

- 6 NOV 1998

# PRESS RELEASE

Release No.: 43/OCT

10-1/97/10/23

17 - yet - 11

**SPEECH BY MR YEO CHEOW TONG,  
MINISTER OF HEALTH,  
AT THE APPRECIATION CEREMONY FOR  
THE NATIONAL HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CAMPAIGN '97  
AT THE FOUR SEASONS HOTEL  
ON THURSDAY, 23 OCTOBER 1997 AT 5.00 PM**

This year's National Healthy Lifestyle Campaign was a great success. As in previous years, the Campaign received enthusiastic response from people of all ages and all walks of life. This is due to the combined efforts of all of you who have worked tirelessly together to organise the numerous campaign activities.

After eight months of careful planning, the message of healthy living was brought to Singaporeans with the launching of the campaign in Orchard Road. About 1500 persons helped to ensure that the launch event, the Fun & Fitness Fiesta, proceeded without a hitch. Some even had to start work around the midnight before the morning launch by the Prime Minister.

All the hard work paid off as 18,000 people converged on Orchard Road to participate in the Fun & Fitness Fiesta. The number of participants exceeded our target of 15,000. Even the haze took a back seat that day, giving all participants a clear blue sky to soak in the fun & festivities.

As an important aspect of healthy living is adopting a healthy diet, the Ministry, in conjunction with 16 Town Councils, organised nutritional activities with special emphasis on fat intake. The 1993 Food Consumption Survey showed that almost half of adult Singaporeans (43 per cent) ate out at hawker centres every day of the week, averaging about once a day. It is with this in mind that the programme for healthier food choices at hawker centres was initiated. 2,200 hawkers from 50 food centres provided healthier menus with more vegetables, less fat, oil and salt for their clients.

This year, more than 730,000 people participated in the numerous activities during the campaign month. This shows that Singaporeans are now more aware of the importance of good health. Healthy living will reduce the risk of lifestyle related health problems such as heart disease, stroke, cancers and diabetes. I therefore urge Singaporeans to lead a healthy lifestyle not only for the duration of the Campaign but throughout their entire life.

Healthy living is a community effort. To reflect this, we have turned the National Healthy Lifestyle Campaign into a civic movement. The Committee on Healthy Lifestyle was formed to harness greater community involvement and participation in healthy lifestyle activities. The Committee has provided advice, guidance and overall direction to the annual Campaign.

The Committee has also initiated the monthly publication of a health newsletter called "Joy of Life" in the four leading language papers in Singapore. 25,000 videos on exercise and including other health tips have also been produced for sale to the public. This will help to spread the message and enhance awareness of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle.

One key lifestyle-related medical problem is heart disease. The incidence of heart attacks has shown a declining trend from 102 per 100,000 population in 1992 to 81 in 1995. This is noted mainly in the 60-64 year age group. Among the various ethnic groups, the Indians experienced the largest decline from 1138 per 100,000 in 1992 to 533 in 1995. This is followed by the Malays with rates declining from 791 to 539 and the Chinese from 367 to 262 over the corresponding period.

The declining trend among this age group is likely to be due to several factors. Firstly, they have heeded the call to lead a healthy lifestyle. A large number of older Singaporeans have quit smoking and also started to exercise regularly. This is reflected in the statistics on smoking which show a declining trend in smoking among those over the age of 50 years. The percentage of Singaporeans exercising regularly has gone up from 14 per cent in 1992 to 24 per cent in 1994. Generally the proportion of people exercising regularly is higher in the older age group than in those under 50 years.

Other factors contributing to the decline in new cases of heart attack include people seeking treatment for heart disease earlier and improvement in treatment modalities.

Notwithstanding the availability of more effective treatment for heart disease, it is better to lead a healthy lifestyle and reduce the need to have to undergo costly medical treatment and procedures. We need, therefore, to press on with our efforts to involve Singaporeans in healthy living.

The Ministry of Health values all our partners in this endeavour. I would like to thank participating ministries, statutory boards and corporate organisations for their support and contribution. It is not possible to mention

all by name, but I would like to place on record our particular appreciation and thanks to:

- a) The Ministries of Defence, Education, Information and the Arts, Home Affairs, the Environment, Community Development and the Public Service Division of the Prime Minister's office.
- b) Singapore Sports Council
- c) Singapore Civil Defence Force
- d) People's Association
- e) National Trades Union Congress
- f) Singapore National Employers Federation
- g) Singapore National Heart Association
- h) Singapore Medical Association
- i) PS21 Functional Committee on Staff Well Being
- j) Committee on Healthy Lifestyle and
- k) The media for their coverage of the campaign.

The continued success of the campaign is also due to the strong support of our many sponsors. I thank all our donors and sponsors for their very generous donations.

Let us continue to work together to improve the health of Singaporeans and build a healthy nation.

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@