

Major campaign to promote EatSmart@school.hk in School

A territory-wide healthy eating campaign, entitled EatSmart@school.hk, will be launched by the Department of Health (DH) in this school year (2006/07) to prevent diet related health problems such as obesity, heart disease, cancer and diabetes among primary school students.

Speaking at a press conference today (September 15), the Assistant Director of Health (Health Promotion), Dr Regina Ching, said the campaign was mapped out after a survey conducted by DH earlier this year found that fostering healthy eating habits among primary school students requires concerted efforts of school management, parents and food traders.

The survey, entitled "Baseline Assessment of Promoting Healthy Eating in primary Schools", covered more than 9 000 students and their parents in 44 primary schools. It investigated the nutritional environment and factors affecting eating habit of students in local primary schools.

It found that most of the students had good knowledge but fair practice of healthy eating, yet they were victims of unfavourable home and school circumstances. For example, 60% of school lunch recipes served one or more unhealthy food and contained less than one serving of vegetables. 90% of snacks brought from home or sold in schools were unhealthy. (Details of the survey are available on DH's Central Health Education Unit website <http://www.cheu.gov.hk>).

"The findings of the survey signaled that parents, school management and food suppliers should actively engage in the promotion of healthy-eating in schools if they are concerned about the unsatisfactory situation of unhealthy food intake among students," Dr Ching said.

As such the campaign will include a territory-wide programme named School "NutriAgent" Project (SNAP) to be held throughout the school year to enable parents and teachers to foster healthy eating habits among students and create a supportive environment through working together with confidence and competence in the spirit of home-school co-operation.

"Letters have been sent to all primary schools inviting them to nominate two teachers and two parents to participate in this project.

"The participants will first be given training, and after that they will be provided with continued professional advice and support for organizing at least two activities promoting healthy eating in the school. An award system will be established to recognize good performers," Dr Ching said.

Other initiatives include an inter-school slogan and e-card design competition to be held in October, a Popular lunch box election in November, an Alliance Building ceremony to highlight the contributions of key players in the campaign in January 2007 and a Fruit Day next April.

The finale will be an award presentation ceremony in June 2007 to commend outstanding achievers.

Dr Ching said two sets of Guidelines, on school lunch and snacks, had been issued, setting out the recommended standard in relation to the nutritional needs of primary school students.

"A Guidebook for school lunch suppliers has also been released in August this year," she added.

She pointed out that briefing sessions to various key players, including food traders, parent groups, principals, school operating agencies and professionals, have been conducted since April this year, and will be ongoing. Two sets of TV and radio APIs have been broadcast since this summer.

Also speaking in the press conference are the Vice-chairperson of Committee on Home-School Co-operation, Mr Christopher Yu, the Vice-chairperson of Union of Heads of Aided Primary School of Hong Kong, Mr Fung Ka-ching, the Vice-chairperson of Union of Government Primary School Headmasters and Headmistresses, Mrs Liu Ng Ka-yee, and the Secretary of Subsidized Primary Schools Council, Mr Tang Lit-man.

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