 to RM3,471 last year,” the Statistics Department said in a statement.

Kuala Lumpur recorded the highest median monthly household income of RM9,073 in 2016, followed by Putrajaya (RM8,275) and Selangor (RM7,225). On the other hand, Kelantan registered the lowest median monthly household income at RM3,079.

The 2016 Household Income and Basic Amenities survey also found that inequality among Malaysians had reduced further last year, as the benchmark Gini coefficient recorded a decline to 0.399 from 0.401 in 2014. The decline indicated an improvement in the Malaysian household income distribution.

In addition, the country’s overall incidence of poverty improved from 0.6% in 2014 to 0.4% last year.

“Poverty incidence in the urban and rural areas depicted the same trend, whereby it decreased to 0.2% and 1%,” said the Statistics Department.

CAN FOOD HELP EASE ARTHRITIS?

The Star, 11 October 2017



Natural remedy: Ginger can help remove 'wind' in the body.

While doctors give anti-inflammatory pills to stop the pain and inflammation of arthritis, the TCM's perspective on wellness strives to strike a balance between the yin and yang, Prof Ng revealed.

"When one has arthritis, the body's yin and yang will be out of balance.

"When the yin and yang are balanced, we can manage the pain better," he said.

In TCM, Prof Ng said this could be achieved by avoiding certain foods, changing one's lifestyle and taking certain herbs.

Nutrition tips: According to Prof Ng, dang shen helps improve blood circulation and revitalise the body.

KUALA LUMPUR: According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), it is more important to avoid food that trigger arthritic pains than eat those that can help reduce the pain.

Federation of Chinese Physicians & Acupuncturists Association of Malaysia (FCPAAM) president Prof Dr Ng Po Kok said that currently, there is no cure for arthritis, whether from mainstream or traditional treatment.

However, it is important for patients to manage their pain because when the condition is severe, it could lead to difficulties in working and sleeping due to swollen fingers, hot and painful joints, or prickly sensations, he said.



Nutrition tips: According to Prof Ng, dang shen helps improve blood circulation and revitalise the body.

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“When it comes to food, it is more important to avoid certain foods rather than eat those that reduce pain,” he said. Among the food that arthritic patients should avoid are duck, animal innards, soy bean, sardine, and shellfish such as crab and prawns, he said.

“They should also avoid eating too much red meat and nuts. While nuts can be eaten in small amounts, peanuts should be avoided.

“Beer is totally a no-no, but some wine is fine,” he said.

Prof Ng said those affected should also avoid processed food, food with preservatives, colouring and additives, and eat natural food.

While citrus fruits are natural food and can be consumed, sour food such as black vinegar and *tomyam* soup should be avoided, he said.

“Another important factor for arthritic patients is to avoid having late night suppers, and they should sleep before 11pm,” he said, adding that exercise is also encouraged.

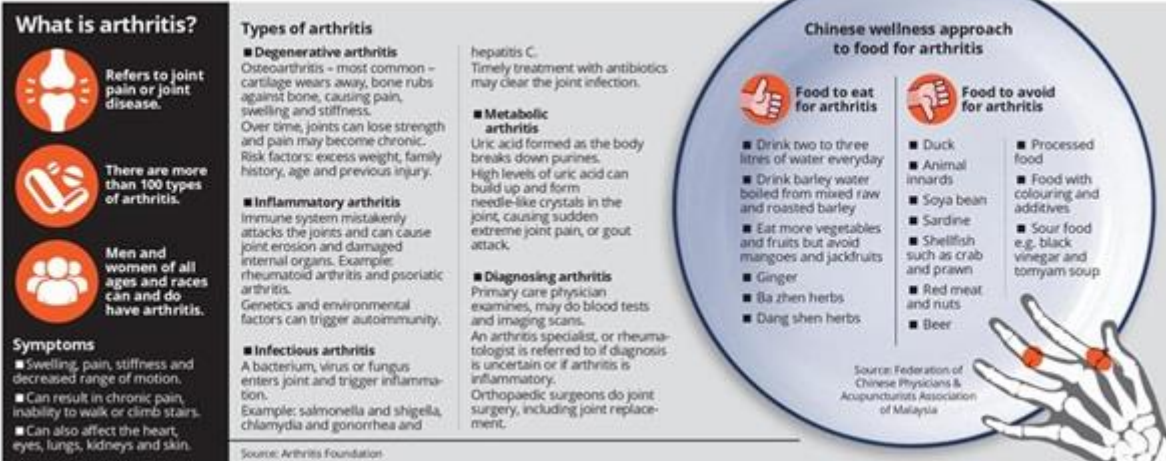
If sleeping in air-conditioned rooms, the temperature should not be too low, preferably not below 22°C, he advised.

Prof Ng said that it is important for those with arthritis to drink lots of water daily – at least two to three litres.

While drinking some cold water is fine, one should not eat ice cubes because in TCM theory, ice cubes can disrupt the yin and yang in the body, he said.

They can drink barley water that is boiled from mixed raw and roasted barley and take more vegetables and fruits, but avoid mangoes and jackfruit, he said.

They could also take some ginger as it helps remove “wind” in the body, he added.



What is arthritis?

- Refers to joint pain or joint disease.
- There are more than 100 types of arthritis.
- Men and women of all ages and races can and do have arthritis.

Symptoms

- Swelling, pain, stiffness and decreased range of motion.
- Can result in chronic pain, inability to walk or climb stairs.
- Can also affect the heart, eyes, lungs, kidneys and skin.

Types of arthritis

- Degenerative arthritis**
Osteoarthritis - most common - cartilage wears away, bone rubs against bone, causing pain, swelling and stiffness. Over time, joints can lose strength and pain may become chronic. Risk factors: excess weight, family history, age and previous injury.
- Inflammatory arthritis**
Immune system mistakenly attacks the joints and can cause joint erosion and damaged internal organs. Example: rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis. Genetics and environmental factors can trigger autoimmunity.
- Infectious arthritis**
A bacterium, virus or fungus enters joint and trigger inflammation. Example: salmonella and shigella, chlamydia and gonorrhoea and hepatitis C. Timely treatment with antibiotics may clear the joint infection.
- Metabolic arthritis**
Uric acid formed as the body breaks down purines. High levels of uric acid can build up and form needle-like crystals in the joint, causing sudden extreme joint pain, or gout attack.
- Diagnosing arthritis**
Primary care physician examines, may do blood tests and imaging scans. An arthritis specialist, or rheumatologist is referred to if diagnosis is uncertain or if arthritis is inflammatory. Orthopaedic surgeons do joint surgery, including joint replacement.

Chinese wellness approach to food for arthritis

- Food to eat for arthritis**
 - Drink two to three litres of water everyday
 - Drink barley water boiled from mixed raw and roasted barley
 - Eat more vegetables and fruits but avoid mangoes and jackfruits
 - Ginger
 - Ilia zhen herbs
 - Dang shen herbs
- Food to avoid for arthritis**
 - Duck
 - Animal innards
 - Soya bean
 - Sardine
 - Shellfish such as crab and prawn
 - Red meat and nuts
 - Beer
 - Processed food
 - Food with colouring and additives
 - Sour food e.g. black vinegar and tomyam soup

Source: Federation of Chinese Physicians & Acupuncturists Association of Malaysia

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On herbs that one could take, he said *ba zhen* helps improve blood circulation and boost the immune system.

Dang gui, one of the eight types of *ba zhen*, helps “produce” blood and when blood volume is increased, the body will be in a better condition, he said.

The other is *dang shen*, also known as poor man’s ginseng, which helps improve blood circulation and revitalise the body, he said.

“In TCM, one must have a strong immune system, and only then can the body fight other conditions,” he added.

Prof Ng cautioned that any mainstream medication and Chinese herbs are just temporary relief.

“People still need to manage their condition, if not, the symptoms could return,” he said. He said for whatever condition that people suffer from, they should first see a physician for assessment.

REBUILDING LIVES TOUCHED BY STROKES

The Star, 19 October 2017

A STROKE. How many of us know what it is?

I certainly didn't know much about it until a few weeks ago, when I spoke to National Stroke Association of Malaysia (Nasam) founder Janet Yeo. I knew the broad strokes of what happens – that a stroke happens when brain cells die due to an interruption in the blood nourishing our body's nerve centre.

However, I have since learned several surprising facts, aside from the fact that Oct 29 is World Stroke Day. For one, strokes are the third largest cause of deaths in Malaysia after heart diseases and cancer, and strokes are the single most common cause of severe disabilities in Malaysia.

We have to be mindful of what a stroke is and how we can recover from one because we can recover, as long as we get the right post-stroke support, said Yeo, explaining the work Nasam does at its nine centres nationwide.

“There is life after a stroke despite the damage, because you can still live your life and enjoy your life even though you are a wheelchair user,” said Yeo.

She added that a big goal behind the services offered at Nasam's centres is to get stroke survivors to live their lives fully instead of giving up because they've survived a stroke.

“I want to discourage stroke survivors from thinking that they have to wait until they get better before they go out and live their lives. I tell them that it takes a long time to recover from a stroke. I had a stroke 28 years ago and I am still recovering.

“The moment I came home from the hospital, my husband said that I'm going out for dinner, to the market and I am going back to the office. I lived my life. I went through it and now I am preaching what I practised.

“I could have been bedridden or a wheelchair user as my stroke was that severe, but my husband believed that I would rise to the challenge if he challenged me. I want stroke survivors to challenge themselves and believe in themselves,” said Yeo.

She said that a stroke can be seen as a challenge for a person to overcome by reinventing themselves.

“I tell stroke survivors to approach every day with a new outlook, that they're going to work and not laze around in bed. Get ready, shower, dress well and treat coming to Nasam as if they're coming to work for two hours.

“And what is the purpose of the work? To rebuild yourself. It is a 'Yes, I can!' mindset that is aimed at lifting the spirit,” said Yeo.

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She added that Nasam helps people develop new talents they never knew they had.

“We have been blessed with a lot of talent, so let’s move on to the next talent. We get people to see that a stroke is a turning point and to see the positive points about it – that they’re making new friends and discovering talents they never knew they had,” said Yeo, who added that Nasam helps about 500 people every day.

I asked her how people can seek Nasam’s help if they or someone they know has been affected by a stroke.

“An appointment has to be made, at any one of the centres. When the stroke survivor comes in, he will be given an introduction to Nasam and what we do, and the centre’s chief physiotherapist will assess him and prescribe the programme best suited to him, depending on his age and the severity of the stroke,” said Yeo.

She also gave advice on how to know if someone is having a stroke.

“First look at the face; the face will be a little distorted. Then ask the person to raise his arms. Strokes always affect one side, so an arm will keep falling down. Then listen to his speech and ask him to smile. If the speech is slurred and he has difficulty smiling, it is time to call the hospital. And this is what I always urge people – go straight to the hospital, don’t go to a clinic. Go to the emergency ward,” said Yeo.

She also said that Nasam – contactable via email at info@nasam.org – welcomes the support of the public.

“Participate in our activities. If we’re having a Stroke Games, come and cheer us on. When we have a public forum, come and listen. Additionally, we are starting to recruit new volunteers as we have arts, craft and music in our holistic programme. These are all the programmes we have. Teach them how to do handicraft, teach them how to do gardening. Be a volunteer,” she said.

Considering that about 52,000 Malaysians are affected by strokes annually, I’d like to think we all have a reason to give Nasam our support.

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STOPPING A SPOUSE FROM SELLING PROPERTY

The Star, 19 October 2017

If a husband has an interest in a piece of land which is at risk, he can file a caveat – but that doesn't guarantee he will be successful.

WHEN a landed property is registered in the name of the wife, can the husband stop the wife from selling the property? In particular, can he lodge a caveat?

A husband had purchased a property valued at RM900,000 in the name of the wife. He had paid, in her name, an initial deposit of RM50,000 and the booking fee. In other words, he paid part of the purchase price.

The wife signed the Sale and Purchase Agreement as purchaser. A loan for the balance was obtained from a bank and the difference of RM84,667 between the payment made by the husband and the loan was paid by the wife.

The property was transferred to the wife's name and charged to the bank as security.

When the marriage broke down, the husband left the house. Later, the wife also left the home.

Since she had difficulties in servicing the loan, she decided to sell the property and entered into a Sale and Purchase Agreement to repay the bank.

When the husband came to know, he entered a private caveat and the wife applied to remove the caveat. The question that arose was whether the husband could lodge a caveat on the ground that he had a beneficial interest.

Apart from the earlier payment, the husband had also paid six monthly instalments and the wife had paid the rest of the instalments, for a much longer period. The husband had not filed a divorce petition at that time.

When a person believes he has an interest in a piece of land, which is threatened or at risk, he can file a caveat because it is a mere registration of an encumbrance and involves only an administrative act. However, if it is not the right thing to do, it will be removed and this is what the wife did by applying to court.

The court reiterated that "it was trite law that only a person or body who has caveatable interest can lodge a caveat on the land. It is also trite that a caveator must prove the existence of his caveatable interest before the caveat is allowed to stand."

To be caveatable, these claims must represent claims that can lead to the making of a substantive entry on the register, either because the interest will become registrable or because it is one for which equitable relief, by way of specific performance, can be sought to enable ultimate registration.

The husband had allowed the name of the wife to be used as the registered owner of the property. If the husband had an interest in the property but he had chosen to vest the whole of the property in the name of his wife, he could not now claim a caveatable interest.

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The court took the view that when a man and a woman enter into a lawful union, all assets acquired during their marriage come under the purview of the Law Reform (Marriage And Divorce) Act 1976.

Section 76 of the Act gives the court power, when granting a decree of divorce or judicial separation, to order the division between the parties of assets acquired during the marriage, whether by their joint efforts or the sole effort of either party. Until the court exercises that power, their respective rights are determined by death, or by divorce or judicial separation.

The court decided that if the husband was trying to protect the matrimonial assets, the evidence did not appear to show him to be doing so. This was because, as the wife alleged, the husband had misappropriated RM115,000 belonging to her and payable to her and thereby deprived her of her ability to service the loan. He had also failed to contribute to the support of the two children.

A further point against the husband was that he had made no attempt to service the loan.

This was in the light of the fact that the Sale and Purchase Agreement with the buyer had been entered into and the purchaser had agreed to service the monthly instalment until the transaction was completed and for the total of such instalments paid to be deducted from the balance purchase price payable to the purchaser.

What about the sum of RM50,000 that the husband had paid earlier? The court found that the facts clearly pointed to an intention on the part of the husband that the contribution was to be a gift to his lawful wife.

In the circumstances, the court held that this was an indeterminate interest. As the husband did not have a title or registrable interest in the property, a caveat could not be lodged and what had been lodged would be removed.

DEBUNKING MYTHS: SUGAR MAKES KIDS HYPER

The Star, 20 October 2017



Sweet issue: Adani Shahrir (left) and her sister, Afiya, playing together in their home in Puchong.

PETALING JAYA: Sales manager Melisa Leeau avoids giving her children sugary desserts in the evenings or she would not see the end of them running helter-skelter and screaming their heads off.

Leeau, 43, said it would then be difficult for her to get her son, Ray Tan, six, and daughter Sara, four, to bed by 10pm.

“If they have sweets or eat chocolates or ice-cream at night, they will be running and jumping

around, shouting and screaming and their bed time will be delaan hour or more.

“When I don’t give them any sugary snacks, they are fine,” she said, adding that she would give them milk to drink at night.

Leeau, who lives in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, said that her children being active during the day was not an issue but it was a concern for her at night as she did not want their sleeping time to be disrupted.

Putri Norhayati Zain, 33, said her children Adani Shahrir Rizwan, five, and Afiya, two, were rather active, so she seldom gave them sugary food except for the occasional treat.

She said she could see the difference in their behaviour each time they had sugary food.

“After they eat cakes or have sweet drinks, they will run around and talk non-stop, especially Adani.

“They will become more active than their usual selves,” she observed



Ray, busy playing with his toys.

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Putri Norhayati said they would also refuse to take their afternoon naps, and if they had sugary drinks for dinner, they tended to sleep later at night.

However, Florence Lim, 43, said her son WX Yan, six, does not show any sign of being more active when given candies, chocolates and ice-cream occasionally. The home-maker from Puchong said she tried not to give processed sugar, honey and fruits with high sugar content such as oranges, apples, grapes, durian, and jack fruits to her son, who has Down's Syndrome, because sugar worsens the low muscle tone problem in her child.

"He has to do life-long exercises to maintain his muscles," she said.

Rachel Goh, 37, who has two sons, said the occasional increase of sugar intake did not make any difference to her younger son's behaviour.

The home-maker from Klang said her son was mildly autistic and his hyperactivity was due to sensory issues rather than sugar.

"When his senses are heightened due to his surroundings and movement of people, he tends to run around," she said.

However, she said that some mothers she knew had claimed that cutting down on sugary food seemed to reduce hyperactivity in their children.

EXPERTS GIVE THEIR VERDICT: NO

The Star, 20 October 2017

Senior consultant endocrinologists Prof Datuk Dr Mafauzy Mohamed and Prof Datuk Ikram Shah Ismail speak on whether sugar causes hyperactivity in children.

Q: Does sugar make children hyperactive?

Mafauzy: Although there have been a few studies associating high sugar intake to hyperactive children, these children tended to have abnormal diet patterns, so it could be that the hyperactive children were taking more sugary food/drink rather than the sugary food/drink causing hyperactivity in children.

Hence, the medical community believes that so far, there is no strong scientific evidence to suggest that sugar makes children hyperactive.

Ikram: Adverse behaviour effects, including hyperactivity, are commonly attributed to excess sugar intake by parents and teachers, but several studies in which sugar was eliminated from the diet and/or children were challenged with sugar, failed to support an association between sugar intake and hyperactivity, attention span, or cognitive functioning.



Senior consultant endocrinologist Prof Datuk Dr Mafauzy Mohamed speaks on whether sugar causing hyperactivity in children has any basis.

Q: If it does not, what does make children hyperactive?

Mafauzy: There are a few causes of hyperactivity in children. A common cause is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Other causes include hormone, brain, nervous system and psychological disorders.

A hyperactive child should be brought to a doctor to be diagnosed and treated.

Symptoms of ADHD in children include being impulsive, inattentive or a combination of the two. They are always running around and will not sit still to eat or be read to.

They don't listen to instructions or only obey for a short time. These symptoms are not a result of sugar intake.

There is also no clear evidence that sugar causes hyperactive children to be even more hyperactive.

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There is also no clear evidence that sugar causes hyperactive children to be even more hyperactive.

Ikram: Hyperactivity in children can be due to many factors. There are predominantly genetic factors in many of the children affected by hyperactivity.

Environmental factors may also play a secondary role in hyperactivity disorders.

The influence of diet on attention, hyperactivity, and behaviour is controversial.

Areas of investigation include food additives (artificial colours, artificial flavours, preservatives), food sensitivity (allergy or intolerance), essential fatty acid deficiency and iron and zinc deficiency.

The effect may be mostly psychological. Studies have shown that parents who believe in a link between sugar and hyperactivity see one, although others do not.

Another possibility is that children tend to be more excited at events like birthday parties where sugary foods are usually served.

People may have confused proximity with correlation, although the environment is probably more to blame than the food.

Q: In your experience with patients, is there a difference in the type of sugar that causes hyperactivity, such as processed sugar or natural sugars from fruits?

Ikram: No difference. Both sugars do not cause hyperactivity.

Q: Have you come across patients (children included) who became tired after taking processed sugar but not natural sugars? If there are such cases, why is that?

Ikram: Sometimes, when a child takes too much sugar, the blood-sugar levels rise too high. The body responds by producing a large amount of insulin, a hormone that sweeps sugar out of the blood and into body cells.

Blood-sugar levels may then drop quickly, and the child may feel shaky or sluggish.

Not surprisingly, low blood-sugar levels can trigger a craving for more sweets, which creates a vicious cycle of sugar highs and lows. This can happen with all kinds of sugars.

Q: Should parents be concerned?

Mafauzy: Parents should be concerned about high sugar intake (in drinks and food), not because it causes hyperactivity, but because high sugar intake can increase the risk for overweight/obesity and dental caries.

Taking drinks and food with high sugar content can also result in poor nutrient

supply and reduced dietary diversity, and this may be associated with increased risk of diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular risk and other health effects in the future.

Q: Should sugar intake be reduced? How much sugar should children take?

Mafauzy: Intake of sugar should be less than 5% of the total energy intake for children and teenagers.

Intakes should be lower in infants and toddlers under two years old.

For example, the recommended energy intake for pre-schoolers is about 1,400 calories, and 5% is about 70 calories, which is about two teaspoons of sugar per day (5% is a conditional recommendation from the World Health Organisation but my recommendation is 10% – so in the above example, it will be four teaspoons).

Ikram: Many children can indulge in the occasional sweets and desserts without any problem.

In small amounts, sugar can even encourage nutritious eating.

Similarly, a recent study found that adding about a teaspoon of sugar to a serving of whole-grain breakfast cereal such as oatmeal, wheat bran or muesli, made a difference in whether children liked it, but it had no significant effect on their blood-sugar levels.

So, relax, go ahead and let your children enjoy sugar in moderation.

Q: What sugar-laden food should children avoid?

Mafauzy: Sugar-sweetened beverages, fruit juice, sugar in food, desserts and sweets. This also includes high-fructose corn syrup and fruit-juice concentrates.

Q: Even if children take a lot of sweets, is that all right for those who run and play outdoors a lot?

Mafauzy: No, because natural carbohydrates such as rice and bread already provide the necessary calories for energy. There is no need for added sugar in drinks or food.

Ikram: It is not all right as too much sugar can lead to cavities, obesity and diabetes.

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SELLING YOUR HOUSE? AVOID THESE PITFALLS

The Star, 22 October 2017



Don't make these mistakes if you want to close the deal quickly

SELLING your house takes more than putting up an ad or finding a property agent. If you want the quickest and best way to close a deal, don't make the following mistakes.

Mistake 1 Neglecting to clean the house for viewing

First impression matters, especially when presenting your house to potential buyers. While it is reasonable to assume that most buyers will eventually do some renovation and cleaning up, you are not doing yourself any favours by “letting yourself go” – in this particular instance, “letting your house go”.

Remember, all the houses put up for sale in the market are competing with one another. Some of these houses have been renovated and cleaned up for viewing; those not tidied up will look less attractive in comparison.

Buyers may not consider a “dirty” house because it would take too much work to clean it up.

For house owners who keep pets, remember to clean the house and the compound. It would be a deal breaker if the potential buyer were to step on some droppings.

Mistake 2 Overdoing it when creating an atmosphere

A more diligent property agent may ask you to clean up the house and set up the surroundings to present a more attractive option for potential buyers. But don't overdo it.

While scented candles may create a calm and serene atmosphere, buyers with sensitive noses may be turned off by the strong smell – and not all visitors will share your taste of music. Just keep it clean and simple. Draw the curtains and make sure there is ample natural light.

Mistake 3 Putting up an outrageous price tag

Many sellers think that marking up the price will leave more room for bargaining when the buyer asks for a discount. But a price tag that is too high may be a mistake.

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House hunters may not even bother to approach the seller for inquiries if the price is way out of their budget. Your house would then be on the market for a long time.

The longer your house carries the “for sale” sign, the easier for buyers to have doubts about the saleability of the property. In the end, you may have to sell at a much lower price.

Mistake 4 Bad picture quality when posting online

In the age of the Internet, most buyers will either look for a house online or at least do quick research at property websites. If the house looks run down or unattractive, they may not even bother to drive to the location to take a second look.

Don't take pictures in low resolution, dim lighting or awkward angles. Such photos may put off the buyer. Use a good camera or hire a professional photographer.

Mistake 5 Inconveniences in house hunting

House hunting can be a complicated and tiring process, and hence it is in the interest of both parties that visiting the house should be as hassle-free as possible.

Most homebuyers, especially those who are seriously interested, would like to see the property as soon as possible. If the owner is always unavailable or keeps postponing the visit, the number of potential buyers will dwindle and the sale of the house will be delayed.

Mistake 6 Presenting the house while still renovating

Working on the presentation of the house is a good thing, but a half-hearted effort could do more harm than good. Seeing an empty room after viewing two or three well-kept rooms is off-putting to any buyer. Mind your budget and go with simple renovations for each room if you don't have the budget to “do it big”.

Mistake 7 Overlooking the pet factor

We love our pets. But sadly not everyone will think they are adorable. You may be used to the fur and smell of your pets, but it is prudent to assume that your visitors are not like you. Some of them may even be allergic to your pets.

While having a pet is not necessarily a deal breaker, you should clean up and limit the presence of your pets while the “guests” are checking out the house.

Mistake 8 Showing a house that's too 'homey'

You are still living in the house, but that doesn't mean you need to let the visitors know the exact details of your daily life.

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A clean bathroom, toilet and kitchen are just the basics. You should avoid leaving your clothes all over the house, more so your underwear. A tidy house will go a long way when trying to impress the buyer.

Mistake 9
Too many unnecessary 'guests'

No one likes to be distracted when making an important life decision. Buying a house is a huge investment, and most interested buyers would like to take their time in viewing the house and scouting the neighbourhood.

If you have tenants or family members in the house, potential buyers may feel uncomfortable about taking their time during the visit and disrupting other people's daily routine.

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TANJUNG BUNGAH LANDSLIDE: USE PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS, SAYS IEM

The Star, 24 October 2017

PETALING JAYA: Many construction incidents are due to the contractor's failure to engage professional engineers to carry out the design, endorsement and supervision of temporary works that facilitate construction, said the Institution of Engineers (IEM).

Temporary works are the parts needed during a construction project which involve erecting longstanding permanent works.

Although temporary works are mainly the contractor's responsibility, it is important that professional engineers involved in the project – either as owner, consultant or contractor – play an active role in ensuring its safety, said IEM president Dr Tan Yean Chin in a statement on Tuesday.

"The design of temporary works shall be given the same due respect as that of the design of permanent works by professional engineers," he said.

He added that companies and contractors should employ professional engineers for temporary works, saying that these engineers would carry out the design, endorsement and supervision of temporary works that require their certification.



Tan said that it is the responsibility of the consultant to ensure that contractors comply with safety and design requirements to safeguard public interest and safety.

"The professional engineer shall ensure that the design, including analysis, calculations, drawings and specifications shall be structurally stable with sufficient details for construction are safe and buildable by contractors," he added.

Tan also said that the Board of Engineers Malaysia (BEM) has published Guidelines on the Role and Responsibility of Professional Engineers for Temporary Works during the Construction Stage.

On developments on hillslopes, Tan said that professional engineers should be responsible to determine the appropriate construction methods.

He said this should be based on the information and data available in the soil investigation report and other information.

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On the Tanjung Bungah landslide, Tan said that the general perception seems to be that it was a hillside incident.

"However, based on observations, the Tanjung Bungah Development is not on the hill slope but on the land adjacent to the hill slope," said Tan.

He added that IEM is also willing to offer its technical assistance and opinion in the investigation, saying that this type of construction is common in areas with land constraints such as Kuala Lumpur and developed cities such as Hong Kong and Singapore.

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IT'S TIME WE HELPED SOMEBODY

The Star, 25 October 2017

OF late, reading the news brings such a sense of gloom to me. There does not seem to be a day without another young offender being arrested for committing a hideous crime or another innocent life lost over a trivial argument.

The headlines surrounding issues that plague Malaysian youths have been dismaying to such an extent that Khairy Jamaluddin, the Youth and Sports Minister, has called for Budget 2018 to include a social agenda blueprint that strengthens the family institution and prevents social problems among the young.

The minister had pointed out that strengthening the education system or increasing religious knowledge simply was insufficient in tackling social problems such as drug addiction and broken families.

These are all very telling of a fast-escalating problem.

Less than 24 hours later, Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye too spoke out. He highlighted the serious crime rates, unresolved drug menace, corruption in the public and private sectors, indiscipline in schools, truancy, bullying and the culture of violence in our midst which all point to an urgent need to address the country's social capital.

His message too was straight to the point: The time had come to improve the quality of life and address the negative trends head-on before the situation deteriorates.

I could not agree more that it is time to shift our thinking and to take a more proactive approach.

But I would urge, aside from having a fresh agenda and a budget – while both are important in the process of uplifting “at risk” youths – that we don't forget to have a heart.

To have the very necessary empathy in understanding is just what is missing from the lives of these youths.

Life has taught me that there is no “one-size-fits-all” or easy solutions.

Coming from a humble family, I was always reminded that education was the only tunnel that you could take in order to escape poverty and change your life. I chose to take that route to forge a new life and build hope.

Humble though my background, my life is far more blessed than many of these youths, who have been charged with crimes.

I have had good people – family, friends and mentors – to help steer me.

I have been fortunate enough to have the luxury to decide that for every bad day I had, I had the power to turn it into someone else's smile.

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Those are the roots for the humanitarian work that has become my passion and daily work. I was fortunate enough to have the right kind of resources to create Help Somebody.

Help Somebody focuses on rendering aid to those in need by connecting volunteers of varied backgrounds to make a difference in our community. The work is focused on the areas of healthcare, education, life skills and poverty eradication.

It is eye-opening to see how the opportunity to do something, to help positive change come about, can bring out – if not the best, then at the very least – the good in people. The children who have the least access to opportunity, who have no voice, are often the most willing to change if given a reason. They too look for a reason to get out, to make a change, no matter how small. This is an inherent human trait that must be nurtured.

All too often, these children are caught in a loop of indifference. No amount of laws can legislate care and empathy.

As such, beyond having programmes, a fresh social agenda and calls for change, I would also call for more volunteerism and participation from within our communities in providing time, giving attention as well as creating opportunities to engage “at risk” youths.

There are many organisations already set up out there that are hard at work in engaging such youths. Their chief constraint is a lack of volunteers, particularly peer volunteers.

There have been many international studies that show youth volunteerism yields benefits both to the giver and recipient (<https://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/files/cd/2003/fs0323.pdf>).

Youth volunteers are far more relatable to “at risk” youths and peer engagement programmes that are co-created by youths on both sides of the equation have greater sustainability.

Certainly, purpose and meaning are not exclusive to the economically privileged. We can do better for these youths. We cannot sit by, wait for the heavy-lifting to be done solely through official means, while bemoaning the situation.

We have the means to make a difference, if you are a parent – I urge you to give the opportunity to your sons and daughters to help make Malaysia better.

If you are a young person, be confident that you can help even in small ways.

Open your heart and volunteer your time to help bring a smile to another person. You matter and they do, too.

The future is yet to be written and will be what we make of it, today.

Dr Esther Michael is a TN50 Youth Ambassador and co-founder of Help Somebody, a community initiative that connects people to make a difference in the community. The initiative currently has approximately 300 volunteers from around Kuching, Miri, Kuala Lumpur and Moscow.

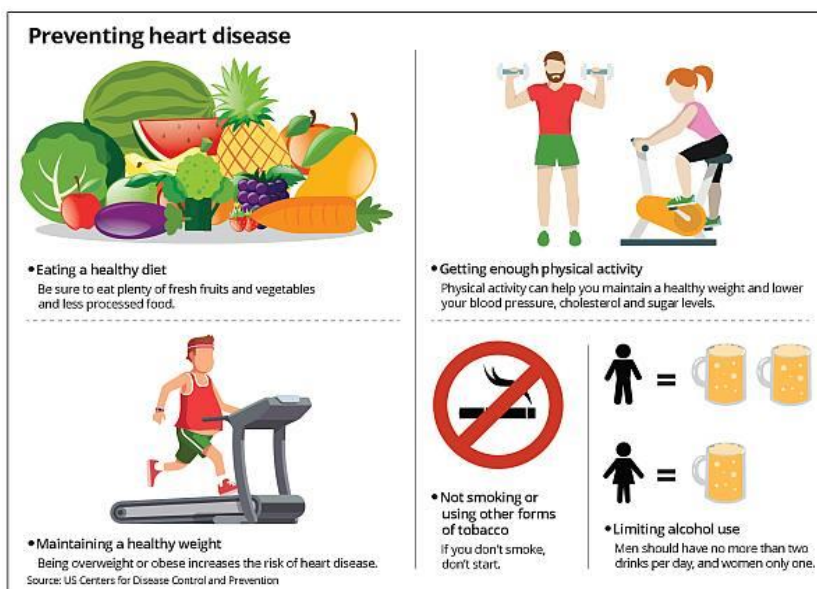
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THE HEART OF HEALTH

The Star, 25 October 2017

PETALING JAYA: “I used to eat out every day,” said Teo Kwee Keng, 65, of her habit of 35 years.

“Char kuey teow, satay, all types of hawker food you can think of, and even instant noodles for supper.”



Last year, Teo underwent a heart bypass surgery.

“Now I stay away from such foods,” she said.

In general, unhealthy eating habits is a significant contributor to the ever-rising incidence of heart disease in Malaysia.

This is especially so as more and more working adults eat out regularly.

Teo, a church worker, said her job also made her “live in a hurry” and has since given herself time to rest.

“I watch my diet now and hired a helper to help me cook at home. I only use olive oil and eat only sea fish, vegetables and fruits to maintain my diet,” she said.

Teo, who still works, said she now regularly steams her food and avoids deep frying.

She also stays away from certain types of food such as seafood and red meat.

Herbert Lee, who had a heart bypass surgery seven years ago, said he was working in a multinational company when he was diagnosed with three blocked arteries.

“I believe that it was the accumulation of the food that I ate and the stress at work that led to my condition,” the 58-year-old said, adding he ate out every day as he needed to entertain his clients.

Lee said his job was so hectic that neither he nor his wife had the time to cook at home.

However, the retiree said all that changed after his surgery when he became adamant about getting in shape and eating healthily.

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“I consulted a dietitian after my surgery and the first thing I changed was the cooking oil I used in my food. The dietitian recommended olive oil, and also to reduce my salt intake,” he said.

Lee revealed that he weighed 70kg prior to his surgery and now weighs 59kg by changing his diet to include steamed food and a higher portion of vegetables and fruits.

“The whole family needs to eat well to prevent heart disease, because once you have heart surgery, your chest never feels the same anymore.

“I tend to get occasional heart pains, but it can’t be fixed, so I encourage everyone to eat a healthy home-cooked meal and only have an indulgent meal once in a while,” he said.

The Ministry of Health has estimated that approximately 73% of deaths among Malaysians are caused by heart problems, hypertension and diabetes.

It said that these non-communicable diseases are closely linked to unhealthy lifestyles.

According to National Heart Institute cardiologist Dr Beni Isman Rusani, we can improve our eating habits by being mindful of three simple steps:

- Step 1: Type of food
- Step 2: Preparation of food
- Step 3: Amount of food

“When it comes to type of food, for example, salmon is high in omega three fatty acids. Nuts, oatmeal and berries are all good for you, but processed food such



Dr Beni laments that Malaysians have the highest obesity rates in South-East Asia.

as sausages and fast food should be avoided as they are high in salt and calories.

“In relation to the preparation of food, steaming and grilling is better than deep frying,” he advised.

Dr Beni urges people to use unsaturated cooking oil when preparing their meals, and to avoid recycling their “expensive” cooking oil.

“Cooking oils should only be used once,” he said.

When it comes to amount of food, Dr Beni said: “I tell my patients to look at their plates and divide it into half, a quarter and another quarter. Half of the plate should consist of vegetables or fruits, the next quarter should be your protein and the other quarter is for carbohydrates like rice.

“As long as people stick to their recommended portion of calories in their daily diet, they are on the right track.”

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“As long as people stick to their recommended portion of calories in their daily diet, they are on the right track.”

The food pyramid is designed to make healthy eating easier. Eat food from each shelf of the food pyramid in the correct amount each day.

Dr Beni said Malaysians generally fill their plates up half full with a meat produce and only a quarter with vegetables or a fibre-related food.

“We have the highest obesity rates in South-East Asia,” he lamented.

Dr Beni stressed that it is not necessary for people to go on an extreme food diet in order to maintain health.

“What is important is that in the long run, having a balanced diet is what really matters. You can avoid heart disease by practising dietary habits as recommended by the food pyramid,” he said.

The food pyramid is a tool used as a guide for healthy eating.

It consists of levels that represent various food groups, and indicates the recommended number of servings per day from each group.

Eat food from each shelf of the food pyramid in the correct amount each day.

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In addition, Dr Beni remarked that there are some dietary habits that are just plain bad for health.

“People need to stay away from sodas. I recommend you stick to good old plain water – it doesn’t have any calories and it hydrates your body,” he said.

Dr Beni also does not favour juices as it “takes away the natural fibres contained in a fruit”.

“It is much better to take the whole fruit as it also helps aid your digestive system,” he said.

Besides food, people also need to be aware of their overall lifestyle.

“Are you leading a stress-free life? Do you have an exercise routine? Do you smoke? These are all important factors,” Dr Beni noted.

“The food you consume is a contributing factor to heart disease, but I want to remind everyone that it is not just food but also your overall lifestyle that can contribute to heart disease.”

He advises people to improve their fitness level by participating in a “moderate intense workout of about 150 minutes in a week” as recommended by the American Heart Association.

“Brisk walking is moderate, or any other exercise that does not make you feel out of breath.

“What research has found is that for anything beyond the recommended level, there is a risk of a sports-related injury,” he said.

Dr Beni stresses that prevention is better than treatment when it comes to caring for the heart.

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DEBUNKING MYTHS: CRACKING JOINTS CAUSE ARTHRITIS

The Star, 27 October 2017

PETALING JAYA: Business consultant Arati Banu, 24, has been cracking and popping her knuckles since she was little, in spite of entreaties from her friends and family to stop the habit.

“I have ‘annoying’ aunty-like friends who told me to stop. I think they didn’t like the sound, which is a fair enough reason.

“My chiropractor told me to stop too. She said that it has something to do with bone alignment, but I don’t really remember what the exact reason was because I knew I wasn’t going to listen,” she said cheekily.

Arati added that she still cracks her knuckles as it makes her fingers feel relaxed.

Cracking knuckles is not the only thing that would annoy others.

Customer service assistant manager Victor Tan, 30, has been cracking his neck, legs and toes since he was 10 years old, much to his mother and grandparents’ dismay.

“When I was young, I enjoyed the sound of cracking joints. Also I did it because sometimes those joints were numb and I felt the need to crack them.

“My mother was upset with me for doing it. She finds it disgusting. According to her, it’s a taboo to crack your joints.

“She told me ‘Please don’t do it as this will cause your bones to become easily breakable.’ That is her old Chinese belief,” he shared.

An 82-year-old lady, who only wants to be known as Ruth, believes that it’s bad for a person to be cracking their knuckles, even if it may feel relaxing to do so.

“When people are stressed out or when they are distracted, thinking about something else, they crack their knuckles.

“I believe that when you do that, you are lengthening and enlarging your muscles. And because you are stretching your muscles so often, your fingers would become bigger,” she said.

Although she herself does not crack her knuckles, she had once asked her physiotherapist about the matter. “According to my physiotherapist, if the knuckles or joints crack naturally, it’s all right. But if you crack them for no reason – and some people have this habit – then it’s not good.

“You’re unnecessarily forcing the ‘pop’ sound to come out of your joints. If there is no pain, just leave it alone. That is what my physiotherapist told me,” Ruth said.

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THE ANSWER: IT DOESN'T

The Star, 27 October 2017



Dr Sargunan: 'even though cracking your knuckles will not lead to arthritis, it may lead to other problems.'

PETALING JAYA: Cracking one's joints will lead to arthritis. Yes or no?

The answer is a resounding "no" from Universiti Malaya Specialist Centre consultant rheumatologist Dr Sargunan Sockalingam (*pic*).

There is no increased prevalence of arthritis between those who crack their knuckles and those who don't, said Dr Sargunan, who cited a 2011 study published in *The Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*.

Other numerous studies came to the same conclusion, according to him.

However, while cracking knuckles does not itself cause arthritis, the behaviour may lead to other health consequences.

"There are a number of reports that suggest that this behaviour, other than being annoying to the unfortunate observer, can lead to swollen finger joints and a weak grip.

"So it is best to avoid this habit, as there has been no known proven benefit to date," he said.

Dr Sargunan also said that there are various theories as to how the act of cracking joints produces that "pop" sound.

"A recent study in Canada indicated that the sound of cracking joints comes from the formation of a cavity within the synovial fluid when the joint is stretched," he said.

Dr Sargunan did say, however, that the popping sound is still "a bit of a mystery" and that there is "no real answer" as to how it is produced.

Other factors leading to arthritis

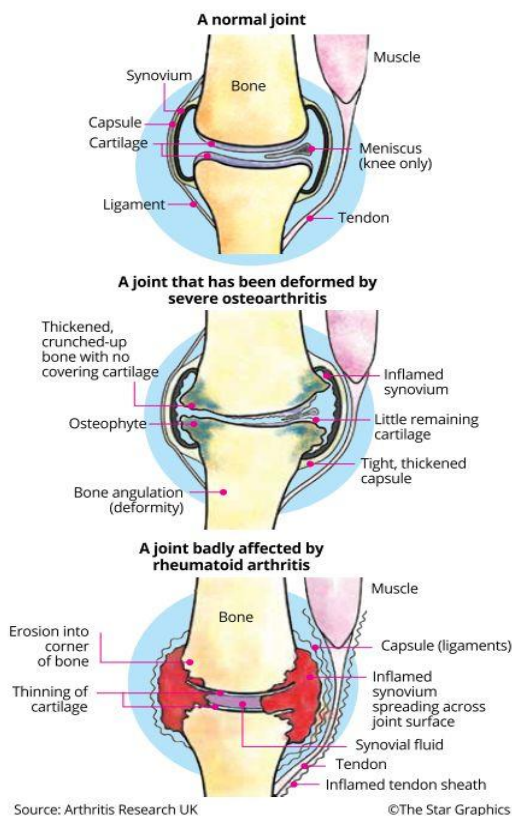
Although it is established that cracking joints does not actually cause arthritis, there are other factors that can lead to arthritis.

According to the US National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, the word "arthritis" is often used as a general term to refer to any disorder that affects the joints.

There are at least 100 different forms of arthritis recognised today, said Dr Sargunan, who is also the Arthritis Foundation Malaysia president.

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He said that the cause of arthritis depends on the disease itself, the most common ones being osteo-arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis and gout.



“For instance, osteoarthritis is caused by the wear and tear process that occurs with repetitive use and the ageing process.

“The synovium and cartilage undergo damage and are unable to regenerate fast enough to replace the worn-out surfaces.

“Osteoarthritis is caused by various factors. It could be hereditary. However, more commonly, trauma, sports injury and obesity could predispose one to early osteoarthritis,” Dr Sargunan said.

Another common type of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, is a type of autoimmune disease.

“The immune cells of the body see the synovium, which is an important component of the joint, as foreign tissue and attack it, thereby causing inflammation within the joint,” he said.

“Many autoimmune diseases have both genetic and non-genetic causes. Treatment of these, how-ever, can be initiated once it is correctly diagnosed,” he said, adding that the prognosis, which is the doctor’s judgment on the likely development of a medical condition, is usually good in such cases.

He explained that both types of arthritis cause pain and swelling, and if left untreated, could cause the affected joint to become damaged and eventually deformed.

Prevention and management

Dr Sargunan said that it is difficult for a person to do anything to prevent the development of most forms of arthritis, like rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis.

“What is more important is to recognise the form of arthritis as quickly as possible,” he said.

However, committing to healthy lifestyle choices is one way of preventing certain types of arthritis.

“Osteoarthritis can be prevented by maintaining an ideal body weight and observing a balanced diet. Low impact sports and muscle strengthening exercises would also be beneficial,” he said.

Gout, which is a condition caused by excess uric acid crystal deposits in the joints, can be prevented by reducing levels of uric acid.

According to Dr Sargunan, a purine-free diet could help lessen the risk of gout to some extent.

Contrary to the myth that older people are more affected by arthritis, he shared that different forms of the condition affect people of all age groups.

“Older people tend to suffer from osteoarthritis, so there is some truth to the myth.

“However, rheumatoid arthritis affects mainly women in the reproductive age group and can begin as early as the age of 15.

“Ankylosing spondylitis usually begins to affect the spine of boys as young as 13 years.”

He explained that the misperception that arthritis only affects older people does create difficulty for rheumatologists.

“Many patients present late into the disease due to ignorance and denial. These patients are told that they are too young to suffer from arthritis.

“If one is experiencing persistent symptoms, such as early morning stiffness of the joints, swelling and pain, it is important to pay a visit to the doctor as soon as possible,” he urged.

— **By Clarissa Chung**

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