

The Hearty Digest

SUNWAY
MEDICAL CENTRE™
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A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Heartfelt Thanks & Seasons Greetings

As we approach the end of another remarkable year, I find myself reflecting on the accomplished journey the whole SMC has undertaken together. Looking back, 2023 has been an extraordinary chapter in the journey of SMC; a year of charting new milestones, marked by remarkable achievements and above all, our unwavering dedication to our mission of providing exceptional healthcare to our community.

Amid these instances of noteworthy accomplishments, it is essential to acknowledge that every person in this hospital plays a crucial role, and I appreciate the passion, relentless commitment, and hard work everyone brings to work every day. We represent the heartbeat of our organization. I am truly grateful, that in the face of adversity, we have been resilient and worked tirelessly to care for our patients.



“

I am also compelled to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you who have given SMC your unwavering support for close to 25 years. Whether you are a patient, a caregiver, or a community partner, your solidarity with us has been the cornerstone of our achievements. I am indeed thankful for the trust you have placed in us. Your stories of courage, perseverance, and compassion have touched our hearts and reinforced the importance of our mission of being a beacon of health and healing.

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Entering the New Year, our hospital will continue to innovate, collaborate, and strive for excellence in healthcare delivery. As the largest private quaternary hospital in Malaysia, our commitment to providing personalized, holistic, patient-centered care remains steadfast, and we are excited about the improvements and expansions that lie ahead.

In the spirit of the season, I extend warm wishes to every one of you. May the upcoming year bring joy, good health, and prosperity to you and your loved ones. Thank you for being an integral part of the SMC family. Your support fuels our determination to continue making a positive impact on the health and well-being of our community and the country.

Thank you & Happy New Year!

Dr Seow Vei Ken

Chief Executive Officer
Sunway Medical Centre, Sunway City

DO YOU KNOW?

Early Intervention, Hope, And Resilience In Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is an ever-looming concern in Malaysia, where the potential risks often remain underestimated, and the urgency of regular screenings is not given the attention it deserves. Statistics reveal that one in 19 Malaysian women is at risk of contracting breast cancer annually. There has been a significant increase in breast cancer awareness, but the reality is that many newly diagnosed women are already in the clutches of advanced stages.

To pave the way for a brighter and healthier future for Malaysian women and men, Dr Christina Lai Nye Bing, Consultant Oncologist at SMC explained some lesser-known aspects of the disease and provides her insights into the multifaceted realm of breast cancer.



Dr Christina Lai Nye Bing
Consultant Oncologist

Understanding the Risk Factors and Recent Trends

Like any cancer, breast cancer can strike anyone, including men, who account for 1% of cases.

Some factors that increases susceptibility are:

- Genetics
- Family history
- Hormonal factors
- Lifestyle
- Age
- Menstrual cycle and menopause

While some risk factors cannot be modified, some elements, like delaying childbirth or not having children, are within our control. Dr Lai said, "This is why married women are often advised to consider starting a family earlier, especially as modern careers often lead to delayed family planning."

“Also, locally, we see 50% of women being diagnosed under the age of 50. Therefore, even young women should start paying attention to this condition. As oncologists, we still grapple with patients who are misinformed or delay medical attention,” she added.

Breast Cancer Remains a Serious Disease, But There is Every Reason to be Hopeful

In the past, a breast cancer diagnosis was often accompanied by fear and uncertainty, which meant facing disfiguring surgeries and debilitating treatments. Today, the outlook for women with breast cancer is much more positive.

Treatment approaches are also less intrusive to patients' lifestyles and daily life. Therefore, while breast cancer remains a serious disease, there is every reason to be hopeful, especially when detected early.

Detection as Early as Stage 0 is Key

Early detection is the cornerstone for improving breast cancer treatment outcomes, thus regular health screenings help detect cancer at its earliest, most treatable stages, such as:

- **Mammograms** - typically recommended annually for women aged 40 and above, can detect precancerous breast calcifications, visible as white spots on X-ray images, indicating ductal carcinoma *in situ* (DCIS), also known as stage 0. While DCIS is often benign, it accounts for 20% of all newly diagnosed breast cancers.
- **Clinical Breast Exams**
- **Self-examinations** - both women and men should initiate this once a month to identify any abnormalities as early as 20 years of age. Do not panic if a lump is found since only 10-20% turns out to be cancerous, but for women, do not do it just before menses as breasts tend to swell.

“ People often avoid mammograms because of the discomfort. If the process seems daunting, consider bringing a friend for moral support. Diagnostic technologies, such as 3D mammography, have improved early detection, even in patients with dense breast tissue. However, the most critical step starts at home, with you conducting regular self-examinations of your breasts because you are most attuned to your body,” Dr Lai advised.

Survival rate of individuals in the early stages is significantly higher compared to locally advanced (Stage 3) or metastatic (Stage 4) breast cancer.

Remarkable Progress in the Field of Oncology

The latest advancements in screening and oncology offer new hope for women facing breast cancer, such as:

- Hormone status and genomic studies which provide valuable insights, allowing oncologists to tailor treatments to each patient's unique situation.
- Targeted treatments that can significantly shrink or eliminate tumours.
- Patients also experience fewer side effects due to innovations like hair-preserving chemotherapy machines, oncoplastic surgery for breast reconstruction, and improved anti-vomiting drugs.



DO YOU KNOW?

A Battle Against Skin Diseases Among Children

Children and infants have young developing immune systems. As the system matures gradually, it faces various challenges from infective agents and allergens. This sometimes predisposes young children to a range of skin diseases.

Dr Heah Sheau Szu, Consultant Paediatric Dermatologist at SMC, shared, “Every skin condition has its unique management approach. Inaccurate diagnosis can lead to improper treatment which may be ineffective, delay recovery or even be potentially harmful.”



Dr Heah Sheau Szu
Consultant Paediatric Dermatologist

Importance of Correct Diagnosis

“All medical conditions, including children’s skin conditions, need to be managed with correct diagnosis followed by appropriate treatment and management plan. Some skin conditions, like atopic dermatitis, can have various presentations, and might be confused with other conditions. Similarity of many skin conditions can make diagnosis difficult sometimes.”

“The treatment for skin diseases in children will vary depending on specific conditions. For example, skin conditions like salmon patch and sebaceous gland hyperplasia are not infectious and can resolve naturally while scabies is infectious and the whole family needs to be treated,” said Dr Heah.

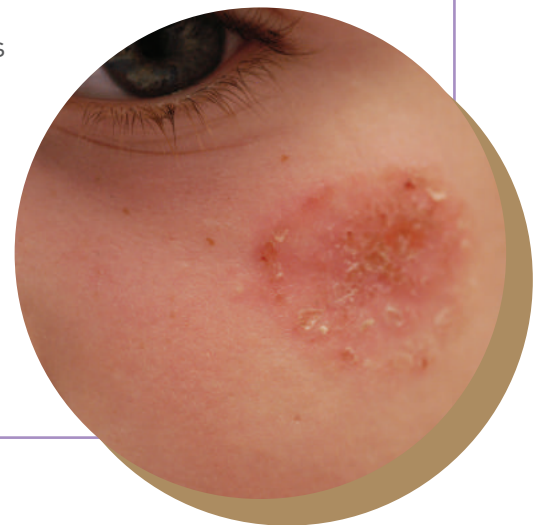
Essentially, all children deserve the best expert care for their diseases. Children’s skin disorders can be managed with accurate diagnosis and effective treatment.



Common Skin Diseases Among Children

There are various types of skin diseases and some are more common than others. A few simple examples are:

- **Atopic Dermatitis (AD)** - AD/eczema, a very common skin disease, impacts up to 13% of Malaysian children, causes inflammation and irritation with itchy, red, and dry patches.
- **Sebaceous Gland Hyperplasia** - presents as clusters of small white yellowish pimple-like lesions around the nose and cheek areas of infants, happens due to maternal or endogenous androgenic stimulation of the sebaceous gland growth.
- **“Salmon Patch”/“Angel Kiss”/“Stork-bite Mark”** - interesting names given to benign vascular lesions, usually at the forehead, glabella and nape of the neck, birthmark that is asymptomatic and will fade with time.
- **Bullous Impetigo** - an infectious skin condition presented as fluid-filled blisters, often on the chest, back, shoulders, abdomen, arms and legs of children below 5 years old. Commonly occurs following secondary bacterial infection of insect bites, chicken pox, scabies and eczema.
- **Molluscum Contagiosum** - a viral skin infection that leads to small, flesh-coloured, dome-shaped skin bumps which are near together.
- **Scabies** - contagious parasitic infection that causes severe itching and scaly rash on fingers, web spaces, wrists, axilla and groin.
- **Diaper Rash** - common skin condition at diaper area resulting from prolonged skin irritation due to exposure to faeces, urine and friction.



General Guidelines in Managing Skin Diseases

- Know the common skin conditions, as largely are mild or benign, although in rare occasions it can be serious with occasional systemic involvement.
- Caregivers should refer to a medical doctor for correct diagnosis and treatment when uncertain.
- Once diagnosed, follow the treatment plan given.
- Avoid scratching as it can worsen infection.
- Remember to always keep the infected area clean and dry.
- Best for children to be dressed in comfortable, loose-fitting outfits to avoid friction to the infected area.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Gaining A Clearer Vision

Prescription glasses and contact lenses are widely used but they do have their limitations in terms of power, durability and practicality. In addition, they can be a hindrance for activities such as hiking, scuba diving, sports and travelling. Hence, laser eye treatment is the option for people who want more flexibility in their lifestyles.

Ophthalmologist specialising in cornea, external eye disease and laser vision correction Dr Umi Kalthum Md Noh at SMC shared about laser eye treatments in Malaysia and elaborated on the differences of photorefractive keratectomy (PRK), laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis (LASIK) surgery, and small incision lenticule extraction (SMILE) procedure.

“ Most patients today are rarely apprehensive about the procedure, and those who are interested have actually been considering it for at least a few years. I feel that the internet has played a big role in that. There are so many videos and anecdotes available for patients to find out more about the procedure before seeking consultation from a specialist. ”

Understanding the Treatment Better

One of the main benefits of undergoing laser vision correction is its long-lasting and stable corrective effects. While there is a misconception that treatment grants complete immunity to minor power changes and age-related risk of developing cataracts, Dr Umi reassured that these changes tend to be minor and are manageable through follow-up medical enhancement.

“In most cases, the patient’s eye power won’t jump so high unless they already have a pre-existing ocular condition. It is possible but uncommon that a patient will require further enhancement after visual correction.”



Dr Umi Kalthum Md Noh
Ophthalmologist

Patients may worry about the symptoms of glare and light sensitivities post-surgery. However, Dr Umi explained that such issues are temporary and will naturally resolve within a month once the patients' visual system has had time to readjust.

From there, patients are free to resume their active lifestyles and enjoy near-perfect vision.

Improved Eye Care

While patients would be eager to undergo laser vision correction, Dr Umi highlighted the seriousness of remaining diligent throughout screening checks, surgical procedure and recovery period, on the part of both patient and surgeon.

“ The key is in the selection criteria for each patient. There are a few factors to look out for such as infections, as well as corneal stability so that the procedure won't result in an abnormal shape. There is also the risk of pre-existing medical and eye conditions which could affect the final result. ”

From consultation until surgery, patients must undergo multiple screening and consultation sessions to ensure that all parameters are in order to ensure the patient's safety. Patients are also prescribed antibiotics and eye protection (sunglasses and eye shield) following the surgery in order to reduce eyestrain and risk of infection.

Due to advancements in science, the field of laser eye surgery has progressed greatly over the last several decades, allowing surgeons to perform more precise operations and greatly improving the safety of the patient.

Differences Between Treatments

- **Both LASIK and PRK** are safe and effective surgeries that change how an eye reflects light by reshaping the cornea.
- **PRK** involves the removal of the outer corneal layer first which will regrow over time.
- **LASIK** requires a small flap to be made to allow the surgeon to make corrections to the inner cornea before being placed back in its original position.
- **SMILE** procedure minimises changes to the outer corneal layer to maintain corneal integrity. Lasers are used to sculpt a disc-shaped piece of cornea, known as a lenticule, right under the eye's surface. A small incision is then made to give surgeons access to this disc to reshape the cornea accordingly.

“Each person will have individual considerations and circumstances that could affect the outcome of laser eye treatment,” said Dr Umi. Hence, she encourages those considering eye surgeries to always consult a specialist first to better understand the options available to them.



**IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

Breaking The Sweet Barrier, Exploring Diabetes Beyond Sugar

Diabetes affects about 422 million people worldwide, with the majority living in low-and middle-income countries, and 1.5 million deaths are directly attributed to this condition each year. Fortunately, increased advancements in the medical industry have significantly improved patient outcomes in terms of diagnosis and treatment.

According to Dr Teoh Wei Leng, Consultant Endocrinologist at SMC, "Diabetes is a chronic disease when an individual's pancreas doesn't produce sufficient insulin or when it can't effectively use the insulin it produces. The insulin hormone helps glucose get into your cells to be used for energy. When this fails, it can lead to elevated glucose levels and over long periods, it can raise risk of organ damage to eyes, kidneys, nerves, blood vessels and/or heart."

The prevalence of diabetes among Malaysians is increasing. It is estimated that 7 million adult Malaysians will be affected by diabetes by 2025. Dr Teoh explained, "One of the most worrying phenomena is that people are getting diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes at a much younger age. I recently diagnosed a 17-year-old, with childhood obesity and a strong family history of diabetes. Our paediatric endocrinologists are seeing Type 2 diabetes in children which was never the case before."

Root Causes, Not as Simple as Excess Sugar

Dr Teoh pointed out that while genetic predisposition does play a role, lifestyle choices significantly contribute to diabetes. Even more so if you have no family history of diabetes. "Poor dietary habits, sedentary lifestyles, and obesity are prominent triggers. We need to educate good healthy food choices from childhood so that we can form healthy lifelong eating habits to reduce the rise of obesity. Addressing these factors is crucial in our battle against diabetes." No one is spared from its risk!

Here are the classic signs of diabetes:

- Frequent urination
- Excessive thirst
- Unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue

“If you notice these symptoms, don't dismiss them, get your blood sugar levels checked promptly. Today, blood sugar levels can be checked for free or a small fee in pharmacies or clinics,” Dr Teoh shared.



Dr Teoh Wei Leng
Consultant Endocrinologist

Dispelling Myths and Encouraging Healthy Habits

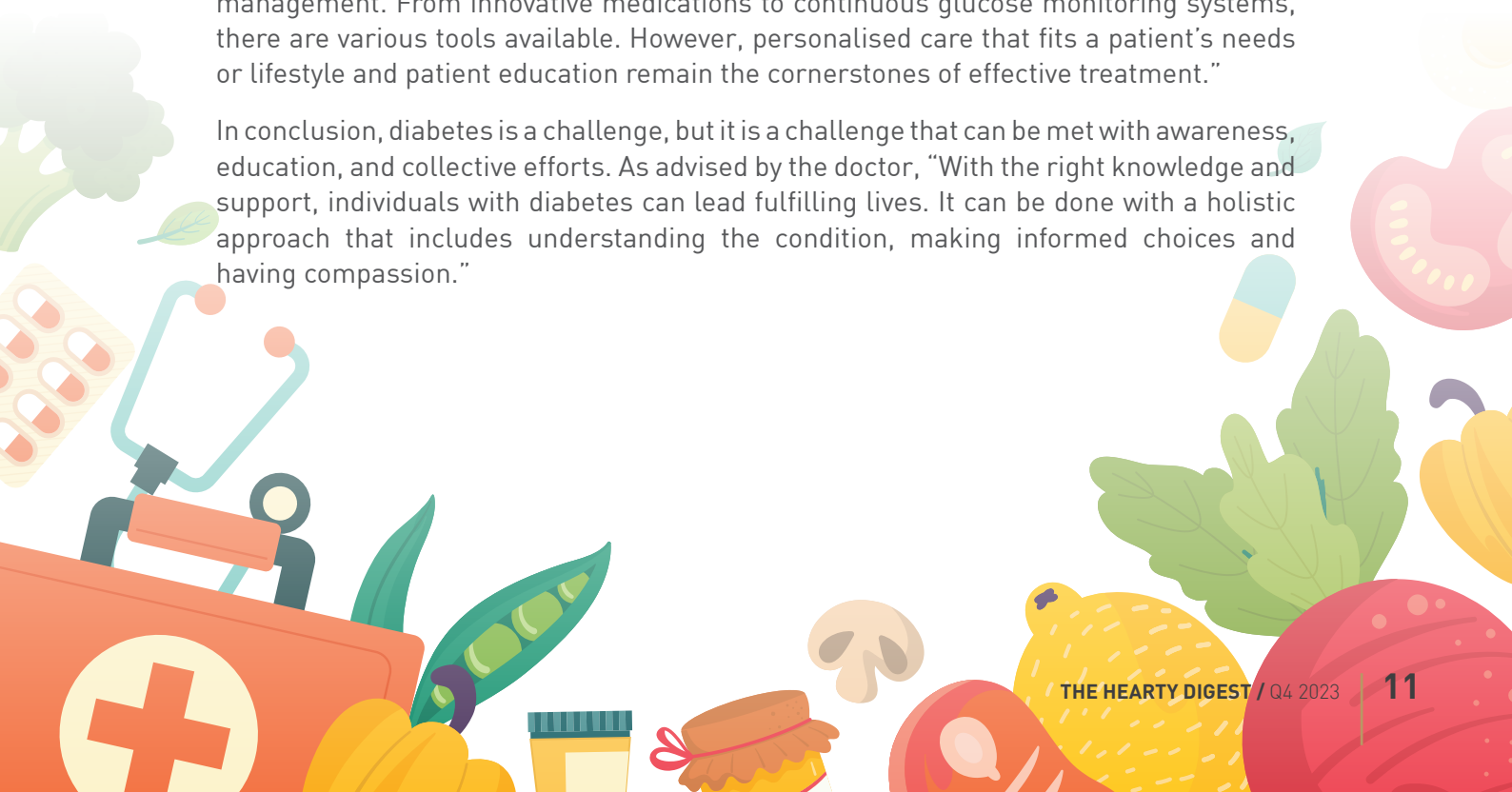
One of the challenges in managing diabetes is the prevalence of myths and misconceptions. Dr Teoh was quick to dispel them, especially regarding medication, “A common misconception is that diabetes medications harm the kidneys. In reality, uncontrolled diabetes can lead to kidney damage. It's essential to ensure regular follow-up with your diabetes doctor.”

Hence, Dr Teoh stressed the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. She said, “It's not about extreme diets; it's about sustainable, nutritious choices. Small changes in daily habits can lead to significant overall health improvements. For example, instead of eating out or takeaways 3-4 times a week, eat out once a week. A balanced diet that includes whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables is essential. Pair this with regular exercise – even a brisk walk every day can make a substantial difference.”

Innovations in Treating and Managing Diabetes

On treatment options, Dr Teoh shared, “We have seen remarkable progress in diabetes management. From innovative medications to continuous glucose monitoring systems, there are various tools available. However, personalised care that fits a patient's needs or lifestyle and patient education remain the cornerstones of effective treatment.”

In conclusion, diabetes is a challenge, but it is a challenge that can be met with awareness, education, and collective efforts. As advised by the doctor, “With the right knowledge and support, individuals with diabetes can lead fulfilling lives. It can be done with a holistic approach that includes understanding the condition, making informed choices and having compassion.”



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Be Wary Of The Silent Killer

According to the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2019, three out of 10 Malaysians live with hypertension. That equates to 6.4 million people being affected, but only half of them are aware of it. This is because high blood pressure is a silent killer.

There are generally no obvious symptoms until complications happen. Most of the time, patients only discover they have hypertension when they suffer a stroke, heart attack or kidney failure, or discover it incidentally if they have a blood pressure machine at home.

SMC's Cardiologist Datuk Dr Yap Yee Guan explained that 95% of the time, primary hypertension, also known as essential hypertension, has no underlying causes. However, the remaining 5% have secondary causes due to congenital problems such as narrowing of the kidney arteries or tumours of the adrenal glands which causes excessive amounts of hormones. This causes the blood pressure to go up.

“The older we are, the more likely we are to get high blood pressure. Both men and postmenopausal women exhibit a higher propensity for developing high blood pressure. Other key factors include family history, a sedentary lifestyle and chronic stress. Smoking, elevated cholesterol levels, inadequate dietary habits and obesity also play significant roles in elevating blood pressure levels. Additionally, individuals grappling with diabetes or other underlying health disorders may experience heightened blood pressure,” said Dr Yap.



Dato Dr Yap Yee Guan
Cardiologist

Fluctuation of Blood Pressure

Blood pressure exhibits a dynamic that fluctuates over 24 hours. During the day, it experiences an increase while diminishing at night.

Multiple measurements are essential for a comprehensive understanding, particularly during the initial stages of diagnosis. Analysing the complete 24-hour profile is imperative in determining whether an individual is experiencing hypertension.

Doctors play a crucial role in differentiating genuine hypertension from white-coat hypertension. The latter occurs when elevated blood pressure results from the anxiety or apprehension associated with medical settings.



Dr Yap outlines two distinct approaches to differentiate between white coat hypertension and essential hypertension, or possibly a combination of both.

1. Individuals are instructed to conduct blood pressure measurements in the comfort of their homes: This capitalises on the absence of doctor-related stressors at home and if their blood pressure readings remain elevated, it implies the presence of genuine hypertension. It also entails consistent monitoring over a week, with patients subsequently presenting their readings to a doctor.

2. Utilising ambulatory blood pressure measurements (ABPM): This employs a portable blood pressure device, similar to wearing an old-style walkman. It features a cuff that periodically measures blood pressure, even during sleep.

This 24-hour monitoring unveils the entire circadian profile of blood pressure fluctuations which are otherwise unobservable through self-measurement.

Lifestyle Modifications to Lower Chances of Hypertension

The initial step in managing hypertension is guiding individuals towards lifestyle adjustments. This holistic approach constitutes the essence of lifestyle modification, wherein dietary improvements and physical activity take centre stage.

This encompasses:

- A reduction in salt consumption and avoidance of salty foods, as excess salt is detrimental for hypertension patients.
- Emphasising exercise and weight loss, assuming blood pressure is within manageable levels.
- Advocating for a Mediterranean-style diet rich in fruits, vegetables, seeds and whole grain products is advisable.

Following these lifestyle changes, the next phase involves introducing medication and maintaining regular follow-up. The overarching objective is to curtail the mortality and morbidity associated with hypertension. Generally, the target blood pressure to strive for is around 140 over 90.

Lifestyle modifications should invariably be advocated for all patients. While pharmaceutical therapy remains the cornerstone of treatment, the emergence of renal denervation (RDN) serves as a high-potential adjunctive treatment along with medication. RDN involves inserting a tube into the renal artery that supplies blood to the kidneys. Through the tube, radiofrequency delivers heat to the nerves around the kidney artery and ablates it, which reduces hormone secretion and lowers blood pressure.

Such technology signifies a positive outlook for the future, providing high hopes for more effective treatments in managing hypertension and improving patient outcomes.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

World Stroke Day: Take Action, Act Fast



Dr Lee Tuan Cheong
Assistant Medical Director and
Consultant Emergency Physician



Stroke is known to be a leading cause of death and disability worldwide, and its prevalence continues to rise. This sudden killer usually occurs when blood supply to a part of the brain is interrupted, causing damage to brain cells.

Stroke can strike anyone at any age, but it is usually more common in people over the age of 60. However, the World Health Organisation (WHO) stated that stroke patients are getting younger. In fact, 1 in 4 strokes now occur in people under the age of 50.

SMC's Assistant Medical Director and Consultant Emergency Physician, Dr Lee Tuan Cheong shared that in Malaysia, stroke is the third leading cause of death. "According to the National Stroke Registry, there were 47,911 stroke incidences in 2019, which means that about 130 people suffer from stroke every day in Malaysia."

The country also records almost 32 deaths per day due to stroke and patients are almost always burdened with various morbidities where 7 out of 10 stroke patients will need to depend on others to survive.

According to the Global Burden of Disease Stroke Statistics Worldwide survey in 2016, it is estimated that 1 in 4 Malaysians will suffer a stroke by 2040 if no preventive action is taken.

“ However, it is understood that up to 90% of strokes can be prevented and attributable to a few modifiable risk factors. By taking the necessary steps to reduce them, you can lower your chances of having a stroke,” said Dr Lee.

How Do You Know When a Stroke Attacks?

When a stroke attacks, the signs and symptoms may vary depending on the part of the brain that is affected. However, do keep in mind these signs and just remember to B.E.F.A.S.T!

B-balance	Loss of balance, headache or dizziness
E-eyes	Blurred vision
F-face	One side of the face droops
A-arms	Arm or leg weakness
S-speech	Difficulty in speaking
T-time	Immediately call for an ambulance or the nearest accident and emergency department

According to Dr Lee, it is important to act quickly and seek medical treatment FAST during a stroke attack. TIME is BRAIN, and early treatment can help to reduce the damage caused by the stroke, as well as improve the chances of a full recovery.

“It’s best to head to the hospital immediately after the onset of symptoms. Preferably within 4.5 hours because reperfusion therapy (re-establishing blood supply), such as thrombolysis and thrombectomy in ischemic stroke have been proven to minimise disability,” Dr Lee shared.

Recuperating After a Stroke

Consultant Rehabilitation Medicine Specialist Dr Foong Chee Chong shared vital knowledge on what can be done after the initial acute stroke management. “I recommend a comprehensive stroke rehabilitation programme, which usually begins when the stroke survivor is still in the hospital, but it can be carried out in an outpatient setting or at home. All recommended exercises have to be individualised depending on the severity of the stroke.”

With medical advancements, there are many rehabilitation processes fit for stroke survivors that can help stroke survivors achieve better functional improvement, such as:

- **Robotic Technology**

One such example available in SMC is an exoskeleton gait trainer (EksoNR). It helps to increase the chances of stroke survivors in improving their mobility, which generally takes between 1 to 3 months. It not only provides intensive training with accurate feedback, it also offers various levels of assistance depending on the severity of the patient.

- **Non-invasive Brain Stimulation**

- **Virtual Reality**



Dr Foong Chee Chong
 Consultant Rehabilitation
 Medicine Specialist

There is actually a golden period where the injured brain is more ‘plastic’ and it is usually within the first 3 months, and according to the doctor, “During this period, intensive therapy can produce more gain.”

For stroke survivors, rehabilitation is an imperative part of the journey to recovery. Therefore, choosing a healthcare facility that is well-equipped with the right expertise and tools to support the process leads to significant improvements.

It takes lots of patience when a loved one suffers from a stroke attack. It is crucial for families and partners to understand the severity of the stroke and the impairments they suffer from. “More importantly, be there to support your loved ones throughout their long recovery journey. Although they may not be able to regain their health and function completely, do understand that they can still have a meaningful life, albeit in other ways,” advised Dr Foong.

Home Exercises

Here are a few types of exercises a stroke survivor can perform at home, which can be broadly categorise into:

- Flexibility exercise
- Strengthening exercises
- Balance exercises
- Functional task training
- Aerobic exercise



Known Risk Factors

The most common risk factors include:

- **High Blood Pressure, Diabetes & High Cholesterol**
- **Smoking**
Damages the lining of blood vessels, making them more likely to narrow or develop clots
- **Obesity & Physical Inactivity**
Increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes, all of which are risk factors for stroke
- **Heart Disease/Irregular Heartbeat (Atrial Fibrillation)**
Causes clots to form, which can travel to the brain and cause a stroke
- **Family History of Stroke**
Heightens likelihood of having a stroke yourself
- **History of Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA)**
A temporary stroke-like event that is caused by a blood clot that blocks a blood vessel in the brain
- **Drug Abuse**
- **Heavy Lifting**
- **Extreme Emotional Stress**

YOUR EVERYDAY WELLNESS

From informative details of diabetes eye health and insightful delvings of congenital heart disease in children, to understanding the importance of your child's well-being while on travels. All these topics are shared in this section to foster a healthier and more compassionate community.



YOUR EVERYDAY WELLNESS

Protecting Your Vision: How Diabetes Can Also Cause Serious Eye Complications

Devoting to raising awareness about eye health, we focus on a hidden threat to our vision — diabetic eye complications. Diabetes, a condition that affects blood vessels throughout the body, can wreak havoc on our eyes, potentially causing irreversible vision loss. 1 in 5 Malaysians was found to have diabetes in 2019, the highest in Asia with a 68.3% increase.

Many diabetes patients do not realise the gravity of diabetic eye complications. According to a recent study, only 58.6% of the patients knew that they could have eye problems at diagnosis. Still, only 43.0% of the patients knew that eyes must be checked at the time of diabetes diagnosis.

Dr Tara Mary George, Consultant Ophthalmologist and Medical Retina Specialist at SMC, shared how diabetes can impair the blood vessels in the retina, a critical focal point of the eye, leading to damage and irreversible vision loss. Diabetes can also influence other aspects of ocular health, causing cataracts or dry eyes — conditions that can be managed without causing permanent vision impairment.

The prevalence of diabetic retinopathy in Malaysia has progressively risen from 44.1% in 1981 to 51.6% in a 2005 study and more in recent years. The number is also much higher than in other countries such as the UK (22.7%) or Japan (39.6%).

“The most concerning manifestation is diabetic retinopathy, where diabetes affects the retina. It poses a dual threat to vision — bleeding within the retina or the swelling of this delicate tissue, referred to as vitreous haemorrhage and macular edema,” Dr Tara explained. Macular edema, characterised by the swelling of the central part of the retina, and vitreous haemorrhage, which involves bleeding within the eye’s gel-like substance, are two critical complications of diabetic retinopathy that can threaten vision.

Significance of Routine Eye Examinations

Diabetic retinopathy can stealthily creep up without warning signs. In a recent study, 29.2% of type 2 diabetic patients in Malaysia were found to have retinopathy in their first eye test. Dr Tara advised, “Do not defer until a problem manifests itself before seeking medical attention. Instead, individuals diagnosed with diabetes should embrace the practice of regular eye check-ups.”



Dr Tara Mary George
Consultant Ophthalmologist and
Medical Retina Specialist



A photo featuring a proliferative diabetic retinopathy

This includes a comprehensive retina evaluation, which can be conducted through pupil dilation or advanced retinal cameras that eliminate the need for dilation. These devices are widely available, making screening highly accessible.

“Diabetic eye screenings are swift, uncomplicated procedures that can safeguard your vision. Prevention remains the linchpin in averting the complications of diabetic retinopathy. Remember, age is not the deciding factor; the key determinants are diabetes control and the duration of living with the condition,” Dr Tara said.

Regarding concerns about eye complications for individuals in the pre-diabetes phase, Dr Tara clarifies that eye complications do not typically arise for them. Nevertheless, this stage provides an opportunity to stave off full-fledged diabetes by adopting preemptive measures and maintaining blood sugar levels.

Treatment Options

Dr Tara explained the various treatment options for diabetic eye complications:

- **Systemic Treatment** includes diabetes control, blood pressure and cholesterol management.
- **Intra-vitreous injections** including anti-VEGF agents, effectively tackle retinal swelling and bleeding, particularly in diabetic macular edema.
- **Laser Treatment** is used in severe cases of vitreous haemorrhage or proliferative retinopathy to arrest or mitigate eye bleeding.

She also shared that those advancements in treatment, notably the adoption of anti-VEGF injections, have yielded remarkable improvements. “The root of our success lies in patient empowerment, emphasising understanding and compliance in diabetes management and regular eye screenings. Treatment choice hinges on individual circumstances and severity, with physicians opting for combinations of injections and laser therapy as deemed appropriate.”

A comprehensive strategy for forestalling vision loss in diabetes

- **Early Diagnosis:** Regular medical check-ups are paramount for early diabetes detection, especially for those with a family history.
- **Routine Eye Screening:** Once a patient is diagnosed with diabetes, it is imperative to undergo annual eye screenings, even without apparent issues.
- **Effective Diabetes Management:** Well-controlled diabetes is instrumental in significantly diminishing the risk of diabetic retinopathy. Monitoring HbA1C levels is crucial, with a recommended target below 7.5.



YOUR EVERYDAY WELLNESS

Parents To Be Vigilant In Detecting Heart Conditions In Newborns And Children



Dr Ang Hak Lee
Consultant Paediatric
Cardiologist

A congenital heart disease (CHD) can dishearten parents looking to welcome a new addition to their family. Earning its position as the most frequently diagnosed congenital disorder, it affects approximately 0.8% to 1.2% of live births globally despite no family history or apparent symptoms.

Dr Ang Hak Lee, Consultant Paediatric Cardiologist at SMC, explained, “Congenital heart disease itself signifies that the condition or trait was present at birth, making CHD an anomaly affecting the heart that originates during an individual’s birth. The symptoms of this condition are often silent and can affect anyone, but the risk increases significantly when there’s a family history of CHD. The risk doubles if the father has CHD; if the mother has CHD, it triples. In critical cases, if not detected soon after birth, it can cause fatality, some within the first year or a few years of a child’s life. This is why early detection and awareness, particularly among those with a family history of CHD, are crucial for managing this condition effectively.”



CHD, a Lot More Common than You Think

Locally, an estimated 5,000 newborn babies are diagnosed with CHD every year. Among them, about two-thirds require surgical intervention. It is worth noting that the prevalence of CHD is not confined to Malaysia alone.

“One of the significant challenges faced is that symptoms in infants are usually subtle, making it easy to miss. The signs could range from difficulty feeding to bluish discolouration of the skin and lips, and a lot of times, symptoms may not appear early or asymptomatic in the first few days of the newborn’s life. Parents often attribute these indicators to common illnesses, delaying the diagnosis,” Dr Ang shared.

“To make matters worse, not all patients produce signs or symptoms until later, sometimes in adolescence or within two weeks of birth, such as ventricular septal defect (VSD) or atrial septal defect (ASD) known as ‘hole in the heart’. Also, there’s no telling when or even if they will become apparent.

Silver Linings in the Clouds

Fortunately, advancements in diagnostic techniques have led to improved detection, allowing timely intervention. In the past 50 years, survival of patients with CHD has seen a dramatic increase, and they are more likely to survive into adulthood following surgery.

Here are some components for early detection in the field of CHD:

- **Pulse oximetry:** Painless and takes only a few minutes to measure the amount of oxygen in a newborn's blood. While it doesn't replace a complete history and physical examination, it can detect critical heart defects before oxygen levels become too low, especially for newborns with other major congenital disabilities.
- **Non-invasive imaging methods like echocardiograms and advanced screening tools:** Helps identify even the subtlest heart abnormalities. Foetal echocardiography can detect CHD during prenatal life. Recommended as one of the initial screening steps for high-risk patients, especially those with a family history.

Dr Ang however cautioned, "There's no doubt that early detection improves a CHD patient's road to recovery and general well-being. Upon diagnosis, your paediatric cardiologist's primary goal is to rectify all issues related to the malfunction of the heart. Sometimes, the defect may be minor and not require treatment, but vigilant monitoring is needed to evaluate any disease progression."

“ In some cases, medical treatment is needed, such as blood pressure and heart rhythm drugs. On the contrary, if a child or infant faces a critical diagnosis, a heart procedure or surgery may be required to repair the heart defect. This includes innovative medical devices and medical interventions that are now available to minimise the risk for the patient as much as possible. ”



Facing CHD in Your Child

Dr Ang agreed that seeing a child undergo a complex heart condition at such a tender age will be emotionally challenging. "However, parents must take solace in remembering that progress in medical research, improved screening programmes and a growing understanding of this condition offer better outcomes for those affected."

"Also, remember that your paediatric cardiologist can be your beacon of support during this time. Prepare a list of questions on any areas of concern you may have and have a thorough conversation with them. We are here to help you through this journey to give your child the chance for a healthier and brighter future."

TIPS FROM SUNMED DOCTORS

Stay Safe While Travelling With Your Little Ones

Travelling with your children can be challenging, especially if they are below the ages of 5. SMC's Head of Accident and Emergency Department, Dr Lee Soon Han said, the most common travel-related injuries or illnesses among children are:

- Motor vehicle accidents
- Falls leading to cuts, bruises, or open wounds
- Febrile or respiratory illness due to viruses
- Water related injuries, such as, drowning
- Diarrhoea and vomiting due to food poisoning

He added, to lower risk of such incidents (but not limited to):

- Use booster or car seats and seatbelts correctly according to the child's age, height, and weight.
- Make sure to wear water safety devices during swimming and always have close adult supervision.
- Always consume clean water and proper food, while maintaining milk bottle hygiene.



Dr Lee Soon Han
Head of Accident and
Emergency Department

First Aid Necessities

Dr Lee shared that kits should have, "Paracetamol for fever or pain, oral rehydration solution (ORS), cough and cold medications, such as, antihistamines, and inhalers for children with asthma. There should also be basic items for wound care, such as gloves, gauze, antiseptic wipes, band-aids and adhesive tape, as well as a thermometer."

In addition, it also helps if parents are aware of the dos and don'ts if their child suffers from motion sickness or feels discomfort due to the difference in pressure while in transit.

Tips For Motion Sickness	Tips For Pressure In The Ear
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay hydrated• Avoid heavy meals, instead, consider eating and drinking in small amounts regularly• Avoid reading or using any screen devices during the ride• Encourage sleep during the ride or flight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It can be equalised by swallowing or chewing<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Babies and young children should be encouraged to nurse or suck on a bottle◦ Older children can have snacks or chewing gum• Bring along familiar toys the child is fond of for comfort

For children with chronic heart or lung disease, travelling to destinations with different climates or altitudes may be risky. "Parents should consult their doctors before travelling. Do dress appropriately, with more layers at lower climate destinations, while for hotter locations, sunscreen should be applied regularly to avoid sunburn," advised Dr Lee.

Be Wary of What Your Kids Consume

What you consume while travelling may not always agree with a child's digestive system. Hence, diarrhoea and vomiting are among the most common illnesses that Dr Nur Elayni Borhan, Consultant Emergency Physician sees in the emergency department.

“Ensure your child is taught to follow safe food and water precautions. Frequently wash hands to prevent foodborne and waterborne illnesses, breastfeed your infants as it's the best way to reduce risk, as well as make sure vaccinations are up-to-date as there is generally a higher risk for most vaccine-preventable diseases when travelling,” urged Dr Elayni.



Dr Nur Elayni Borhan
Consultant Emergency Physician

Children should also avoid swimming in any fresh, non-chlorinated bodies of water, such as, rivers, ponds, or lakes, as they may be contaminated with diseases that can be transmitted to the child if the water is ingested.

As for treatment for diarrhoea, it is best to consume plenty of fluids. ORS may be used to prevent dehydration, especially if the child is also vomiting. If your child appears to be dehydrated, has a fever, or bloody stools, seek medical attention immediately,” said Dr Nur Elayni, adding, “Bring some topical medication like antiseptic cream, mentholated or medicated topical ointment – anything you're used to. You know your own children, so bring the things that you know would benefit them. Try to avoid bringing things that are new to them.”

As for Dr Lee, he encouraged parents, “Prior to departure, identify all important healthcare facilities at the destination and get advice on available local medical services from hotels or tour company representatives. All child travellers should be included in any travel insurance policies bought for the trip, which should include medical repatriation if necessary.”

Staying Alert on Allergies

Dr Elayni shared tips for children with food allergies:

- Bring a medical kit with your child's medication, including their epinephrine pen. Do this no matter how near or short the trip is.
- Pack safe snacks and meals in case there are no safe restaurants for your child.
- If you are going to a non-English speaking country, get information about your allergy translated. You can give this written information to those who prepare your food to help them understand your child's needs.
- If your child has a history of severe allergies, take note of the allergy policies on the airline and at the hotels. Every airline or hotel is different, and they need advance notice to make accommodations.
- Research restaurants or grocery stores which would carry products safe for your child.

SUNMED HIGHLIGHTS

Pink October 2023

Pink October was officially launched at SMC with our CEO Dr Seow Vei Ken, COO Jacqueline Chong Hui Lin, and General Manager of Cancer Centre Dr Heng Siew Ping who shared their messages of hope and love dedicated to our breast cancer fighters.

During the campaign, our doctors, nurses, patients and staff from Sunway Healthcare Group's network of hospitals — Sunway Medical Centre Sunway City, Sunway Medical Centre Velocity and Sunway Medical Centre Penang stood firmly together in resolute display of unity to symbolise our unwavering dedication in empowering the message of solidarity and advocacy to Breast Cancer Awareness Month through beautiful pink ribbon formations.

To champion the cause further, Sunway Cancer Centre offered 500 women free mammogram screenings for the second year to advocate early detection of breast cancer.





World Diabetes Day 2023

In honour of World Diabetes Day 2023, SMC hosted a special event titled 'Beyond Sugar: Fight the Sweet Fight' on 25 November 2023.

Recognising the challenges faced by millions of diabetes patients worldwide even a century after the groundbreaking discovery of the insulin, we are committed to fostering awareness and promoting accessibility to essential diabetes treatments.

Our Diabetes Care Centre, a dedicated Centre of Excellence, is established in alignment with our unwavering commitment in providing high-quality care and services to our diabetic patients. Utilising a holistic approach, our multidisciplinary team works in tandem among various specialties and subspecialties to address the various needs of individuals grappling with diabetes, and they comprise of experts which includes, among others, endocrinologists, cardiologists, nephrologists, neurologists, ophthalmologists, vascular surgeons, and rehabilitation physicians.

Apart from that, we also collaborated with *Pusat Aktiviti Warga Emas (PAWE)*, Subang Jaya for this event. This collaboration signifies the hospital's dedication in serving the community and raising awareness about diabetes prevention, management, and the importance of timely access to care.

The event featured a variety of activities, including free blood sugar screenings, diabetes education talks, eye screenings, healthy cooking demonstrations and exercise demonstrations. This afforded valuable opportunity for individuals living with diabetes to learn more about the condition, and more than 340 participants attended the event, which included the hospital's patients with their families, members of PAWE as well as the neighbouring community.

SUNMED HIGHLIGHTS

World Sight Day 2023

In support of World Sight Day 2023, Sunway Eye Centre successfully held free eye health screening for the staff of SMC. With the theme, 'Love Your Eyes At Work', the comprehensive staff eye health screening included an eyesight assessment, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy screening as well as tips on how to maintain healthy visual habits. This underscored and showcased the unwavering commitment to the staff's well-being.

Apart from that, Sunway Eye Centre also took the opportunity to join the global pledge initiated by the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB). The new initiative, entitled 'Pledge to EyeSwear', is dedicated to fostering a culture of awareness and support for eye health within the organisation.

All involvement is not only beneficial for oneself directly but it also contributes to cultivating a healthier and more vibrant workplace for all.

Let's work together to raise awareness about eye health!





SUNMED HIGHLIGHTS

Infant Massage Workshop

Aveeno Baby in collaboration with SMC hosted an Infant Massage Workshop on October 7 which saw over 38 couples joining and experiencing the ways as well as benefits of infant massage on parent-child bonding.

There were several interesting topics including postnatal nutrition, baby skincare routine, benefits of infant massage, and hands-on massage demonstration. Speakers present were Dietitian Saw Bee Suan, Consultant Paediatrician and Neonatologist Dr Khoo Boo Aik, and Staff Nurse Jessy Hon who gave a fantastic and insightful session to the attendees.

The event received good feedback overall with many attendees raising interesting questions during the Q&A session.

SUNMED HIGHLIGHTS

#SunMedCares: People Of SunMed



Behind The Sterile Curtains

“Not many people know about us as we work behind the scenes, but we’re, in fact, the heart of the hospital. Our department is open 24/7 and we regularly deal with blood, tissue, and bone residue. Admittedly, the smell can initially be unpleasant, but you get used to it after a while.”

Meet Ivan Cho, Central Sterile Services Department (CSSD) Technician. He has a Diploma in Healthcare and joined our in-house Certificate CSSD Technician Programme 3 months after he graduated.

He handles all reusable medical and surgical instruments here at SMC, ensuring that they are kept clean, sterile and safe for surgeries. It’s not as simple as it looks. He and his team work tirelessly around the clock, handling the crucial tasks of washing, sterilising, cooling, assembling, packaging, and storing them.

Their work requires the use of specialised equipment, and chemicals, as well as a keen eye - each instrument must be inspected for stains and signs of damage after washing. There are also specific guidelines that they’ll have to follow for different types of instruments.

Things can often get hectic here due to the unpredictable nature of surgeries. Nevertheless, they ensure the timely delivery of clean instruments, keeping operations on schedule and ultimately saving lives.

Here is our appreciation for him and our CSSD technicians. Thank you!

Her Chemical Romance

“Our role involves much more than simply preparing patients’ chemotherapy medications. It involves a great deal of care to ensure that the medication is suitable for our cancer patients with compromised immune systems. This includes meticulous checks of the dosage, frequency, patient’s allergies and body surface area, among other things.”

Meet Elawarasi Arumugam, Senior Pharmacy Technician and Cytotoxic Drug Reconstitution (CDR) Trainer, who is based at our Cancer Centre’s Pharmacy Department.

She is responsible for preparing the chemotherapy medication for our cancer patients’ treatments. Each dose is carefully tailored for every patient and she trains other technicians too.

This process requires highly specific skills and the medication must be prepared in a sterile environment. As such, Elawarasi wears a full PPE suit and heads to a special room where she will prepare it in a specialised cabinet.

The added challenge is to ensure accuracy and timeliness when preparing the medication. There is no room for error with chemotherapy - it must be 100% accurate.

Thank you Elawarasi and the rest of our CDR team, for their tireless efforts in preparing our cancer patients’ chemotherapy medication!





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AWESOME HOLIDAYS

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EXPERIENCE NEW ATTRACTIONS

- Pangolin at Lost World Petting Zoo •
- Brand New Luminous Forest •
(Available from Dec 2023 onwards)

Dragons, Magic, and Adventure: Your Ultimate Vacation Awaits At Sunway Lost World Of Tambun This Year-End Holiday!

Year-end holiday vibes are just around the corner! Ready to plan the ULTIMATE holiday of the year? Say hello to Sunway Lost World Of Tambun! It's the EPIC, adventure-packed family getaway you've been waiting for! Nestled in the midst of the mesmerizing, 400 million-year-old limestone formations of Tambun, this multi-award-winning theme park is your ticket to fun and adventure, no matter your age. And hold onto your hats, because this year-end, Sunway Lost World Of Tambun is cranking up the excitement with a breath of magic and fire - dragons have appeared in this land!

Ancient Dragons Discovered! New Luminous Forest Ignites!

Home to the Malayana tribe, this mystical forest has taken an enchanting twist with the discovery of a secret portal to the lost realm of ancient dragons and mythical creatures. This December, prepare to embark on a daring journey through Eshno's path, coming face-to-face with majestic dragons roaming freely and exploring the fantastical wonders at every turn. With scales that shimmer like precious gems and each with their very own magic, the new Luminous Forest promises to ignite your sense of wonder and adventure with secrets, mysteries, and surprises!

But the adventure does not stop with the dragons. Journey to Kukuntalu's throne and immerse yourself in the mystical flora and fauna! Create enchanting memories under the captivating Lights of Aiyanna, all under the watchful protection of Shadowfang.

Thrills Under The Sun! Non-Stop Adventure From Dawn to Dusk!

The Luminous Forest comes to life at night, but don't fret; your day is packed with excitement! Sunway Lost World Of Tambun ensures you and your family are in for a day of non-stop fun. Get your adrenaline pumping at their Amusement Park and Water Park, filled with high-energy rides and thrilling slides like Lupe's Adventure roller coaster and Tube Raiders water slide.

The Malayana Rainfortress is a definite must-go for families to slide down this Asia's first two-and-a-half-storey water dark ride! Make giant splashes on 12 exciting water slides and even immerse yourself in the Dragon's Lair, a cinematic 4D water tunnel!

Parents can also kick back at Sandy Bay, surrounded by mesmerizing mountains and nature around the theme park. But when you hear the beat drop, it's time to head to their Jungle Wave Bay for an Awesome Pool Party!

New Wildlife Encounters Alert! Get Up Close with Pangolins!

But wait, there's more! Keep an eye out for the new arrivals - pangolins in their nature sanctuary. You and your family can get up close and personal

with these endangered animals, a unique experience only available at Lost World Petting Zoo.

P.S. If your kids are crazy about these shy but friendly creatures, consider turning your vacation into an educational weekend with their revamped Explorer Rangers program, now with a brand new syllabus and interactive structure in its 2nd season! Your kids may even sign up for a year-long series of classes to build and strengthen their interest in wildlife and nature!

Time to Pamper Yourself In Hot Springs!

For those in need of a relaxing holiday, Lost World Hot Springs & Night Park is your ultimate oasis. Unwind in 12 pools of 100% natural mineral hot springs waters, enriched with minerals to revitalize your weary bodies. And don't forget to pamper yourself with a traditional massage at Crystal Spa, offering body therapy, aromatherapy, and massages. It's time for some self-care, hoomans!

End 2023 with a BANG! Santa is coming to TAMBUN!

Most importantly, your vacation should go out with a BANG to celebrate the end of 2023! This festive season, Sunway Lost World Of Tambun is wrapped up with a big, glittering bow, ready to BURST with the Christmas spirit! The ancient land transforms into a Christmas paradise, adorned with Christmas trees, presents, mouth-watering food, and thrilling shows and performances. It's a season of pure joy, and Sunway Lost World Of Tambun is here to share it with you and your family.

Mystical attractions, pulse-pounding fun, a serene escape, and the JOLLIEST celebration - it's the recipe for the BEST vacation of the year! The only thing missing is your tickets! Be a part of the most AWESOME HOLIDAYS of 2023 here: <https://sunwaylostworldoftambun.com/>

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Sunway Medical Centre Sdn Bhd
No.5 Jalan Lagoon Selatan, Bandar Sunway,
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Malaysia.

 +603-7491 9191 / 5566 9191

 +603-7491 8181

 smc@sunway.com.my

 www.sunwaymedical.com

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