

10 November 2012

HPB TAKES SENIOR CITIZENS ‘BACK TO SCHOOL’ TO RAISE HEALTH LITERACY

*Provides convenient access to dental and functional screening services
as well as influenza vaccination*

Singapore, 10 November 2012: Health behaviour surveillance indicates that only one in 10 Singapore residents between the ages of 50 and 69 were vaccinated for influenza (flu) in 2011¹.

2. An acute viral infection of the respiratory tract, the flu is often characterised by fever and accompanied with symptoms such as a sore throat, cough, cold, headache and body aches. It is spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing. With Singapore’s tropical climate the influenza virus circulates year round, although a higher incidence of the flu can typically be witnessed from April to July and November to January each year. If left untreated, the flu can result in a secondary bacterial pneumonia or lung infection. This is of particular concern for the elderly as pneumonia is one of the top ten causes of hospital admissions.

Back to School to raise health literacy

3. To heighten the health literacy of seniors and empower them to make healthier choices, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) will pilot two initiatives as part of a new programme of its kind in Singapore, at Chua Chu Kang constituency.

¹ Flu vaccination rates 2011, Health Behaviour Surveillance of Singapore, Health Promotion Board

Themed “Back to School”, the programme was launched by Minister for Health and MP for Chua Chu Kang GRC, Gan Kim Yong, and was developed for residents over the age of 50.

4. Jointly implemented by HPB, Chua Chu Kang Grassroots Organisation and South View Primary School, the programme incorporates a series of classroom-based workshops as well as hands-on and experiential educational activities. The workshops cover pertinent health topics to help residents and their care-givers understand the importance of getting the flu vaccination, improve their mental wellbeing, and pick up tips on home safety and how to maintain good oral health.

5. The first initiative of the “Back to School” programme to be piloted is the on-site community-based flu vaccination for needy seniors to reduce their risk of flu and the possible consequences associated with it. The provision of flu vaccination and educational activities are improvements to the existing one-stop integrated screening programme offered by HPB.

6. In addition, survey shows that less than half of the population visits the dentist once a year². This is of concern as there is a high prevalence of poor oral health in Singapore’s elderly population. Preliminary results from HPB’s Functional Screening programme show that about 60% of those screened have poor oral health needing dental follow-up. To address this, HPB is now piloting the second initiative to leverage on the existing infrastructure to open up school dental clinics to help the needy elderly receive regular dental treatment. The launch saw the leveraging of the existing dental clinic in South View Primary School to extend a range of basic dental services to needy seniors on scheduled weekends. It is expected that with the increased convenience and affordability available at such facilities, needy Singaporeans will be able to receive regular dental checkups and the necessary follow-up treatment required.

² Personal Health Practices, Statistics of Singapore Newsletter, March 2009

7. Minister Gan said, “The ‘Back to School’ programme is an innovative and meaningful project that has been made possible through the excellent cooperation and support of the 3P (people, public and private sectors) network. I thank HPB for taking the lead to organise and I am certain that Chua Chu Kang residents will benefit greatly from ‘Back to School’.”

8. Said Ang Hak Seng, Chief Executive Officer, HPB, “If left untreated, flu can lead to serious illnesses such as pneumonia and hospitalisation; however, this can easily be prevented with regular flu vaccination. The uptake of the flu vaccine in Singapore, particularly amongst the needy elderly is low and this is a cause for concern. That is why we are expanding our existing ‘one-stop’ integrated screening programme to include on-site flu vaccination for the elderly. By bringing them back to school, not only do they learn to be healthy but also to have their routine dental check and receive the flu vaccine all under one roof.”

9. The flu vaccination was provided to the needy in partnership with HPB’s corporate partner Sanofi-Aventis Singapore Pte Ltd. Functional screening with falls risk screening and on-site follow-up were also made available as part of the programme, including:

- Screening for osteoporosis together with educational talks and workshops on prevention and management of osteoporosis
- Screening for changes in vision followed by prescription for spectacles (if necessary) by optometrists
- On-site pharmacists to review elderly persons who are on multiple medications as this may be a cause of giddiness resulting in falls
- Completion of a home safety checklist by Senior Health Ambassadors followed by home assessments where necessary by occupational therapists, to detect possible fall hazards and recommend simple changes to the home environment
- Falls prevention talks and workshops for both the elderly and their caregivers

- Healthy lifestyle activities tailored for the elderly such as the Strength Training Exercise Programme (STEP) developed by HPB

10. The 'Back to School' programme will be expanded to another two constituencies by March 2013.

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Annex 1 Factsheet on Influenza

Annex 2 Factsheet on Functional Screening Services

Issued by Health Promotion Board

Annex 1 – Influenza

Influenza is an acute viral disease of the respiratory tract characterised by fever and one or more symptoms of sore throat, cough, coryza, headache and myalgia. It is spread from person to person mainly through infectious respiratory secretions released during coughing and sneezing.

The causative agent is the influenza virus and three types of influenza virus (influenza A, B and C) are recognised. The Influenza type A viruses include three subtypes (H1N1, H2N2 and H3N2) that infect humans and have been associated with pandemics and widespread epidemics. Influenza type B is occasionally associated with regional epidemics, and influenza type C is usually associated with sporadic cases and minor localised outbreaks. Diagnosis is based on the clinical recognition of influenza-like illness with or without laboratory confirmation and strain characterisation.

In the temperate and cold climates, influenza reaches peak incidence in winter. As the Northern and Southern Hemisphere have winter at different times of the year, there are two flu seasons each year: December-March in the Northern Hemisphere; June-September in the Southern Hemisphere.

In tropical and subtropical areas, influenza epidemics can occur either twice a year or even throughout the year. In Singapore, influenza viruses circulate year round, with a bimodal increase in incidence observed in April–July and November–January.

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Annex 2 – Functional Screening Services

Community Functional Screening Programme

LIVE HEALTHY AGE WELL



Background

Singapore faces the challenge of a rapidly ageing population, with an estimated one in every five residents being more than 65 years of age by 2030, up from 1 in 10 today. A major concern for both the healthcare and social sectors is the increasing proportion of older adults who are at risk of developing functional impairments such as reduced mobility, vision & hearing impairment, and depression, all of which can affect independence and quality of life.

What is functional ability?

Functional ability is the ability to carry out daily activities independently. With age, functional ability may decrease resulting in functional decline and without appropriate management can lead to functional disability.

What is functional Screening?

Functional screening detects common age-related functional deterioration in the areas of



Why is it important to get screened for functional decline?

Functional decline, if picked up early, can be well managed and will result in an improved quality of life. Early detection followed with appropriate treatment and lifestyle changes will enable our seniors to remain independent and active.

Who can take part in this programme?

Singaporeans and Permanent Residents aged 60 years and above, dwelling in the community.



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Community Functional Screening Programme



LIVE HEALTHY AGE WELL

Why these six domains?

HPB with MOH has developed the Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPG) on “Functional Screening for Older Adults in the Community” which was launched in July 2010. The set of guidelines addresses the screening and referral of adults aged 60 years and above for the six functional domains.

What to expect in this Community Functional Screening Programme (CFSP)?

This Programme is conducted and supervised by a HPB-appointed health service provider in collaboration with community partners. The screening involves a series of simple tests and questionnaires administered by healthcare professionals for the six domains mentioned above.

What are the tests done for each domain?

 Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Snellen Chart• Pinhole Test
 Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global Questionnaire• Hearing Handicap Inventory Elderly-Screening• Audioscope
 Mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Geriatric Depression Scale-15
 Continence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• International Consultation on Incontinence Questionnaire Urinary Incontinence–Short Form
 Oral Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral Health Assessment Tool (modified)
 Physical Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vulnerable Elders Survey-13• Short Physical Performance Battery



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 Vision	A visual acuity chart to identify the presence of visual impairment
 Hearing	Questionnaire and a hand-held device to screen for hearing impairment in older adults
 Mood	Questionnaire to screen for possible depression among older adults
 Continenence	A simple questionnaire to assess if the person is at-risk for urinary incontinenence
 Oral Health	Physical check to assess the person's lips, tongue, gums, oral tissues, saliva, natural teeth, prosthesis, oral cleanliness
 Physical Function	A questionnaire and a performance based test to screen for functional disability in the older adults

What does the onsite screening results notification include?

The results of the functional screening will be shared with participants at the end of the screening session (on the same day).

For participants with normal results and do not need referral to a healthcare professional, the onsite nurse counsellor will advise on healthy lifestyle practices to maintain good function. They will also provide resources on healthy living, including links to community-based activities which promote healthy lifestyles.

What does the CFSP referral process include?

For participants who need referral to a healthcare professional for further consultations, the nurse counsellor will explain the results and encourage them to seek medical follow-up. The nurse will also issue a letter of referral to the appropriate medical professionals.



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These participants who are referred for further consultations with healthcare professionals will receive a reminder phone call one week after screening, and a follow-up phone call one month after screening to enquire and remind them of their recommended follow-up status and if they need further advice.

How long is this screening process?

The screening is a comprehensive package and each participant may take about an hour to complete the entire screening including the counselling session.

What is the cost of the CFSP?

The cost to each participant is a nominal SGD \$5.00, which includes the screening, interpretation of the results, advice on the appropriate follow-up treatment if any, and educational materials on the management of functional decline and healthy lifestyle.

What are other things to note before coming for functional screening?

- This screening DOES NOT require the participant to fast overnight
- This screening DOES NOT involve invasive tests (like blood tests etc.)
- Participants are required to bring their NRIC and Registration Ticket on the day of screening

For enquiries contact



Healthline -1800 223 1313



HPB_CFSP@hpb.gov.sg



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Community Functional Screening Programme



LIVE HEALTHY AGE WELL

More information about the six functional domains:

Adopting and maintaining a good lifestyle will help you live life to the fullest!



PHYSICAL FUNCTION

Good physical function is important to help you perform daily activities. Screening for physical function identifies your risk of developing physical decline. The tests used will help detect the risk of health deterioration as well as your risk for falls. If your scores are low, you will be referred to your family doctor for medical follow up.

Engaging in a range of different physical activities will help strengthen muscles and bones, and reduce your risk of falls and hospitalisations.



CONTINENCE STATUS

Urinary incontinence is associated with a low quality of life in adults. Screening can help detect incontinence and seek effective treatment /management. A questionnaire will be given to assess your risk of urinary incontinence. If you have a high score, you will be referred to your family doctor for medical follow up.



MOOD STATUS

Certain changes in life such as retirement, loss of a loved one and health conditions that affect one's independence and mobility, can cause some people to feel 'blue' or 'sad'. Depression could become an illness if it stays for too long and could obstruct your daily functioning, including work and interest in activities. Screening provides early detection of depressive symptoms. If your scores are high, you will be referred to your family doctor for further follow up.



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Community Functional Screening Programme



LIVE HEALTHY AGE WELL



VISION

Eyesight is an integral part of everyday life. As treatment is available for most causes of decreased eyesight, it is beneficial that you get screened early to reduce the incidence of falls and accidents due to poor vision. If your scores are low, you will be referred either to an optometrist (professional who measures vision) or to an Ophthalmologist (eye doctor) for follow-up. Regular monitoring of eyesight for changes can help you increase your level of independence.



HEARING

Good hearing is important to keep you connected to the world. If you find difficulties with communication, it may result in decreased social activity. Screening can help detect hearing problems. Based on your scores you may be referred to an audiologist (professional who measures hearing) or an ENT (ear, nose, and throat) doctor.

In most cases of age related hearing loss without any other ear problems, hearing aids and assistive listening devices are usually sufficient to take care of the hearing problem.



ORAL HEALTH

Oral health is important for overall health because it helps you enjoy your food and maintain good nutrition. The prevalence of oral health problems appears to increase with age. You will be screened for oral cleanliness, number and condition of teeth, condition of dentures, as well as signs and symptoms of dental pain. If you have any dental problems, you will be referred to a dentist for follow-up.

This Community Functional Screening Programme assesses functional status only and is not intended to be a comprehensive geriatric screening programme.



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