Malaysia has the highest obesity rate in Southeast Asia and is ranked 6th in the Asia-Pacific region, based on a 2010 WHO survey. In 2006, the National Health Morbidity Survey found that 43pc of adult Malaysians, or 2 in 5 adults, were now either overweight or obese.

SUGAR plays a hidden indirect role in stroke. Sugar is a major cause of overweight and obesity. Obesity puts a strain on our body that affects the entire circulatory system. This can lead to difficulty in blood flow and an increased risk of blockage, both of which can cause strokes.

Obesity also makes you more likely to have high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes—all factors that also increase stroke risk. High blood pressure is known to be a leading cause of stroke. And diabetes itself is an individual risk factor for stroke.

Sugar is also a major culprit in internal inflammation—swelling of the walls of the arteries and organs within the body—the foundation for many chronic diseases, including stroke.

Here is sugar's legacy of diseases and internal damage, which predispose you to stroke.

OBEITY
Malaysia has the highest obesity rate in Southeast Asia and is ranked 6th in the Asia-Pacific region, based on a 2010 WHO survey. In 2006, the National Health Morbidity Survey found that 43pc of adult Malaysians, or 2 in 5 adults, were now either overweight or obese.
February 2011, came from the first large US nationwide study of stroke hospitalizations by age.

The more overweight you are, the more likely you are to have a stroke, a recent study reports.

The study, which followed 13,549 middle-aged Americans for 19 years, looked at stroke risk associated with several measures of obesity, emphasizing BMI, ie a ratio of weight and height, but also such measures as waist circumstance.

We found that the risk of stroke was increased with each measure of obesity, said Dr Hiroshi Yatsuwa, a visiting associate professor of numerical health at the University of Minnesota and lead author of a report published in the online version of Stroke.

Obesity nearly doubles the risk of a stroke in healthy middle-aged men, a long-running Swedish study found. That is true stroke if nothing is done to attack (TIA), ie a "mini stroke" or low-calf blood pressure and strain on her heart. Research studies have shown that left ventricular hypertrophy and high blood pressure are predictors of heart disease and stroke in both disease and stroke in both children and adults.

Sugar's role in obesity

Diets containing too much sugar - white sugar, sucrose (beet sugar and cane sugar), whether white or brown, high-fructose corn syrup and sugar substitutes (ie artificial or low-calorie sweeteners) - can quickly cause weight gain.

According to Robert Lustig, MD, a University of California, San Francisco paediatric neuroendocrinologist, sugar both drives fat storage and makes the brain think it is hungry, setting up a "vicious cycle".

More specifically, it is fructose that is harmful, according to Lustig. Fructose is a component of the 2 most popular sugars, table sugar (sucrose) and high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), which has become ubiquitous in soft drinks and many other processed foods.

Over the years, there have been many findings that link sugar to obesity.

Researchers taking nutrition-analap shot observations of the population around a major metropolitan area (ie Sydney, New South Wales) that would become ubiquitous in soft drinks and many other processed foods.

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3 MILLION Malaysians are diagnosed with diabetes closely associated with obesity. This is a 2-fold increase – from 1.5 million in 2006. "We estimate about 2 million people have not received any treatment for diabetes," says Deputy Health Minister Datuk Rosnah Shirlin.

Diabetes is a disease that affects a person, or glucose, out of the blood and into the body’s primary source of fuel.

When we eat, our food is digested and glucose makes its way into our bloodstream. Our cells use the glucose for energy and growth. However, glucose cannot enter our cells without insulin being present – insulin makes it possible for our cells to take in the glucose.

Insulin is a hormone that is produced by the pancreas. After eating, the pancreas automatically releases an adequate quantity of insulin to move the glucose present in our blood into the cells, and lowers the blood sugar level.

A person with diabetes has a condition in which the quantity of glucose in the blood is too elevated (hyperglycemia). This is because the body either does not produce enough insulin, produces no insulin, or has cells that do not respond properly to the insulin the pancreas produces. This results in too much glucose building up in the blood.

High blood sugar levels damage blood vessels over time. Persistent elevated blood glucose levels contributed to the buildup of plaque in blood vessels. Plaque – a fatty substance made up of cholesterol, calcium, cellular waste and protein – sticks to the walls of blood vessels and can interfere with blood flow.

This impaired blood flow can lead to stroke (as well as heart attacks, chronic wounds and amputations).

What causes diabetes

The cause of diabetes is unknown but there are some well-recognised risk factors for the disease.

Obesity or excess body weight – fueled by excess sugar consumption – is one of the major contributors for people suffering with diabetes. According to the Obesity Society in the US, 90pc of all adult-onset or Type 2 diabetes are overweight or obese.

According to a report, a weight increase of 11-18 pounds raises a person’s risk of developing Type 2 diabetes to twice that of individuals who have not gained weight.

Other risk factors for Type 2 diabetes include genetics, increasing age, physical inactivity, stress, and hypertension (about 40pc of diabetics also have high blood pressure, a condition that is made worse by being overweight).

**Metabolic Syndrome.** Diabetes is a metabolic disease that affects the way our body uses digested food for growth and energy. It has been noted that 1 out of every 5 individuals who are overweight is affected by a metabolic condition known as “Syndrome X” (or Metabolic Syndrome).

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**Metabolic Syndrome** is a group of risk factors that occur together (such as high blood pressure and excess body fat around the waist) that increase the risk of coronary artery disease, stroke and diabetes. Many people with Metabolic Syndrome have, or are on their way to developing Type 2 diabetes.

The factors that characterise this condition such as high blood pressure or insulin resistance can increase the individual's risk for developing more serious health problems including heart disease, diabetes and stroke.

Sugar is a major cause of Metabolic Syndrome.

**Diabetes increases stroke risk**

Multiple studies have shown that people with diabetes are at greater risk for stroke compared to people without diabetes regardless of the number of health risk factors they have. Overall, the health risk of cardiovascular disease (including stroke) is 2.5 times higher in men and women with diabetes compared to people without diabetes.

According to the American Diabetes Association, “people with A1C levels above 7pc... are nearly 3 times as likely to have to stroke as people with an A1C level below 5pc. (A1C, also referred to as HbA1C, is a lab test that shows the average amount of sugar in your blood over 3 months. It shows how well you are controlling your diabetes).

Type 2 diabetes has also been associated with an increased risk of recurrent stroke or cardiovascular events among patients who had an ischaemic stroke or TIA (transient ischaemic attack). This is particularly evident among stroke patients who face high death risk. A study in the journal Neurology (Vol.59, No.1, 9 July 2002) shows that stroke victims who have uncontrolled high blood sugar have a high blood sugar have a higher risk of dying than stroke patients with normal blood sugar levels.

**Sugar’s role in diabetes**

While it does not cause the disease (an elevated blood sugar level is the result of having diabetes, not the cause), sugar – along with other foods we consume and how much we exercise – are contributing factors.

A recent Harvard study has found that regular consumption of soda and other sugar-sweetened beverages is associated with a clear and consistently greater risk of Metabolic Syndrome and Type 2 diabetes.

In the study, researchers pooled 11 studies that examined the association between sugar-sweetened and other sugars.

The findings showed that people drinking 1-2 sugary drinks per day increased the risk of Type 2 diabetes by 20pc compared with those who consumed less than 1 sugary drink per month.

Drinking one 12-ounce serving per day increases the risk of Type 2 diabetes by about 15pc.

According to the Harvard School of Public Health researchers, the study provides empirical evidence that intake of sugary beverages should be limited to reduce risk of these conditions.

This study is the first meta-analysis to quantitatively review the evidence linking sugar-sweetened beverages with Type 2 diabetes and Metabolic Syndrome.
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