

Healthy Kids Programme

The Healthy Kids programme (HKP) in Malaysia, a collaborative education programme between the Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM) and Nestle Malaysia was launched in August 2010 with the aim to improve nutrition knowledge and promote healthy lifestyle among school children in the country. It consists of two components, namely the awareness component to reach out to masses; and the research component to develop, implement and evaluate effectiveness of a nutrition educational package. The ultimate goal at the end of the 3-year research

component is to develop an interactive nutrition educational package that the Ministry of Education can utilize for implementation in all primary schools in the country.

The awareness component focused on building and improving the dedicated website (www.healthykids.org.my). Interactive games for children were added to make learning for children more fun and engaging. Articles and recipes were also added to make the website relevant and interesting for parents.

HKP Research Component

The 3-year research component of HKP commenced early 2011 and concluded last December 2013. About 300 children from 6 primary schools in the Klang Valley were selected for the intervention group and a similar number from 6 other schools were identified for the control group. The intervention group received 6 educational sessions spread out over several months in each year. The educational modules developed focused on basic principles in healthy eating and active living as well as basic hygiene and disease prevention. Worksheets and goal cards were prepared to reinforce the modules. Parents were provided summary leaflets of the modules.

Positive results were obtained after the 3 years of intervention. A Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) survey conducted at the beginning and at the end of each year showed significant improvement in scores after 3 years of module implementation. Besides, the immediate impact surveys that were conducted before and after each educational session showed an increase in the mean score for all topics. Children who received the educational sessions also had lower prevalence of overweight and obesity over the 3-year period as compared to the control group.

What's next for HKP?

The positive results obtained from the research component have clearly proven the effectiveness of this nutrition educational package. NSM and Nestle are taking steps to roll out the developed package to more schools in the country. We have confirmed the collaboration of the Ministry of Education to initiate implementation of the package in more than 70 day-boarding schools in Sarawak and Sabah, to cover 6000 primary school children.

By systematically implementing this programme in schools, we believe that it will have a positive impact by inculcating good nutrition knowledge, attitude, and healthy eating and lifestyle habits among Malaysian children, which may contribute to arresting the prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity. We hope that this will pave the way to a healthier nation and that the teachers would amplify our efforts!