

Headline:	<b>New initiatives aim to promote healthy living among the young</b> <i>Professor Chia Kee Seng, Dean, Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, commented that the new NurtureSG recommendations should not be taken in isolation. He emphasised that good health habits need to be sustained into adulthood, and that it is crucial for parents to be role models to their children.</i>
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## New initiatives aim to promote healthy living among the young



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Pre-schoolers to get an hour's exercise daily in new initiatives to promote healthy living among the young

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Reporter

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The obesity rate in schools is going up. Mental health concerns among the young, like cyber-bullying and suicide, are on the rise. There are gaps to be addressed in existing school health programmes.

Against this backdrop, inter-agency taskforce NurtureSG yesterday released a slew of recommendations addressing three key areas: active and healthy living, mental well-being and sleep health.

They were accepted by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of Education (MOE) yesterday.

At a press conference yesterday, Minister of State for Health Dr Lam Pin Min said NurtureSG complements many health promotion efforts here, as well as Singapore's recent declaration of war on diabetes.

The disease is projected to hit a million Singaporeans by 2050, in part due to the rapid rise in the proportion of overweight and obese young adults.

Said Dr Lam, who co-leads NurtureSG: "So we really need to work upstream to promote and sustain the promotion of a healthy lifestyle from a very young age."

#### SINGAPORE

## Ways to cultivate healthier habits in kids

Feb 24, 2017

This includes doubling preschoolers' physical activity time to an hour every day.

While NurtureSG's recommendations will help to address downstream problems like diabetes, sleep health and mental well-being should not be overlooked, said Dr Chia Shi-Lu, who chairs the Government Parliamentary Committee (GPC) for Health.

The Tanjong Pagar MP told TNP: "If you speak to doctors from the Institute of Mental Health, the mental health issue in the young, even in children, is rising at quite an alarming rate. It's under-reported. There's also a lack of awareness.

"As for sleep, it may seem like something frivolous, but we certainly must not underestimate the importance of sleep. Our GPC's standpoint, as well as the other health groups, is for more importance to be placed on this."

More importantly, these initiatives should not be seen in isolation, said Professor Chia Kee Seng of the National University Health System.

The Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health dean told TNP: "They will only be effective if these habits take deep roots and are sustained into adulthood. Parents must reinforce these habits and be role models themselves."

He added that there was no point in having healthy habits in schools if parents take their children to fast-food joints for unhealthy foods.

This is why parents feature quite prominently in NurtureSG's action plan.

Said Dr Lam: "NurtureSG is a national effort that involves everyone. MOE and MOH cannot do this alone, and we need the participation of individual, the family as well as the community and the schools.

"And the key thrust of NurtureSG is to ensure that the health-promoting environment does not stop within the walls of the schools, but to actually go beyond the school to involve and engage the parents as well as the community."

Parents, like Mr Christopher Yong, are heartened by the efforts to look after the children's well-being.

The 40-year-old father of an eight-year-old boy told TNP: "I'm glad that mental health is one of the aspects the ministries are doing something about.

"With something that creeps in so silently and goes undetected often, it will be good to better equip educators to pick up warning signs early."