

LAYERED with soft nougat, silky caramel, and encased in smooth milk chocolate - it is no wonder chocolate bars remain a popular sweet pick-me-up among children and youth in Malaysia.

But that's not all! Fried nuggets, doughnuts and fries also are common convenient snacks that kids reach for when their tummies rumble.

But did you know that over consumption of all these easily accessible snacks of which are laden with high contents of fat or sugar—can be harmful in the long run?

The National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2022 reported that one-third of Malaysian teenagers aged 13 to 17 are overweight or obese, which can lead to a spike in mental health issues as well as a range of chronic illnesses that are usually only associated with older adults.

In fact, multiple studies have also shown the prevalence of obesity among Malaysia's youth is mostly due to unhealthy lifestyles and eating habits.

These trends are alarming and will result in dire consequences for the state of our children's health if steps are not taken to contain and address these deep-rooted issues.

As a proactive step forward, AIA Malaysia has recently launched the AIA Healthiest Schools programme, which encourages healthy living habits among students aged five to 16 through the promotion of healthy eating, active lifestyles, mental wellbeing, as well as health and sustainability in schools.

Endorsed by the Education Ministry, the AIA Healthiest Schools programme — open to all government, private and international schools, both primary and secondary levels — provides free resources that teachers can easily integrate into existing teaching plans.

These educational materials are free downloadable resources, available in multiple languages — English, Bahasa Malaysia and Mandarin, which consist of introductory films, flexible activities, lesson plans and fun games. It will facilitate

SHAPING HEALTHY HABITS FROM YOUNG

AIA Malaysia promotes health literacy and wellbeing among Malaysian children with AIA Healthiest Schools programme



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the effective introduction of health and wellbeing concepts into the classroom.

Noting that one of the most pressing concerns of the nation is the children's state of health, AIA Malaysia chief executive officer Ben Ng says society owes it to the children — future leaders of the nation — to do better in supporting their ability to inculcate a healthier lifestyle.

"Health is our greatest asset. It is important for future generations to have a chance at living a healthier, happier and more fulfilling life.

"As an organisation that advocates for

Healthier, Longer, Better Lives, AIA Malaysia is committed to address the increasing rate of childhood health issues here.

"The AIA Healthiest Schools programme is a proactive step towards promoting health literacy and wellbeing among Malaysian children through reliable and accessible educational resources."

He added that the programme will be a natural extension of the organisation's advocacy and social responsibility to help children reach their full potential.

The AIA Healthiest Schools programme

AIA healthiest schools

includes a competition which serves as a platform for schools to showcase their impact and success in driving better health outcomes among students, in addition to building a community that share best practices and sparks innovative ideas around promoting health and wellness.

Prizes totalling US\$100,000 (about RM468,000) is up for grabs for schools that demonstrate the best health and wellness efforts.

The AIA Healthiest Schools programme was launched by AIA Group in 2022 as part of its Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategy with the purpose of bringing positive impact to the improvement of children's health across the region.

The first edition of the programme was held in four of AIA's 18 markets: Australia, Hong Kong, Thailand and Vietnam.



Scan the QR code for more information on the AIA Healthiest Schools programme and how to access the free downloadable teaching resources.