

DH releases "Student Health Service Annual Health Report for 2023/24 School Year"

The Department of Health (DH) today (April 2) released the "Student Health Service (SHS) Annual Health Report for 2023/24 School Year", which summarised the key findings of the annual health assessment service provided to primary and secondary school students in Hong Kong during the school year. Among these findings, there has been an improvement regarding the overweight condition of primary school students but the proportion of students spending two hours or more using the Internet or electronic screen products for recreational purposes has increased, which is a situation that warrants attention.

In the 2023/24 school year, around 257 000 primary school students and 173 000 secondary school students received annual health assessment services at the DH's Student Health Service Centres (SHSCs). Students were provided with a series of health services, including growth monitoring, physical examinations, screenings for vision, hearing and scoliosis, health assessment questionnaires on health behaviours and psychosocial well-being, individual health counselling, health education and mop-up vaccinations.

The health assessment revealed that the weight problems and dietary patterns among Hong Kong students remain unsatisfactory. The prevalence of being overweight (including obesity) among primary school students has decreased from 19.5 per cent in the 2022/23 school year to 16.4 per cent in the 2023/24 school year, which was a record low since the 2014/15 school year. However, the prevalence of being overweight (including obesity) among secondary school students remained high at 20.0 per cent. In the 2023/24 school year, 94.4 per cent of students reported insufficient physical activity, meaning that they were not able to engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity physical activity per day. About 89.9 per cent of students (83.5 per cent primary and 97.0 per cent secondary school students) reported an inadequate intake of fruits and vegetables per day (i.e. an average of less than four servings for primary school students and less than five servings for secondary school students).

"To prevent childhood and adolescent obesity from developing into a lifelong threat to health, the DH encourages students to adopt healthy lifestyles and maintain a balanced diet. The DH will continue to offer weight management advice through the SHSCs to students in need. Dietitians of the SHS will provide dietary counselling to individual students if indicated," the Consultant Community Medicine (Family and Student Health) of the DH, Dr Chuang Shuk-kwan, said.

The inappropriate use of electronic screen products should not be overlooked. The DH recommends children aged between 6 and 12 years old to limit recreational screen time to less than two hours a day. The health

assessment questionnaire revealed that 43.3 per cent of primary school students indicated that they spent two or more hours in using Internet or electronic screen products (including computers, tablets, smartphones, video games and television) for recreational purposes on a typical school day. The proportion was higher than in the pre-COVID years of around 30 per cent. For secondary school students, the proportion was higher at 80.9 per cent, which is a cause for concern.

Dr Chuang noted that, apart from reminding students of the appropriate recreational screen time, the DH has set up a webpage on [Healthy Use of Internet and Electronic Screen Products](#) to assist parents and teachers in handling related issues.

The state of vision among Hong Kong students remains less than ideal. The proportion of primary one students wearing glasses was 14.3 per cent which was similar to that of the previous school year (14.8 per cent), but still much higher than that of the pre-COVID years of about 11 per cent. The proportion of students wearing glasses was higher among students at higher grades, up to 53.8 per cent among Primary Six students. Among the primary and secondary school students with a visual acuity test done in the 2023/24 school year, 18.5 per cent required further assessment by optometrists in the SHS or private sector due to a failed preliminary visual acuity test, other eye or visual problems.

Regarding psychosocial health, a majority of students reported they very much enjoyed family life (94.3 per cent) and school life (92.4 per cent). However some students were identified to have psychosocial problems warranting attention. In the 2023/24 school year, 2.2 per cent and 1.0 per cent of students reported that they had planned or attempted to commit suicide in the past 12 months respectively, which were slightly lower than that in the previous school year (2.8 per cent planned and 1.3 per cent attempted to commit suicide) and are similar to the levels in the 2018/2019 school year. Professional staff of the DH promptly provided the students concerned (including some with emotional or mental health problems) with an immediate risk assessment, support or arranged referrals for further evaluation and management. In the 2023/24 school year, 1.4 per cent of students receiving annual health assessment services at the SHSCs were referred to the clinical psychologists of the SHS or other organisations, for further assessment and management of their psychosocial and behavioural problems.

The Government has set up the 18111 – Mental Health Support Hotline to provide one-stop, round-the-clock support for people with mental health needs. The Government has also implemented the Three-Tier School-based Emergency Mechanism through cross-departmental collaboration of the Education Bureau, the Health Bureau and the Social Welfare Department in all secondary schools in Hong Kong to ensure early identification and support for students at high risk, and provide timely assistance and seek professional counselling or treatment services for them.

Furthermore, "The Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address" announced that the Whole School Health Programme (WSHP) will be strengthened. Besides

publishing this territory-wide health report, health reports will be compiled for each participating school to recommend targeted school-based health promotion measures for physical activities, diet and other matters, to improve students' physical and psychological wellbeing. So far, more than 760 schools have joined the WSHP, covering over 65 per cent of all primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong. The DH will continue to encourage more schools to join through various channels and work towards realising the vision of "Making every school a health-promoting school".

At the same time, the Primary Healthcare Commission is actively promoting the Life Course Preventive Care Plan via the District Health Centres (DHCs), DHC Expresses and family doctors. A personalised preventive care plan will be formulated to address the health needs of citizens, including vaccinations required by children as well as prevention of infectious diseases, cancers and chronic diseases. The DHCs and DHC Expresses also provide children-targeted services, such as emotion management, weight management and healthy diet classes as well as collaborate with schools to provide outreach health education, health-risk factors assessment, low salt and sugar diet education and promotion activities. In the long run, the Government will integrate some of the DH's primary healthcare services into the primary healthcare system, in order to enhance children's healthcare services in Hong Kong and create a better environment for children's medical care and healthy development.

The "[Student Health Service Annual Health Report for 2023/24 School Year](#)" has been uploaded to the DH's website as information for members of the public.

"The DH has been safeguarding both the physical and psychological health of school children through health promotion and disease prevention services. The annual health assessment service aims to identify students with health problems at an early stage for timely advice and intervention, including referrals to appropriate organisations for further assessment or management. Enrolment is now open for the annual health assessment service of the 2024/25 school year. Students who have not yet enrolled are encouraged to enrol through their school or directly with the [SHSCs](#)," Dr Chuang said.

For more information on a healthy lifestyle, members of the public are welcome to browse the "[@DH mobile application](#)", DH's [social media accounts](#), and scan the QR codes attached.