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## SINGAPORE COMES TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE 20 YEARS OF HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

*New initiatives to encourage Singaporeans to lead a healthy lifestyle*

*Launch of healthy lifestyle index and first digital TV health and wellness channel in the Asia-Pacific to increase health literacy*

The National Healthy Lifestyle Campaign was started by then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in 1992 to ensure that Singaporeans were aware of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

2. A number of important indicators have shown that Singapore is on the right track with regards to health. Singaporeans are exercising more, eating better and undergoing regular health screening.

- Physical Activity: More Singaporeans are incorporating physical activity into their daily routine with about 6 in 10 (60%) Singaporeans meeting guidelines for sufficient total physical activity equivalent to 150 minutes a week;
- Obesity: Despite the soaring global obesity trends globally, Singapore's obesity level in 2010 was 11% - lower than the OECD average of 17% and those of developed countries such as the USA at 34%, Australia at 25%;
- Smoking: Heralded as having one of the lowest smoking rates in the world, the effectiveness of Singapore's anti-smoking campaigns has resulted in the daily smoking rate declining from 18% in 1992 to 14% in 2010.
- Diet: The consumption rate of healthier food products carrying the Healthy Choice Symbol has steadily increased from 29% in 2002 to 49% in 2009;
- Health Screening: About 80% of the population are regularly screened for high blood cholesterol and hypertension.

3. National efforts to keep Singaporeans healthy were also recently recognised when Singapore topped Bloomberg's global health survey<sup>1</sup>. While Singapore has come a long way in its health promotion efforts, a series of new initiatives were unveiled today by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to encourage Singaporeans to make healthier choices, by tapping on community support and healthy lifestyle tools accessible via new media.

4. Prime Minister Lee said, "Unhealthy lifestyles cause serious health problems in many developed countries. In the US and UK, obesity has become an epidemic. Obese people are more likely to suffer from diabetes and hypertension, so these diseases are increasing too. The developed countries are doing their utmost to tackle the problem. But their lifestyles, diets and social environments have become entrenched and extremely hard to change. New York City is even legislating to limit the size of soft drinks sold, because sugar in soft drinks contributes significantly to obesity. Sceptics doubt such a radical move will work, though there is some scientific evidence that this can help."

5. "Singapore has been promoting healthy lifestyles for 20 years. We have made progress – more people are exercising, fewer are smoking and Singaporeans are generally more aware of the need to stay fit and healthy. But our obesity rates are going up too, with more fast foods and sedentary occupations. And we must never let our guard down against smoking, especially among our young. Hence, we must redouble our efforts and see what more we can do to regulate advertising and promote healthy food choices. At the same time, each person has to take responsibility for his own health. We must each watch our weight, eat healthily and exercise regularly, and avoid smoking."

6. Along with some 20,000 participants, PM Lee revisited the achievements of the past 20 years of the National Healthy Lifestyle Campaign and took part in the Great Singapore Workout which continues to be an annual highlight.

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<sup>1</sup> The Bloomberg survey considered the health system and risk factors of various countries. Singapore was scored 92.5% for our health system, coming in behind Italy, Australia and Switzerland. In terms of risk factors, Singapore's penalty score of 3% was the lowest in the world. The risk factors were assessed by considering health issues such as smoking, alcohol consumption, BMI, physical activity, HIV, chronic diseases, childhood immunisation, pollution, sanitation and number of underweight children.

## **Celebrating together 20 years of healthy lifestyle**

7. Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong said “I am glad the NHLC has become the national platform to promote healthy living for Singaporeans since I launched it some 20 years ago. Over the years, the Health Promotion Board has done a good job to ensure that the NHLC remains in tune with the changing lifestyles and health needs of Singaporeans, by promoting innovative health initiatives and programmes aimed at improving the health of all Singaporeans. I hope the NHLC will not only continue to address current health needs of Singaporeans but also to prepare Singaporeans to deal with future health challenges. This will become more important as Singapore’s population ages.”

8. Over the past 20 years, the NHLC has been the national platform to promote a culture of health. In its early years, it focused primarily on public education and raised awareness of healthy living and has been at the forefront of initiatives including:

- *Great Singapore Workout* - first launched in 1993 and has since been a yearly highlight of the NHLC;
- *Ask for Programme* - started in 1994 and encourages consumers to ask for more vegetables, less oil, salt, sugar and syrups when eating out;
- *A.C.T.I.V.E Day* or All Companies/Communities Together in Various Exercises Day - commenced in 1999 to encourage health-promoting activities in workplaces such as exercise programmes and training courses on organising comprehensive health promotion programmes in the community;
- *Healthy Mind, Happy Life* - developed in 2007 to improve mental well-being;
- *Lose to Win* - a holistic weight management programme that encourages Singaporeans to lose weight through healthy lifestyle practices was launched in 2009. Lose to Win had 251 participants in its first run and witnessed weight loss among 94% of the participants.

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## **Co-creating sustainable health solutions**

9. Minister for Health Gan Kim Yong said, “The NHLC has entered its 20<sup>th</sup> year. After two decades, Singapore, through HPB and its many partners, is still actively promoting a healthy lifestyle, through regular exercise, healthy diet, smoking cessation and mental wellness. It shows our government's seriousness in creating a healthy nation, and continuous investment in health promotion. It takes years to achieve the kind of results that Singapore has been recognised for and I urge all Singaporeans to continue on with the good efforts. I am heartened to note that in recent times, HPB has embraced a ground-up approach where it works closely with grassroots leaders and communities to co-plan, co-develop and co-implement relevant health promotion initiatives to

meet the local needs of the residents. Such a community-centric strategy is complemented by broader efforts to build health promoting ecosystems through strong public-people-private sector collaborations. At the same time, HPB has also nurtured an army of Health Ambassadors working on the ground to inspire their fellow Singaporeans to live healthily. These strategies have been pivotal in the success of its many health promotion efforts.”

10. Mr. Ang Hak Seng, CEO, HPB, noted, “In recent years, HPB has focused on making the healthy choice accessible and affordable for all Singaporeans. This year, we will be launching a Healthy Lifestyle Index and healthyMEtv to give Singaporeans access to their own virtual healthy lifestyle personal coach, while the Healthy Shopper Programme has been developed with leading supermarket chains, so that affordable healthier food choices are within easy reach. However, HPB cannot do this alone and I am happy to report that over the past year, more than 4,000 Singaporeans have stepped forward to join our growing Health Ambassador Network. They have given us valuable insights into how our programmes can be better designed, but more importantly they have also been part of our implementation so that we co-create a healthier future together.”

11. The Healthy Lifestyle Index is the first tool of its kind to be rolled out nation-wide in the world. Available online in all four official languages for anyone aged 18 and above, the index is in the form of a quick and easy to use questionnaire of ten questions, each covering one of the following ten health domains: Body Mass Index (BMI); physical activity; diet; smoking; alcohol; sleep; stress; depression; social/emotional support and health screenings. The index seeks to assess the overall health behaviour of the participant and is developed to provide advice and recommendations on appropriate HPB programmes to support the individual participant and help improve health behaviours.

12. To strengthen health literacy in Singapore, healthyMEtv promises a free one-stop digital channel to view programmes on wellbeing and learn about healthy living. Available on demand and around the clock via any internet connected device, programming will range from short videos on a range of medical conditions to tips on exercise, healthy eating and relaxation. The channel is the first digital health channel in the Asia-Pacific region and boasts a team of inspiring and energetic TV presenters including Darren Lim and Nikki Muller and well-being experts Kristy Curtis and Dr. Robert Sloan.

13. To round out the new initiatives, the Healthy Shopper programme is aimed at helping Singaporeans make the healthier choice in food and ingredients when grocery shopping. A joint collaboration between the HPB and Singapore's major supermarket chains, NTUC Fairprice, Cold Storage, Giant, and Sheng Siong, shoppers will now be able to easily identify healthier food and ingredients such as fruit and vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins by an easily identifiable Healthy Shopper logo. In addition, a selection of healthier food items will be available every week at promotional prices to ensure they remain affordable to all.

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## **Annex 1 – Factsheet on Advertising Guidelines**

Evidence shows that advertising influences children's food preferences, purchase requests or consumption patterns. In view of this growing scientific evidence, WHO is encouraging the restriction of advertising of foods and beverages high in fat, sugar or salt to children. Quebec, Norway and Sweden have banned advertisements aimed at children aged 12 years and younger, while countries such as United Kingdom and South Korea have statutory regulations restricting food advertising. Finland and Denmark have also introduced guidelines in this area.

In line with WHO's recommendation, MOH/HPB is reviewing the need to strengthen standards for advertising of food and beverage products high in fat, sugar or salt to children. In addition, MOH/HPB will also be embarking on an online public consultation exercise in November 2012. The intention is to gather public feedback and suggestions for the development of the guidelines.

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## **Annex 2 – Factsheet on NHLC milestone activities**

### **Great Singapore Workout**

GSW began in 1993 and has been taken up by numerous community programs over the years. It is often used as a warm up program before brisk walking or health qigong in the community.

In 2009, the “New” Great Singapore Workout was developed and included strength training and aerobic dance moves that were more relevant to Singapore’s diverse culture. Both workouts are used in the community and for various events each year. HPB has developed CDs and training for aerobics instructors to use in their programs island wide.

### **“Ask For” Campaign**

The “Ask For” Campaign was a campaign launched in 1994 to encourage individuals to ask for healthier modifications to their hawkerfare. The entire campaign was centred on the concept of “Ask for...,” with point of sale labels placed at hawker stalls to remind customers that they could request for healthier modifications to their dishes. Coupled with a media campaign to raise consumer awareness, the philosophy behind the “Ask for” campaign was to create the demand for healthier options that would drive changes in hawker food.

Since 2011, healthier hawker food is available under the ‘Healthier Hawker Programme’ with 12 healthier hawkers and coffeeshops serving hawker fare prepared using healthier oil, salt and wholegrain ingredients. By 2013, the programme would be expanded to 70 healthier hawker centres, coffee shops and food courts.

### **A.C.T.I.V.E Day or All Companies/Communities Together in Various Exercises Day**

The A.C.T.I.V.E Day campaign was launched in 1999 to encourage health-promoting activities such as exercise programmes in workplaces and the community.

Companies and workplaces are encouraged to have a dedicated day every year to promote physical activities among their employees. The campaign has since been adopted by many companies as part of their staff well-being and healthy lifestyle activities.

### **“Healthy Mind, Happy Life”**

In 2007, with an increasing emphasis on mental well-being, the Board’s Mental Health Education programme shifted its focus from conditions such as depression, to cultivating positive mental health. The annual National Healthy Lifestyle Campaign adopted the theme “Healthy Mind, Happy Life” and was launched by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Singapore Botanic Gardens, attended by more than 5,000 people who participated in experiential activities on mental well-being.

Since then, HPB has developed a suite of mental wellbeing programmes and initiatives such as *Treasure Your Mind* for working adults, *Mind Journey* for the general community and the *Mental First Aid Kit* for older adults. In 2010, HPB developed the Singapore Mental Wellbeing Scale, a locally validated tool to measure mental wellbeing and evaluate mental wellbeing initiatives as well as launched the Be Positive Mental Well-being Public Education Campaign to encourage Singaporeans to engage in positive thoughts and actions to enhance their mental well-being.

**Lose To Win**

*Lose to Win* is the Health Promotion Board's holistic weight management programme that encourages Singaporeans to lose weight through healthy lifestyle practices. The programme includes physical activity, nutrition and mental well-being sessions to provide participants with the knowledge and skills to reach their weight loss goals.

Since 2009, *Lose To Win* has run for three seasons and reached out to a total of 2,200 participants. In total, 1,105kgs have been shed. Many participants continue to stay connected by joining HPB's *Lose To Win* Facebook page, where they receive regular health tips to sustain their healthy lifestyles.

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### **Annex 3 – Factsheet on Health Ambassador Network**

As part of the 3Ps (people in the community, public sector and the private enterprises) approach, HPB has tapped onto the power of social networks – leveraging on the network of Health Ambassadors to create a healthy living social movement to:

- Disseminate HPB’s health messages to the community
- Empower the community to be health literate
- Provide effective peer support to introduce and sustain behaviour change in individuals
- Catalyse the recruitment of more Health Ambassadors in the community

A HPB Health Ambassador should be practising healthy living, i.e. regular physical activity, healthy eating, not smoking and staying positive and having regular screening. He/she is passionate about helping others lead a healthy lifestyle and is committed to participate in HPB activities on a regular basis.

All Health Ambassadors are required to undergo basic training in communication skills, hypertension management (including the taking of blood pressure) and achieving a healthy weight. They must pass an assessment before they are deployed at public events.

The 4,000 strong network of Health Ambassadors comprises youth, adults and seniors, who have been involved in numerous community health screening events and in raising awareness of topics like nutrition, physical activity and mental health. Some Health Ambassadors also play special roles, such as supporting members of the public in their efforts to lose weight (Lose To Win) or quit smoking (I QUIT).

Since January 2012, Health Ambassadors have also been enlisted to raise awareness of the Ministry of Health’s programmes, such as the Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS).

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#### **Annex 4 – Factsheet on Healthy Lifestyle Index**

The Healthy Lifestyle Index (HLI) is an online tool developed by the Health Promotion Board that is customised to the Singapore context. It is a concise questionnaire which will identify one's general health behaviour, based on each individual's current lifestyle.

Designed for those aged 18 years and above, the HLI comprises 10 questions from 10 different health domains. The health domains are BMI, physical activity, diet, smoking, alcohol, sleep, stress, depression, social/emotional support and health screenings.

Based on the score assigned to each health domain, a customised report summarising the overall health behaviour of an individual will be generated. With this score, advice and recommendations on appropriate HPB programmes will be dispensed to individuals, to help them improve their health behaviours.

In developing the Healthy Lifestyle Index, the set of questions were pre-tested among a sample size of 1,237 Singapore residents, aged 18-69yrs. About two-thirds of the respondents found the questions well-constructed and easy to understand. 7 out of 10 respondents who were involved in the pre-testing, felt that answering the questions made them more conscious about their personal health status. Singaporeans were found to be generally over optimistic about their health score with a 20% difference between their perceived and actual scores.

The HLI will be available free via HPB's website and Facebook page. Users can also access the index using their mobile devices.

For more information, please visit [www.healthylifestyleindex.sg](http://www.healthylifestyleindex.sg)

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## **Annex 5 – Factsheet on healthyMEtv**

An initiative of the Health Promotion Board, *healthyMEtv* is the first digital health channel in the region. Positioned as the ‘home of good health’, it is designed as a one-stop destination where the public can view programs on well-being and learn about healthy living.

From short videos on a range of medical conditions, to TV programmes on exercise, healthy eating and relaxation, *healthyMEtv* will be the channel to go to in journeying towards a healthy lifestyle. Featuring interesting videos that help one stop smoking, improve diet, lose weight and get into shape, learn how to relax, or prevent the onset of lifestyle diseases, *healthyMEtv* allows viewers to obtain information on health and well-being, conveniently even when they are on the go.

As Singapore’s first transmedia health platform that is available for viewing via any Internet connected device – computer, tablet, smart phone, smart TV – *healthyMEtv* will air over 1,500 TV programmes and videos in its first year. Its content will cover a vast array of topics in the well-being space mainly in English, with some content in Mandarin, Malay and Tamil, to educate and inform, inspire and motivate individuals to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Subscription will be free and e-learning tools will also be made available as part of the channel’s development plans.

A team of energetic TV presenters such as Darren Lim and Nikki Muller, as well as well-being experts which include Kristy Curtis and Dr Robert Sloan, will host an exciting schedule of programmes that will be available to view on demand, and also to share with family and friends.

For more information, please visit [www.healthymetv.com.sg](http://www.healthymetv.com.sg)

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## **Annex 6 – Factsheet on Healthy Shopper**

The Healthy Shopper programme is a joint collaboration between the Health Promotion Board and supermarket chains Cold Storage, Giant, NTUC FairPrice and Sheng Siong.

The initiative is aimed at helping shoppers select a combination of healthy food and ingredients during grocery shopping that include fresh food, lean proteins and wholegrain items. In developing the Healthy Shopper programme with the supermarkets, HPB has taken into account the current Dietary Guidelines, 2010 National Nutrition Survey data, 2011 Key Household Characteristics and Income Trend data and the 2007/08 Report on the Household Expenditure Survey. This is to ensure that the supermarkets will offer a variety of healthy food at affordable prices to customers.

Through the Healthy Shopper programme, the supermarkets will be transformed into healthy marketplaces with shopping trolleys and aisles bearing nutrition-related messages. These will make it easier for shoppers to remember that a balanced diet should include a variety of food groups to meet nutritional requirements.

To encourage shoppers to prepare healthier meals, food from the various categories such as fruit and vegetables, whole grains and lean meat and other alternatives will be identified with the Healthy Shopper logo in the supermarket newspaper advertisements and in-store messaging.

These Healthy Shopper items will be on offer as part of the weekly promotional activities of each supermarket chain.

For more information, please visit [www.hpb.gov.sg/healthy-shopper](http://www.hpb.gov.sg/healthy-shopper)

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## **Annex 7 – Quotes on Healthy Lifestyle Index**

*“I am very pleased that the Health Promotion Board is launching the Healthy Lifestyle Index for Singapore, which will go a long way to remind us of the importance of healthy lifestyle behaviours on a regular basis. It will also serve as a prompt for Singaporeans to go for appropriate health screening as advised.”*

**Professor Lee Hin Peng MBBS, MSc, FAMS, FFPH  
Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health  
National University Health System  
Singapore**

**Chairman, Screening Tests Review Committee  
Singapore**

*“We applaud the efforts taken by the Health Promotion Board to develop the Healthy Lifestyle Index. The Index will help individuals to assess their health behaviour status and with its tailored recommendations, help them to make the right changes for better health. This is aligned with the Life Insurance Association’s goal of helping individuals to achieve high quality of life and peace of mind. We are therefore pleased to support HPB and encourage our members and clients to use the Healthy Lifestyle Index.”*

**Mr Tan Hak Leh  
President, Life Insurance Association  
Singapore**

*“I would like to commend the Singapore Health Promotion Board for developing and launching the Healthy Lifestyle Index as part of the National Healthy Lifestyle Campaign. Once again Singapore is playing a leadership role incorporating health promotion into national health policy. Congratulations!”*

**Dr Michael Pratt, MD, MPH  
Senior Advisor for Global Health  
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta  
United States**

*“We must not underestimate the extent to which a healthy lifestyle can add years to our life, and life to our years! The Healthy Lifestyle Index is a useful tool to help assess important lifestyle behaviours, and to identify areas for improvement.”*

**Dr I-Min Lee, MD, ScD  
Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School  
Professor of Epidemiology, Harvard School of Public Health  
Boston, MA  
United States**

*“The Singapore Health Promotion Board has produced a great program in the Healthy Lifestyle Index. The Index identifies key areas for improving health and function, and should be used by all citizens.”*

**Steven N. Blair**  
**Professor, Departments of Exercise Science and Epidemiology/Biostatistics**  
**Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina**  
**United States**

*“Managing personal health is a key factor for mitigating premature diseases and the associated costs. The Health Promotion Board continues to lead the way with innovations like the Healthy Lifestyle Index that aim to engage individuals in their role to maintain good health practices.”*

**Eric Finkelstein PhD, MHA**  
**Deputy Director, Associate Professor**  
**Health Services and Systems Research Program**  
**Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School**  
**Singapore**

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