

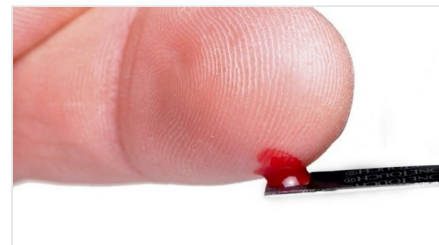


Singapore's war on diabetes: \$5 screening test latest weapon in the armoury

By Gary Scattergood [✉](#)

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After calling on soft drink firms to slash sugar content, and encouraging the development of more functional ingredients, the latest addition to Singapore's so-called 'war on diabetes' is S\$5 screening tests for people aged 18 to 39 who are deemed to have high diabetes risk.



Since it was introduced at the beginning of the month, around 15,000 people have used the Ministry of Health's (MOH) Diabetes Risk Assessment (DRA) tool at the online health portal, HealthHub.

Those found to be at risk of diabetes are entitled to a heavily subsidised S\$5 screening consultation.

So far, around 4% of participants have been recommended for screening.

Minister for Health Gan Kim Yong said: *"I think it's very important for us to have a very targeted approach to this younger group, to help them identify whether they are among the high-risk group, and to take action against it."*

The government's focus on diabetes has led to a raft of reformulation projects, as firms seek to reduce sugar content in their products.

Last month, Japanese-owned brand Pokka said it was *"fully confident"* of achieving the HPB's target of a 12% limit by 2020, and has already started work to reduce sugar in its soursop and guava juices.

More than 40% of Pokka's portfolio already meets Singapore's Healthier Choice requirement to contain less than 6% sugar, the company said in a statement.

Health requirements

Launched in 2005, Healthier Choice now allows some 2,600 F&B brands to carry its symbol on their packaging to signify they comply with health requirements.

Official estimates suggest that Singapore will be home to 1m diabetics by 2030 unless something serious is done to address the disease — that's almost one-fifth of the population.

Speaking at our Food Vision Asia summit in April, Singapore Minister of State for Health Chee Hong Tat said that government enterprise body SPRING was working with food firms to find new solutions to help fight the epidemic.



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"I am proud of our local companies, such as Alchemy Foodtech, supported by SPRING Singapore, which is currently working on creating low-GI white rice that tastes the same as regular rice," he said.

"Sunshine Bakeries has incorporate beta-glucan to create a low-GI bread with a soft texture that appeals to many Asians. Noodle manufacturers such as Prima have developed a super-fine version of wholegrain flour to create noodles that are 50% wholegrain but retain the taste and texture of regular noodles. My family and I have tried both products and they taste good."

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