

Singapore Government

**PRESS RELEASE**

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SPEECH BY MR CHIN HARN TONG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,  
(HOME AFFAIRS), AT THE MARINE PARADE HEALTH FAIR  
HELD AT THE COMMUNITY HALL OF HDB MARINE PARADE AREA OFFICE,  
BLOCK 50 MARINE TERRACE ON SUNDAY, 28 JUNE 1987 AT 9.00 AM

Singaporeans enjoy a high standard of health today. At present, we are no longer afraid of the infectious diseases which were the top killers some 40 years ago. Those diseases include tuberculosis, gastroenteritis, pneumonia and infections of the newborn. We have been able to overcome these diseases with better public health services including a good immunization programme, safe water supply, good sanitation, better housing and nutrition and effective treatment.

Today, we are concerned with a very different kind of health risks. The killer diseases now are the chronic degenerative diseases such as ischaemic heart disease, high blood pressure, strokes, diabetes and cancer.

Unlike the bacterial infections, there is no cure for the chronic degenerative diseases. Once these diseases set in, medical treatment serves mainly to control the worsening of the disease and prevent complications. Therefore the answer lies in prevention. However, prevention, too, calls for a different line of action since there are no easy measures, like immunization, against these diseases.

These diseases do not occur suddenly. They take time to develop, maybe starting even from childhood. And whether we succumb to these diseases later in adulthood, depends largely on the way we live, i.e. our own behaviour and life-style. This means our health is in our own hands.

This is why the Ministry of Health is currently emphasizing preventive medicine and health education. Health Education is necessary to make all Singaporeans such as yourselves realise your own crucial role in safeguarding your health and how you can do this.

Medical science has identified certain risk factors that increase the chances of developing ischaemic heart disease which is today's top killer. Of all the known risk factors, the most important are cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, obesity, sedentary life, and inactivity, unrelieved stress, and a family history of heart disease.

While we cannot alter our family history, we can lessen many of the other risks arising from our lifestyle by changing our lifestyle.

We need to take stock of our present lifestyle and start to improve our odds for better health. Here are five health tips which I would like to share with you.

- (1) Don't smoke - smoking is the single most preventable cause of diseases. Many people know that smoking increases the risk of lung cancer but few are aware that it increases the risk of heart attack by 3-6 times. The more cigarettes smoked per day, the higher the risk.
- (2) Avoid being overweight because overweight is linked with high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease.
- (3) Eat foods containing less fat, cholesterol, salt and sugar. Include more fish and poultry in your meals as substitutes for pork, mutton and beef. Eat more vegetables and fruits to increase fibre intake.

- (4) Learn to relax between stressful work. Take up a hobby, or do something that you enjoy.
- (5) Ensure proper, regular treatment, if you have high blood pressure or diabetes. Regular and proper treatment reduces the risk of complications like heart attack or stroke.

I hope you will take this good advice to heart and adopt a healthy lifestyle for yourselves and your families from today. By your example you can influence others and help them achieve good health.

It is now my pleasure to declare open the Health Fair.

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