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## More people in Singapore keeping their health in check



Sata CommHealth reported an increase of more than 30 per cent in people going for health screenings from January to Sept 7, 2021. PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO



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**SINGAPORE** - Some medical centres are seeing a growing demand for health screenings as more people pay closer attention to their health during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Out of seven healthcare providers The Straits Times contacted, three saw an increase in people going for medical checks, while two did not record an increase. One healthcare group declined to comment and another did not respond.

Dr Michelle Lee, medical director (executive health screening) at Fullerton Health, which provides comprehensive screening packages, has seen a surge of more than 60 per cent in people going for medical screenings from January to March this year over the same period in 2019.

"This could be due to more awareness and interest in preventive health and wellness, higher commitment by companies to care for and encourage their employees to go for screenings, and increased discretionary spending as people do not spend on travelling during the pandemic," she says.

Sata CommHealth, a charitable organisation which runs medical centres, reported an increase of more than 30 per cent in people going for health screenings from January to Sept 7 this year compared with the same period last year.

Its medical director, Dr Cheryl Glenn, says this could be due to people gradually wanting to do health checks after the end of the circuit breaker in June last year.

"As they spend more time at home, they are more interested in their health and that of their loved ones. Given the potential gravity of Covid-19, many are likely keen to ensure their health and immunity are adequate," she adds.

Mr Ayush Johari, vice-president (specialist division) at private healthcare provider Healthway Medical Corporation (HMC), has also noted a rise in health screenings this year.

Dr John Cheng, the head of primary care at Healthway Medical Group, says people may want to check for potential illnesses or health risks as they realise that pre-existing medical conditions can cause severe Covid-19.

To make health screenings more accessible, HMC opened a second health screening centre at The Centrepoint last month. It offers different types of health screening packages, from basic investigations to in-depth assessment of specific diseases.

Women usually outnumber men among those going for medical screenings, say the healthcare groups interviewed.

At Sata CommHealth, more women than men turn up for health checks as the former are concerned about changes in their metabolism and cardiovascular risks as they approach or go through menopause, notes Dr Glenn.

Dr Lau Pik Onn, a senior resident physician at Icon Health Screening, a private medical centre, which also sees more women, feels that men tend to see the doctor only when they do not feel well. "On the other hand, women tend to be better in keeping to the regular screening appointments," she adds.

She has also seen quite a number of couples in their late 20s to early 30s going for screening before getting married.

Pre-marital screening is important, she adds, as it detects infectious diseases and identifies carriers of genetic disorders such as thalassemia, a blood disorder.

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Senior marketing executive Uma Guntupalli, 25, who found out that she had high cholesterol after a health screening in June this year, says she is thankful it was detected early. "I was worried about the outcome of the test, but it is better to find out if I have any medical problems while I'm young," she says.

Now, she exercises regularly and tries to maintain a healthy diet with more vegetables and fruit.

On the importance of being proactive in managing one's health, Dr Lau says: "In my years as a health screening physician, I find that most people are thankful when a condition is identified and treated early. In such cases, they will normally encourage their friends or family members to also come for health screening."

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