

# Making health a priority

Programme aimed at enhancing lower secondary students' knowledge on nutrition

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**O**NE hundred day-boarding schools across the nation participated in a three-year intervention programme for "Healthy Lifestyle" (PCHS) from 2012 to 2014.

"As part of an initiative under the Nestle Healthy Kids (NKH) Global Programme, the aim of PCHS is to enhance lower secondary students' knowledge on nutrition and to encourage physical activity," said Universiti Putra Malaysia's (UPM) Faculty of Medicine and Health Science Research Programme head Dr Chin Yit Siew.

He said statistics collected in 2011 showed that three out of 10 children do not have breakfast, nine out of 10 children do not have five servings of fruits and vegetables in a day and two out of 10 children were faced with obesity or overweight problems.

More recent data from 2014 revealed that one out of four teenagers (13 to 19 years old) experience obesity or overweight issues.

In view of these troubling figures, Nestle Malaysia in collaboration with the Education Ministry and UPM established the PCHS programme.

Deputy Education Minister P.

Kamalanathan said the purpose of introducing the programme in day-boarding schools first was because these schools were equipped with residential hostels.

The PCHS programme was run using an intervention module known as "Healthy Eating and Be Active among Teens" (Hebat), which comprised 10 topics covering areas of nutrition and physical activity.

In order to test the effectiveness of the programme, the schools were equally divided into an intervention group and control group.

The intervention group incorporated the PCHS programme into their after-school activities and the control group did not.

"The results derived from the research team at UPM showed an increase in knowledge and practice of a healthy lifestyle, better dietary habits and an increased involvement in physical activities," said Kamalanathan.

The obesity rate in the intervention group saw a decline from 9.8% to 6.3% whereas the control group saw no change and remained at 7.8%.

Based on these rewarding results, Nestle and Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM) are targeting 77 primary day-boarding schools in Sarawak and Sabah from 2014 to 2016.

The press conference on the PCHS programme also witnessed the launch of the revamped Nestle Healthy Kids (NHK) programme website.