

- Heart / Medical awareness

Women at high risk of coronary heart disease after menopause — Cardiologist

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MELAKA: Women are more likely to be at high risk of coronary heart disease, especially after menopause, said a cardiologist.

Consultant Cardiologist and Internal Medicine of Pantai Hospital Ayer Keroh, Dr Lim Kien Chien said this happens as women will lose the protection provided by the sex hormones, estrogen and progesterone, which are chemicals released from the glands, especially the ovaries, which also have the additional function to protect the formation of atherosclerosis. “This means that women are equally susceptible to heart attack, stroke or sudden death after menopause. Generally, menopause occurs in women between the ages of 45 and 55 years, while the average menopause age is 50,” he told Bernama here yesterday.

According to him, coronary heart disease occurs due to atherosclerosis formation inside the lining of the artery wall leading to the hardening of the arteries whereby excess cholesterol, especially bad cholesterol (LDL) are deposited on the artery walls.

“The inflammatory process will eventually lead to concentration of inflammatory cells, minerals such as calcium and scar cells. These deposits are called atherosclerosis plaque. Without care and treatment, this process will continue to cause plaque growth and blockages. Plaque blockage can disrupt oxygen supply to the heart’s chambers.

“Atherosclerosis can also occur in other organs including the brain, kidneys and leg muscles. Oxygen delivery disorders can lead to stroke, heart attack, kidney failure and sudden death. The onset of atherosclerosis can also be caused by other chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or smoking, “he said.

Not all individuals with cholesterol problems need medication and acceptable cholesterol levels also vary between individuals, he said, adding that adopting a healthy lifestyle, reducing fatty or fried foods and losing weight, can reduce the problem index level by 20 percent.

In addition, he said, doctors would use the ‘Framingham Risk Score’ risk calculator by entering the age, gender, cholesterol levels, blood pressure, diabetes and smoking status of an individual to assess his or her cardiovascular risk in the next 10 years.

“At Pantai Ayer Keroh Hospital, doctors also resort to nontraditional techniques to interpret an individual’s cardiovascular risk. One of the gadgets used is the ‘Coronary Calcium Score’ in which a ‘CT 640 slice’ scanner is capable of producing clearer images while delivering precise and low radiation.

“Heart disease is one of the leading causes of death in this country, so let us start to adopt a healthy lifestyle to keep our heart healthy, exercise at least 150 minutes a week or about 30 minutes a day for five days consistently,” he added.

For more information, contact Pantai Ayer Keroh Hospital Cardiovascular Unit at 06-2319999 ext. 2229 or visit <https://www.pantai.com.my/ms-my/ayer-keroh/make-appointment>. — Bernama