

Health Promotion Board Unveils Two-Pronged Strategy to Step Up Tobacco Control Efforts on World No Tobacco Day

New Initiatives Include New ‘No-To-Tobacco’ School-Based Programme by 2017 and Increasing Smoking Cessation Touchpoints to 600 by 2020

Singapore, 31 May 2014 – Health Promotion Board (HPB) today announced its Tobacco Control Strategy to reduce adult smoking prevalence in Singapore to 12 per cent by 2020.

HPB’s Tobacco Control strategy will adopt a two-pronged approach to reduce smoking prevalence in Singapore: (1) preventing initiation amongst youths by bringing programmes upstream to schools and (2) strengthening infrastructure to provide more support and improving accessibility to smoking cessation programmes to encourage smokers to quit. The strategy is a structured approach that complements regulations and anti-smoking restrictions, which are necessary but not sufficient for reducing smoking rates.

Recent findings from the National Health Surveillance Survey (NHSS) 2013 show that the Government’s long-term efforts to reduce smoking-related diseases in Singapore have shown some results. The rate of adult smoking prevalence has stabilised at 13.3 per cent in 2013, compared to 13.6 per cent in 2007.

Associate Professor Faishal Ibrahim, Parliamentary Secretary for Health said, “Singapore’s multi-pronged approach to tobacco control has ensured that smoking prevalence in Singapore is amongst the lowest in the world, at 13.3 per cent. Under the Healthy Living Master Plan, the Tobacco Control Strategy will take our efforts to the next level to further drive down adult smoking prevalence levels by preventing initiation amongst youths and supporting adult smokers to quit for good.”

Moving Upstream To Prevent Initiation In Youths

NHSS 2013 showed a significant drop in smoking prevalence amongst those aged 18 to 29 years, from 17.2 per cent in 2007 to 12.7 per cent in 2013. This drop is an encouraging indicator that HPB’s long-term efforts to prevent initiation of smoking and early intervention amongst youths are beginning to yield results, as statistics have shown that 75 per cent of Singaporean smokers establish their regular smoking habit before they turn 21¹ years old.

In addition to the Point-of-Sale Display ban announced earlier this year which will reduce exposure and access to tobacco products when it is implemented in the future, the Tobacco Control Strategy will expand these efforts by changing social norms to prevent initiation. A new “No To Tobacco” education programme will be introduced to all mainstream schools by 2017. In addition, HPB will leverage school-based mental wellbeing programmes to promote

¹ National Health Survey 2010

resilience and positive self-esteem to help youths to develop the self-awareness and ability to say no to social influences that may encourage tobacco use.

More Support For Smokers On Their Quit Journey

Statistics from NHSS 2013 showed that adults aged 30 to 49 years have a higher smoking prevalence at 15.3 per cent. As such, more programmes will be dedicated to reinforce and amplify smoking cessation support programmes to aid smokers in their quit journey, with the aim to bring down the prevalence among this age group.

By 2020, the number of smoking cessation touchpoints, which includes retail pharmacies and primary healthcare institutes, will increase by four-fold from 150 to 600 nationwide. Smokers can also receive smoking cessation counselling at HPB's I Quit roadshows, which will be held at various locations across Singapore over the next six months.

HPB will also work with the Ministry of Health and the private sector to increase accessibility and affordability of nicotine-replacement therapy in Singapore.

I Quit 2014

To mark the World No Tobacco Day, HPB has launched its annual National Tobacco Control campaign, I Quit. This year marks the fourth edition of I Quit, a national anti-smoking social movement introduced by HPB in 2011. This movement adopts a community-based but personalised approach to build a network of support that helps smokers make their first or next attempt to quit smoking.

This year, HPB aims get 10,000 smokers to take the pledge to start their quit journey by signing up for the I Quit 28-Day Countdown.

Building on last year's success, I Quit 2014 will once again inspire smokers to remain smoke-free for 28 days through "I Quit 28-Day Countdown". This challenge was designed based on research that demonstrated the reduced risk of relapsing after the first 28 days of being smoke-free². In 2013, one in 10 smokers³ who signed up for the challenge stayed smoke-free after the crucial 28-day period.

To encourage more smokers to take up the challenge, the I Quit campaign will expand its outreach and support network with:

- An increased number of roadshows (from 20 in 2013 to 60) that will run from 31 May 2014 till January 2015;
- Forty (40) roadshows for the Ramadan I Quit 28-Day Countdown to reach more within the Malay Muslim community.

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Annex 1: About I Quit

Issued by Health Promotion Board

² "Clinical and public health significance of treatments to aid smoking cessation. R. West and J. Stapleton. Eur Respir Rev 2008; 17: 110, 199 - 204"

³ Over 3400 smokers signed up for I Quit 28-Day Countdown in 2013.

Annex 1: I Quit

I Quit adopts a community-based but personalised approach to build a network of support to help smokers of all ages make their first or next attempt to quit smoking.

Through 150 touchpoints, HPB provides convenient and accessible programmes that a smoker can tap into wherever he is.

Smokers may get assistance to quit smoking through the following avenues:

Let's Quit: The 28-Day Countdown

Many smokers consider smoking cessation and the journey towards being smoke-free a daunting prospect. This perception is a significant barrier which leads to 52 per cent of smokers delaying their intention to quit smoking.

HPB introduced the "Let's Quit: The 28-Day Countdown" as part of its I Quit 2013 campaign. The 28-Day Countdown is based on findings that smokers who stay smoke-free for 28 days are five times more likely to succeed for good.⁴ Smokers are also more likely to quit successfully when they have a supportive environment.

The 28-Day Countdown helps smokers to break down quitting into actionable steps to empower smokers with the knowledge and support to remain smoke-free through the crucial period of 28 days.

To sign up for the countdown, smokers can register online at www.hpb.gov.sg/iquit28, or at partnering pharmacies or I Quit roadshows.

QuitLine

The QuitLine is a helpline for smokers and people who are interested to find out more about how to stop smoking, with trained staff to provide customised professional advice and tips. For more information on methods to quit smoking, please call the QuitLine at 1800 438 2000 (Toll-free).

QuitLine SMS

Talking may be uncomfortable to some, and thus the SMS platform is available for smokers and non-smokers to send questions or doubts on smoking-related issues. Text questions or doubts to +65 9463 3771 or +65 9138 0081. Replies would be made by Quit Consultants trained to provide help on quitting smoking.

I Quit Club

I Quit Club is a Facebook community created to gather all ex-smokers who have successfully quit smoking or have taken the pledge to quit smoking. The platform was made to share success stories, tips and to prove to current smokers that quitting is possible. For more information please visit iquitclub.sg.

I Quit Mobile Application

The application helps individuals to determine their smoker profile type to provide the most effective method to quit smoking, and offers tips and strategies to cope with the withdrawal symptoms from quitting smoking. This application is currently available for free downloading on iTunes and Google Play.

⁴ R West and J Stapleton 'Clinical and public health significance of treatments to aid smoking cessation', Eur Respir Rev 2008; 17: 110, 199–204

HPB Website

The HPB's website provides articles, success stories, tips, and strategies for smokers and their loved ones on providing the best methods to help them quit the addiction. For more information, please visit www.hpb.gov.sg/smokefree.