

Taiwan to curb 'big-stomach' eating contests

November 3 2011

Taiwan moved Thursday to curb eating contests, a fad that has caused at least one death, and suggested the national health insurance stop paying for participants seeking medical treatment afterwards.

Competitions involving eating everything from oversized steaks to meatballs by the dozen are endangering public health and wasting [medical resources](#), according to the Control Yuan, the top [government watchdog](#).

"The frequent 'big-stomach' contests not only endanger health but violate the principle of fairness as the contestants who get sick are using the national health insurance resources," it said in a statement.

It asked [health authorities](#) to consider refusing to reimburse [medical bills](#) from the cash-tight national insurance scheme for people needing treatment after eating too much at competitions.

"It's something we're keeping an eye on," an official with the national [health insurance](#) body told AFP. "We've started asking the organisers of the competitions to pay for the medical bills."

The Control Yuan also urged government agencies not to host or sponsor eating contests and called on the media to carry warnings when promoting such events.

Expanding wastelanes are a rapidly growing problem in Taiwan, and the number of children on the island classed as overweight or obese has

surged from six percent a decade ago to 25 percent in 2009, local data showed.

A recent survey showed that Taiwanese people's favourite pastime is dining out while eating contests are on the rise on the island.

In 2008, a graduate student choked to death after eating too much bread too quickly in a competition on campus in central Taiwan.

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