

**5 May 2012**

## **HOLISTIC HEALTH PROMOTING FRAMEWORK TAILORED FOR TOTS**

*With growing evidence that shows early intervention impacts health outcomes later in life, the Health Promotion Board is launching a health promoting framework specially designed for pre-schoolers to ensure that children start on the right foot as early as possible.*

**Singapore, 7 May 2012:** To promote and encourage healthy habits in children as young as three, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) is launching a health promoting framework for pre-schools called CHERISH Junior.

2. An acronym for **CH**ampioning **E**fforts **R**esulting in **I**mproved **S**chool **H**ealth, CHERISH Junior is a holistic framework adapted from the World Health Organisation's Health Promoting School concept, which advocates a learning environment that provides children with an integrated health-conscious experience.

3. What began as a small project in a few pre-schools a few years ago, featuring a series of educational talks for parents, has been transformed by HPB this year into a comprehensive and holistic health promoting framework. The aim is to move a full suite of health promotion activities 'upstream' to pre-schools, so as to effectively strengthen the health foundations of young children and influence their health outcomes later in life.

4. According to data from HPB, about eight per cent of children entering Primary 1 every year are already overweight. With evidence revealing that obesity is hard to reverse in adulthood once it is established in the early years, there is an even greater urgency to move 'upstream' to pre-schools and introduce healthy lifestyle habits in children as early as possible.

5. Launched officially today at participating pre-schools, HPB's CHERISH Junior framework comprises health promoting initiatives designed for the pre-school setting such as:

- The Pre-school Health Curriculum  
Teachers use lesson plans and activities, developed by HPB for children aged three to six, to teach health-related topics in a fun and interesting way.
- The Pre-school Health Ambassador (PSHA) Programme  
K2 students are selected and trained by teachers to act as role models and champion simple health-promoting habits, such as regular brushing of teeth, among their classmates, with the help of a Pre-school Ambassador Kit.
- The Healthy Meals in Childcare Centres (HMCC) Programme  
To help childcare centres prepare meals with foods found in the four food groups and in the right proportion, HPB's nutritionists help them put together menus that are balanced and healthy. In addition, HPB installs interactive wall murals and stickers at the premises to teach children about healthy lifestyle and healthy meals.

6. To date, at least 91 pre-schools have applied to be a CHERISH Junior pre-school, and are currently being assessed by HPB based on six criteria:

- Healthy School Policies
- Healthy School Physical Environment
- Healthy School Social Environment
- Community Involvement
- Curricula for Healthy Living
- Preventive and Promotion Services

7. Participants have to demonstrate they are setting standards for best practices as well as achieving tangible outcomes in school health promotion. These include providing a safe and healthy environment for learning, such as working with HPB to vigilantly detect and prevent the spread of communicable infections like the Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

(HFMD) by displaying and distributing educational materials, and conducting educational talks for parents.

8. Stressing the importance of bringing the Health Promoting School concept to pre-schools, Dr Amy Khor, Minister of State for Health, said: “Health promotion in early childhood goes a long way in preventing infectious diseases and developing good health habits and self-esteem into adulthood. For instance, studies show that dietary habits are formed before one reaches five, and these habits are difficult to change after they turn 11. It has, therefore, become necessary to bring our school health services further ‘upstream’, so as to nip any health problem in the bud even before our children enter primary school.”

9. For example, in 2002, HPB’s National Myopia Prevention Programme started vision screening in kindergartens to detect myopia earlier so as to minimise the chances of progression. As a result, the latest HPB study showed a reduction in the prevalence of myopia among primary school children by about five per cent, making Singapore one of the first countries to actually reduce myopia prevalence.

10. Mr Ang Hak Seng, Chief Executive Officer, HPB, said: “The pre-school environment provides one of the most conducive environments for influencing lifestyle habits that can be lifelong – not just by reaching out to young children, but their parents and teachers. Within this setting, HPB is able to nurture the youngest health ambassadors and role models we have so far, empower parents with the ability to take proactive action in raising a healthy family, and provide educators with the resources and tools they need to run a successful health promoting school recognised by the CHERISH Junior Award. In turn, I believe such schools will become popular choices among many parents who want their children to have a healthy start in life.”

11. By the end of 2012, HPB aims to transform at least 10 per cent of all pre-schools to health promoting CHERISH Junior pre-schools. By 2015, the goal is to grow this percentage to 30 per cent.

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