

Obese parents court trouble

DANGER: They have a higher chance of getting overweight children

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PARENTS on the heavier side have been advised to adopt a healthier lifestyle to prevent their children from becoming overweight or obese.

Universiti Putra Malaysia's consultant and gastroenterology unit head Associate Professor Dr Loong Yik Yee said individuals from obese families should put in more effort to combat weight issues which led to health problems.

"Parents who are obese have a higher chance of getting obese children and a higher risk of medical complications," he said during the *New Straits Times* Live session at Balai Berita yesterday.

He said an overweight or obese person had a higher risk of getting diabetes, heart attack,



Universiti Putra Malaysia's consultant and gastroenterology unit head Associate Professor Dr Loong Yik Yee with senior reporter Azlan Abu Bakar during the NST Live programme yesterday.

high blood pressure, as well as cancer.

Dr Loong said obesity in Malaysia had been climbing steadily over the past 20 years.

"The prevalence of obesity

among those aged 18 years and above increased from 4.4 per cent in 1996 to 12.3 per cent in 2004 and to 14 per cent in 2006."

It was reported earlier that 43 per cent of adults, 20 per cent of

teenagers and 26 per cent of primary schoolchildren were either overweight or obese.

Three million Malaysians have been diagnosed with diabetes, a disease closely associated with obesity, heart attack, high blood pressure, stroke and cancer.

Dr Loong said parents who were not into exercise would influence children to follow suit.

"Children should be educated from a young age to adopt healthy eating habits and lifestyles as most behavioural patterns become a habit when they grow older," he said, adding that tackling weight problems of adults was a little too late.

"When one is obese at a younger age, the risk of developing complications later in life is higher as one's weight will increase further."

He said the treatment of those who suffered from obesity due to genetics was not different from others.

"They would only have to put in more effort as they have genetic factors going against them."

In 2006, the National Health Morbidity Survey found that 43.1 per cent of the adult population was overweight, with 14 per cent of them obese.

"They would only have to put in more effort as they have genetic factors going against them."
Associate Professor Dr Loong Yik Yee

Dr Loong said the prevalence of obesity was highest among Malays (13.6 per cent) and Indians (13.5 per cent) followed by the indigenous group of Bumiputera Sarawak (10.8 per cent) and Chinese (8.4 per cent), while the indigenous group of Bumiputera Sabah had the lowest

prevalence of 7.3 per cent.

He urged the public to take part in the Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society's initiative, "My Weight My Health" programme that gave constant support to patients to continue maintaining their weight loss.

For those interested, the "My Weight My Health" hotline number is 1300 800 373.