

## Childhood obesity • Measures in place to prevent and address condition

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We share Dr Oh Jen Jen's concerns about childhood obesity (Now's the time to address childhood obesity, March 31).

The Ministry of Education and Health Promotion Board (HPB) work closely with schools to equip our students with the knowledge and motivation to embrace healthy living.

As Dr Oh observed, schools adopt a holistic health promotion approach to improve the overall well-being of students, and to encourage them to lead active, healthy lifestyles.

Through physical education lessons, students are taught good habits such as healthy eating, and regular participation in sports and exercise.

Schools measure the height and weight of students twice a year to monitor their physical development, using Body Mass Index (BMI)-for-Age norms set out by HPB.

Students outside the healthy range for physical growth are supported by their school to focus on healthier behaviours, using strategies such as journalling, goal-setting and action planning in physical activities and nutrition.

Our schools regularly review their approaches to better help students maintain their BMI within a healthy range.

Overweight and severely overweight students, together with their parents, are referred to HPB's Student Health Centre for medical assessment to identify and treat early metabolic conditions.

These students are offered personalised lifestyle coaching to support them in their weight management journey, and their progress is closely monitored until they achieve a healthier BMI.

Complementing these efforts, HPB's Student Health Advisers are deployed in schools to counsel students requiring support on weight management.

Most students guided by these advisers adopted healthier habits such as consuming more wholegrains, fruits and vegetables, and participated in physical activities more regularly.

Of the students who participated in this programme last year, 64 per cent achieved a healthier BMI, with close to 70 per cent showing improvements in lifestyle habits.

Our schools also take preventive measures such as engaging parents and teaching them to support their child in building healthy habits from a young age.

Students also take part in

HPB's school- and community-based healthy eating and physical activity programmes.

Since 2019, more than 45,000 students have participated in these programmes.

Successful weight management requires gradual and consistent lifestyle modifications.

We will continue to work closely with schools, parents and students on efforts and interventions to prevent and address childhood obesity.

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