

## FIRST NATION-WIDE STEPS MOVEMENT OF AN UNPRECEDENTED SCALE EXTENDED INTO SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND JUNIOR COLLEGES

*HPB's National Steps Challenge aims to break the monotony of a sedentary lifestyle and physical inactivity, spurring Singaporeans to sit less and move more*

**Singapore, 19 February 2016** – The Health Promotion Board (HPB) today announced *Rep with Steps*, a school-based steps challenge for students in secondary schools and junior colleges which started this week. *Rep with Steps*, which means represent your school with steps, follows *Steps for Good*, a Challenge encouraging students to walk for charity, targeting Institutes of Higher Learning, and the National Steps Challenge, which targets the rest of the general population.

The National Steps Challenge is a social movement of unprecedented scale attracting over 156,000 participants to sit less and move more. Preliminary findings for the months of November and December 2015 revealed that of the adult participants who had collected their steps tracker, 63% continued to use it<sup>1</sup>. On average, participants are generally clocking about 7,500 steps daily<sup>2</sup> with 30% hitting about 10,000 steps a day. Since the Challenge began, over 80% have accumulated enough steps to win prizes.

Designed to encourage Singaporeans with a sedentary lifestyle to sit less and move more, the National Steps Challenge leverages HPB's Healthy 365 mobile application to nudge participants towards a more active lifestyle by taking more steps anytime, anywhere. This is also the first time the entire nation is engaged in a common physical activity goal on three different platforms – *Steps for Good*, National Steps Challenge and *Rep with Steps*. Leveraging on behavioural insights and technology, the Challenge nudges participants to take more steps daily, and rewards them for sustained behaviour, shifting the focus to a simple, behavioural change goal, such that it becomes a norm.

### **Walk for better health**

Similar to the trend in other high income countries, Singaporeans have become increasingly sedentary and are spending less time on exercise<sup>3</sup>. The 2010 National Health Survey showed that 39% of adult Singaporeans between 18 to 69 years old do not have sufficient physical activity, with one in four of these inactive adults only achieving less than 30 minutes of physical activity a week. Studies<sup>4</sup> have also shown that sedentary behaviours are prevalent among Singapore children, with two in three inactive youths failing to meet half of

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<sup>1</sup> This is defined as those who have used their steps tracker on at least one day, after the day of initial pairing. A day of use is defined as achieving at least 1,000 steps on that day. This high level of participation is comparable or better than international examples (such as in the US, Australia) of pedometer-based, community-based interventions, which achieve around 40-74% of participants having used the tracking device.

<sup>2</sup> Average daily step count is based on the period from the date the participant first paired the steps tracker to his/her profile, to 27 Dec 2015.

<sup>3</sup> National Health Survey 2004, and National Health Surveillance Survey 2013

<sup>4</sup> Chia. M; Mukherjee. S; & Lye. J. (2010) Inactivity Physiology – Staying still, Singaporean youths are not moving enough. NIE Research Brief, 13-002, ISN 2010-3093

the recommended amount<sup>5</sup> of physical activity. Coupling the lack of physical activity with consuming calories in excess has also led to the rise of the obesity prevalence in Singapore from 7% in 2004 to 11% in 2010<sup>6</sup>.

Adopting the concept of incidental physical activity, the National Steps Challenge empowers Singaporeans to take responsibility for their health and wellbeing and track their progress with the aid of a steps tracker<sup>7</sup> and HPB's Healthy 365 mobile application. As participants accumulate steps, they can track their diet and see the total calories consumed and expended daily. Through this nation-wide initiative, HPB aims to influence a shift in lifestyle and behaviour so that taking more steps becomes the norm in an effort to counter a sedentary lifestyle and physical inactivity.

“Walking more and breaking up sedentary time has been associated with improved health outcomes and better management of chronic diseases. Using technology as an enabler, the National Steps Challenge makes it easier to nudge Singaporeans to counter a sedentary lifestyle and physical inactivity, with minimal adjustments to their daily routines, so that they may enjoy the benefits of a more active lifestyle. Ultimately, some physical activity is better than none,” said Minister of State, Ministry of Health, Mr Chee Hong Tat, who joined students at Woodgrove Secondary School this morning to mark the start of *Rep with Steps* this week at secondary schools and junior colleges.

### **Benefits of being physically active**

Individuals do not need to be highly active to start reaping the benefits of being physically active. Relatively small increases in activity volume can bring along significant health benefits<sup>8</sup>. For an inactive adult who on average takes about 3,000 to 5,000 steps a day, walking the recommended 7,500 to 10,000 steps daily has been shown to reduce high blood pressure<sup>9</sup>, aid with glucose control<sup>10</sup> (for those with Type 2 diabetes), lower blood cholesterol levels<sup>11</sup>, contributing to a 19% reduction in the risk of all-cause mortality.

Regular physical activity can also improve one's mental wellbeing such as improved sleep quality, increased concentration, reducing one's anxiety levels<sup>12</sup> and is linked to a 50% reduction in the prevalence of depression<sup>13</sup>. In addition to the above benefits, regular physical activity also improves cognitive and motor functions in the elderly<sup>14</sup>, leading to a 30% lower risk of falls<sup>15</sup>.

The infographic in [Annex A](#) shows some of the minor adjustments Singaporeans can make to weave an additional 2,500 steps into their daily routine.

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<sup>5</sup> Children from ages 7 to 18 should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity everyday.

<sup>6</sup> National Health Surveys 2004 and 2010

<sup>7</sup> According to C3 Collaborating for health. (2012) Review: The benefits of regular walking for health, well-being and the environment, majority of pedometer-based interventions have proven to be successful and result in an increase of about 2,500 steps per day.

<sup>8</sup> Wen et al (2011) Minimum amount of physical activity for reduced mortality and extended life expectancy: a prospective cohort study. The Lancet.

<sup>9</sup> Garber et al (2011) Quantity and Quality of Exercise for developing and maintaining Cardiorespiratory, Musculoskeletal and Neuromotor fitness in apparently healthy adults: Guidelines for Prescribing Exercise. American College of Sports Medicine.

<sup>10</sup> Swartz AM, Thompson DL (2002) Increasing daily walking improves glucose tolerance in overweight women. Res Q Exerc Sport.

<sup>11</sup> Sugiura H, Kajima K, Mirbod SM, et al (2002) Effects of long-term moderate exercise and increase in number of daily steps on serum lipids in women: randomised controlled trial. BMC Womens Health.

<sup>12</sup> Panedo, F.J. & Dahn, J.R. (2005) Exercise and well-being: A review of mental and physical health benefits associated with physical activity. Current Opinion in Psychiatry.

<sup>13</sup> McKercher et al (2009) Physical activity and depression in young adults. Am J Prev Med.

<sup>14</sup> Weuve, J., J. Kang and J. Manson et al. (2004) Physical activity, including walking, and cognitive function in older women. JAMA

<sup>15</sup> Physical activity guidelines advisory committee report; Part E: Integration and Summary of the Science (2008). Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, USA.

## **National Steps Challenge**

Last year, HPB partnered several Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL) including the Institute of Technical Education, Nanyang Polytechnic, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic and Temasek Polytechnic, to trigger a movement of a sit less, move more lifestyle. The IHL Challenge, *Steps for Good*, which ran for a period of eight weeks from October 2015, saw over 10,000 students clocking steps to raise funds for charitable causes adopted by their schools<sup>16</sup>.

The IHLs encouraged their students to participate in mass exercises to increase their step count. At the end of the IHL Challenge, the students had clocked about 2.2 billion steps, raising \$38,000 for charity. The monies raised went to each IHL's education fund to support needy students and the improvement of school facilities.

Replicating the success of the IHL Challenge, HPB is rolling out *Rep with Steps* to about 20,000 students from 27 secondary schools and junior colleges, which is set to run for 10 weeks. HPB will work closely with interested schools to organise booster activities such as the integration of mass exercises into curriculum time to encourage students to sit less and move more. The top eight schools with the highest average step count will receive cash prizes, with the first prize being \$5,000. Information on *Rep with Steps* can be found in [Annex B](#).

At the national level, HPB has also joined forces with several partners across different industries, such as sports and wellness companies and food and beverages establishments, to offer attractive sure-win prizes at different stages of the National Steps Challenge to spur and motivate participants on. Participants without smart phones and have no access to HPB's Healthy 365 mobile application may go to participating Guardian and Sportslink outlets to sync and update their step count. More information on the National Steps Challenge can be found in [Annex C](#). [Annex D](#) shows an overview of the challenge on all three platforms.

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## **About Health Promotion Board**

The Health Promotion Board was established as a statutory board under the Ministry of Health, Singapore, in 2001 with the vision of building "A Nation of Healthy People". The Health Promotion Board aims to empower the people of Singapore to attain optimal health, increase the quality and years of healthy life and prevent illness, disability and premature death. As the key agency overseeing national health promotion and disease prevention programmes, HPB spearheads health education, promotion and prevention programmes as well as creates a health-supportive environment in Singapore. It develops and organises relevant health promotion and disease prevention programmes, reaching out to the healthy, the at-risk and the unhealthy at all stages of life – children, youths, adults and older Singapore residents. Its health promotion programmes include nutrition, mental health, physical activity, smoking control and communicable disease education. HPB also promotes healthy ageing, integrated health screening, and chronic disease education and management.

More information can be found at [www.hpb.gov.sg](http://www.hpb.gov.sg).

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<sup>16</sup> In Singapore Polytechnic, students above 19 years old participated in the Challenge while in Ngee Ann Polytechnic, a control group study was conducted on the level of physical activity amongst polytechnic students.

Infographic on Ways to Clock Additional 2,500 Steps Daily



### Factsheet on *Rep with Steps*

- a. HPB is rolling out *Rep with Steps* to about 20,000 students from 27 secondary schools and junior colleges, which is set to run for 10 weeks, from 15 February to April 2016.
- b. *Rep with Steps* is a closed challenge, where only nominated students currently enrolled in the participating schools are allowed to join the challenge.
- c. The participating schools are:

1.	Anderson Junior College	15.	Outram Secondary
2.	Bedok South Secondary	16.	Pasir Ris Secondary
3.	Boon Lay Secondary	17.	Raffles Girls' Secondary
4.	Canberra Secondary	18.	Raffles Institution
5.	Cedar Girls' Secondary	19.	School of Science & Technology
6.	Changkat Changi Secondary	20.	Tampines Junior College
7.	CHIJ St. Theresa's Convent	21.	Westspring Secondary
8.	Clementi Town Secondary	22.	Woodgrove Secondary
9.	Crescent Girls' School	23.	Xinmin Secondary
10.	Greendale Secondary	24.	Yishun Secondary
11.	Hillgrove Secondary	25.	Yishun Town Secondary
12.	Hua Yi Secondary	26.	Yuhua Secondary
13.	Mayflower Secondary	27.	Yuying Secondary
14.	National Junior College		

- d. Participating schools have the option to work with HPB in organising booster activities such as the integration of mass exercises into curriculum time to encourage students to sit less and move more, and up their step count.
- e. The top three winning schools with the highest average number of steps achieved per student during the challenge period will receive cash reward of \$5,000, \$3,000 and \$2,000 correspondingly. The subsequent five schools with the next highest average step count will receive \$1,000 each.

Position	Rewards
1st	\$5,000
2nd	\$3,000
3rd	\$2,000
4th – 8th	\$1,000

### Factsheet on the National Steps Challenge

- a. The National Steps Challenge is open to all Singapore residents 19 years old and above.
- b. The objectives of the National Steps Challenge are to:
  - Get Singaporeans to be more active by removing the barriers to physical activity through promoting simple steps which can be incorporated into daily life
  - Leverage on technology and adopt behavioural insights to influence a shift in lifestyle by motivating Singaporeans to sit less, move more.
- c. Participants are required to download HPB's Healthy 365 mobile application and register for the Challenge to get a steps tracker. Non-smart phone users are able to sync their step count via kiosks located at all Guardian and Sportslink outlets island-wide.
- d. To earn rewards, participants will have to sync their steps tracker with the Healthy 365 mobile app to update their step count to earn points. The more steps they take per day, the more points they earn.
- e. There are several avenues for participants to win prizes:
  - Sure-win rewards worth \$30 or more for shopping, groceries, etc
  - Qualifying draw where 500 winners will walk away with \$250 shopping vouchers each
  - Destination draw where 10 winners will win holiday packages worth \$10,000 each
- f. The table shows the number of steps taken with corresponding reward points to be earned daily.

Steps (Daily)	Points (Daily)
5,000	15
7,500	45
10,000	60 (maximum)

- g. Participants can accumulate points to redeem a variety of shopping and grocery vouchers. Additionally, with every 750 points earned, they will earn a chance in both the Qualifying Draw and the Destination Draw.
- h. To get sure-win rewards, participants can accumulate points by increasing their step count daily.

	Points (Total)	Rewards Value
Tier 1	600	From \$5
Tier 2	Additional 1,800	From \$15
Tier 3	Additional 1,200	From \$10

## Overview of All Three Challenges

<b>Key Milestones</b>			
	<b>IHL Challenge</b>	<b>National Steps Challenge</b>	<b>Rep with Steps</b>
<b>Challenge</b>	Steps for Good	National Steps Challenge	Rep with Steps
<b>Period</b>	8 weeks October-December 2015	6 months November 2015-May 2016	10 weeks February-April 2016
<b>Target participants</b>	Institutes of Higher Learning	Singapore residents 19 years old and above	Secondary schools and junior colleges
<b>No. of participants</b>	Over 10,000 students	About 126,000 registrants	About 20,000 students
<b>Overview of game mechanics</b>	Students work together to accumulate step count to raise funds for a charity of the institution's choice.	Individuals get sure-win rewards based on their daily step count, with a chance to participate in the Qualifying and/ or Destination Draw.  More information in <a href="#">Annex C</a> .	Schools compete against one another for the highest average number of steps per school to win cash prizes.
<b>Average daily step count from participants currently using the steps tracker</b>	Close to 6,700	Close to 7,900	Not available yet.