



STRIVING FOR BETTER HEALTH FOR ALL

The Ministry of Health (MOH) will continue to implement programmes and initiatives to support Singaporeans in attaining good health and to live well. To deliver person-centred care, we will build a proactive and inclusive care system premised on the different health needs and health risks across the life cycle of the individual. We will also establish a longer-term structure to oversee mental health and well-being strategies.

Fostering Healthier Lifestyles for Different Population Segments

New inter-agency taskforce for Child and Maternal Health and Well-being Strategy and Action Plan

2. MOH will develop a Child and Maternal Health and Well-being Strategy to provide holistic and comprehensive support to women and their children to attain good health and well-being. The Strategy and Action Plan span the pre-conception phase to adolescents aged 18 years old and will help to support our young achieve their maximum human development potential.
3. An interagency taskforce, chaired by Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health, has been set up to oversee the development and implementation of the five-year Strategy and Action Plan. The Taskforce comprises representatives from various government agencies such as MOH, Ministry of Social and Family Development, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Health Promotion Board, as well as the three public healthcare clusters. This is part of a larger effort to improve the health of the population, which takes a person-centric approach to address the health needs of individuals and the modifiable risk factors which go beyond the realm of healthcare.
4. To ensure that the needs of children and their mothers across the age spectrum are sufficiently addressed, programmes and initiatives under the Strategy and Action Plan will be implemented in phases over the next three years, with the first phase of the Action Plan expected to be ready by early 2022.
5. The Taskforce will take a whole-of-society approach and focus on bringing various agencies together to collaborate and collectively address cross-cutting issues to help achieve better health, social and education outcomes for our young. Some of these issues include:
 - Enhancing upstream preventive health efforts for women and children, including preparing young couples for parenthood and equipping mothers with skills and knowledge to foster good physical and emotional health for themselves and their children;

- Tighter integration of social and health services across agencies to provide more support and person-centric care to women and their children; and
- Better design and delivery of health services for both mother and child to enhance convenience to the family.

New workgroup on healthy living for ethnic minority groups

6. Our review of national health data has shown significant disparities in the health behaviours and outcomes across ethnicities. While the Chinese consistently have the highest age-standardised cancer incidence, the proportion of Malays among all cases of cancer has gradually increased over the decades. In addition, Malays have the highest obesity rates, were more likely to be daily smokers compared to Chinese and Indians and have the lowest screening rates for chronic conditions or cancers¹. This suggests that there may be cultural differences influencing lifestyles and health behaviours.

7. MOH formed a new workgroup in February 2021 to improve the health of ethnic minority groups. The Workgroup will first focus its efforts on the Malay community before expanding its efforts to other ethnic minority groups, to design culturally relevant programmes and help rally the community against poor health habits. This will entail the co-creation and implementation of year-round healthy living activities in the Malay community with the overall aim to help improve health and well-being.

8. The workgroup will be led by Parliamentary Secretary for Health Ms Rahayu Mahzam, and Members of Parliament Dr Wan Rizal and Ms Mariam Jaafar. The Health Promotion Board, together with organisations such as PA MESRA, MUIS, Mendaki (under the M3@towns committees) and the Muslim Healthcare Professionals Association (MHPA), will provide support for the workgroup. Other community partners such as voluntary welfare organisations may subsequently join the workgroup as well to extend its efforts and reach.

Strengthening Efforts to Support the Mental Wellness of our Population

Inter-agency platform on mental health and well-being

9. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in increased stressors on individuals, such as fear of infection and loss of employment, and a greater need for mental health/well-being support.

10. MOH and the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) set up the COVID-19 Mental Wellness Taskforce (CoMWT) in October 2020 to look into the psychosocial impact of the pandemic on the population, take stock of the mental health and well-being initiatives introduced across agencies to address the impact thus far, and identify gaps that will need to be addressed to better meet the mental health needs of the population during this time.

¹ These include chronic diseases and cancers under the Screen For Life (SFL). Subsidised screening tests under SFL include those that screen for cardiovascular risk factors (e.g. obesity, diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidaemia), as well as cervical, colorectal and breast cancer screening.

11. The CoMWT has reviewed the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on the population, and recommended three key areas to be addressed:

- Developing a national mental health and well-being strategy to align and guide the work of various agencies in promoting mental health and well-being across cross-cutting issues;
- Developing a national mental health resources webpage to help individuals in accessing useful and accurate information; and
- Establishing a national mental health competency training framework to align and standardise training curricula on mental health in the community.

12. The CoMWT will transit into an inter-agency platform by mid-2021, to oversee the development and implementation of mental health and well-being efforts, including the three key areas that the CoMWT is currently working on.

Meeting the Needs of Seniors of Today and Tomorrow

Refreshed Action Plan for Successful Ageing

13. The Ministerial Committee of Ageing (MCA) is refreshing the Action Plan for Successful Ageing, to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the seniors of today and tomorrow. While we have made significant progress in the implementation of the Action Plan since its launch in 2015, the demographics of our seniors are changing, and future seniors are likely to live longer, be better educated, and have different needs and aspirations. We will therefore continue to update our plans to redefine ageing as a positive force and work towards a concerted Whole-of-Society effort. The refreshed Action Plan is targeted to be launched in 2022.

14. The refreshed Action Plan will focus on the three “C”s of Care, Contribution and Connectedness, which aim to:

- Care: Delay the onset of chronic illnesses and improve seniors' quality of life, through preventive health programmes and support for mental well-being.
- Contribution: Empower our seniors to continue contributing to society even as they age, by tapping on their knowledge, expertise and life experiences.
- Connectedness: Ensure that seniors remain connected to their loved ones and the broader community, through support networks that embody the "kampung spirit", and an inclusive built environment so they can move around actively and confidently.

15. As part of the SGTogether movement, we have embarked on a series of engagements with Singaporeans from all walks of life to co-create the refreshed Action Plan. These include focus group discussions on a wide variety of topics such as retirement adequacy, digital participation for seniors, as well as active ageing programmes and surveys to gauge public sentiment. Further engagement efforts will continue throughout 2021.

“ABC” suite of services at eldercare centres from 2021

16. There are about 130 Senior Activity Centres as well as 150 Senior Care Centres and Active Ageing Hubs today. We will progressively roll out an enhanced suite of “ABC” services at these centres from 1 May 2021, with more than 50 centres coming onboard each year. The centres will serve as a go-to point where all seniors can participate in various **A**ctive Ageing programmes close to their homes, receive **B**efriending or Buddying services if they are lonely or vulnerable, and receive information and referral assistance for **C**are services as needed.

17. Centres delivering this “ABC” service suite will be called Active Ageing Centres (AAC). For seniors who are more frail, Active Ageing Care Hubs (AACH) will provide additional care services, such as day care and community rehabilitation services, in addition to the common “ABC” service suite.

18. MOH will set aside about \$180 million to complete the rollout of over 200 AACs and AACHs by 2024. With the new service model, seniors will have more opportunities to stay active and take charge of their health. Seniors and their caregivers will also be better able to navigate the social and health support available.