

'MCO, WFH impacted health'

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More people have cardiovascular disease, says doctor

KUALA LUMPUR: The work from home (WFH) ruling in various sectors during the various phases of the movement control in 2020 and 2021 has led to an "increasing number of people suffering from cardiovascular disease", according to an expert.

Consultant specialist in cardiology and internal medicine at Universiti Malaya Medical Centre Assoc Prof Dr Muhammad Dzafir Ismail said among the negative aspects of WFH was that people spent most of their time at home, which resulted in them eating "too much unhealthy food" and not exercising enough as they could not go jogging or cycling outdoors.

"During the prolonged movement control order, most Malaysians unfortunately adopted sedentary lifestyles.

"Many also felt demotivated and

were mentally distressed, which led to an increase in unhealthy habits such as smoking," he told Bernama.

He did not provide any data but said that based on his observations, he had noted an "increasing number of young patients suffering from cardiovascular disease which can lead to a heart attack".

Dr Muhammad Dzafir said cardiovascular disease, including coronary artery disease (CAD), remained Malaysia's leading cause of death every year.

According to data from the Statistics Department, 23% of deaths in 2019 were caused by cardiovascular disease. Out of the medically confirmed deaths due to cardiovascular disease, 16,325 (15%) were caused by CAD.

Dr Muhammad Dzafir explained that CAD is caused by a blockage in the blood vessels of the heart, better

known as coronary blood vessels.

"The process of fat deposition or atherosclerosis is the main reason why such blockage in the coronary blood vessels can happen, as the supply of oxygen that is supposed to be carried by the blood cannot reach the heart muscle area.

"This condition, also called ischemia or ischemic, will cause the heart to not function properly.

"If left untreated for a prolonged period of time, the patient will suffer a heart attack and subsequently, heart failure, which can eventually lead to death," he added.

He said CAD that prevails for a long period of time can be worsened by other risk factors for heart disease such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, an inactive lifestyle and other hereditary factors.

Signs of CAD include severe chest

pain, Dr Muhammad Dzafir said.

"The pain comes and goes in waves, and you may feel something heavy in the middle or left side of the chest. The pain will sometimes be accompanied by numbness in the left arm, jaw and neck, as well as sweating, nausea and possibly vomiting.

"However, older patients, diabetics or women sometimes don't experience (severe) pain. Instead, they may experience milder pain, shortness of breath, fainting or extreme fatigue," he added.

Consultant cardiothoracic surgeon at Malakota Medical Centre Dr Benny Cheng said several regular surgery options for CAD are available in hospital settings, with the popular one being coronary artery bypass grafting which involves creating new conduits to bypass blockages in the blood vessels.