

# A SIMPLE GUIDE

ISSUE 71 | FEB'23 / MAR'23

*Pg1*

## BEAT 'FOOD GUILT'

JUMP START A HEALTHIER NEW YEAR  
WITH HEALTHY FESTIVE FEASTING TIPS

*Pg3*

## FIGHT OBESITY

UNDERSTANDING ENERGY BALANCE  
AND LEARN TO LOSE WEIGHT SAFELY

Our Health  
is in  
*Our  
Hands!*

KEEP WELL | GET WELL | LIVE WELL

This newsletter is jointly brought to you by:

**Health Up!**  
Keep Well, Get Well and Live Well  
A SingHealth community programme

**ECHO**  
Eastern Community Health Outreach

# Dear readers,

Happy new year and a prosperous lunar new year! We are in a successive period of festivities these few months and it's a joyous occasion for many of us with opportunities to gather with families and friends.

Festive goodies and food form a major part of these gatherings, thus in this issue, we have Clinical A/Prof Khoo to share with us tips on how to monitor our food intake and how to balance this with adequate physical activity.

We also have our active health coach to share tips on keeping well and staying fit. Let's make these celebrations a time for us to also celebrate our fitness and health.

Wishing you a wonderful year of the rabbit ahead!

ECHO Programme Director,  
Dr Linsey Utami Gani



## Eating and Exercising Healthily for the Holidays

Fill up your plate with healthier choices - watch your portion and choose your food wisely.

It's already hard to count calories when we're enjoying festive goodies with family and friends, what's more maintaining an exercise routine between entertainments. Studies have shown that almost 50% of people gain about 2kg during Chinese New Year, while weight lost during the fasting month is regained (and more) come Hari Raya. Worse, the pounds put on during Christmas and New Year are hard to shed subsequently, as seen in a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine.

So how do we limit weight gain during seasonal feasting, and lose the extra poundage thereafter? Here are some tips which have been shown to work:

### 1 Focus on Food



Know the **calories** in your favourite goodies - this information is readily available in the newspapers, online (e.g. the [Health Promotion Board's website](#)) and in food labels.



**Consciously** limit your portion and don't take more while you're distracted.



**Choose the foods** that are "worth eating" and exclude those that aren't special or important to you. Or **choose the days** that you want to indulge, and stick to them.



**Avoid carbonated and sugary beverages.** Water is best, or coffee/tea without sugar, or diet drinks just for the taste.



**Cook and shop healthy:** buy healthier goodies, include more veggies and lean meat/fish in the reunion dinner, bake your usual Hari Raya treats with healthier substitutes.



## 2 Add Activities



**Additional exercise** is needed to work off the calories consumed in every snack. To burn calories off 1 piece of 'bak kwa', you would have to play badminton for 30 minutes and burning calories off 1 slice of 'kueh lapis' would require you to walk 3500 steps.



Increase **activities in daily living** such as climbing stairs, standing rather than sitting, and getting down 1 bus or MRT stop earlier.



Set your exercise goals and plan your workout **in advance**. A more specific schedule, for example 30 minutes of brisk walking three days per week, is easier to visualise and to follow through. It is also necessary to change the routine for variations.



## 3 Resume Routines



Insufficient or late **sleep** can lead to difficulty losing weight; return to your normal hours and pattern as soon as possible.



**Stress** before, during and after (cleaning the mess! work piling up! kids not studying!) the holidays increases production of the hormone cortisol which causes weight gain, so look after your **emotional well-being** too.



Even if your routines were temporarily disrupted by the holidays, **stay focused** on your long-term weight and health goals. Restart diet and exercise at where you left off before the holiday excesses, rather than overexerting (and possibly injuring) yourself. Worse still, cutting down your calorie intake drastically is also not an ideal solution as it might slow down your metabolic rate and make it more difficult to lose weight later.

Image by <a href="https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/set-wellness-fitness-objects\_5162346.htm?query=set-wellness-fitness-objects&position=32&from\_view=search&track=sph">Freepik</a>

## 4 Lose the Leftovers

If we know where it is, we'll eat it! So **give away** the pineapple tarts, tins of love letters and 'kuih bangkit' etc. In the very unlikely event that nobody will take them, throw them out and restock with healthier snacks such as unprocessed nuts and packet oats.

Try to see which combination of strategies works best for you, and this might also vary over time. The most important is to stick to what works, and change what doesn't. Happy new year and happy holidays!



Image by <a href="https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/top-view-healthy-balanced-vegetarian-food\_12952835.htm?query=top-view-healthy-balanced-vegetarian-food&position=1&from\_view=search&track=sph">Image by joomp</a> on Freepik

# Keep Well and Stay Fit!



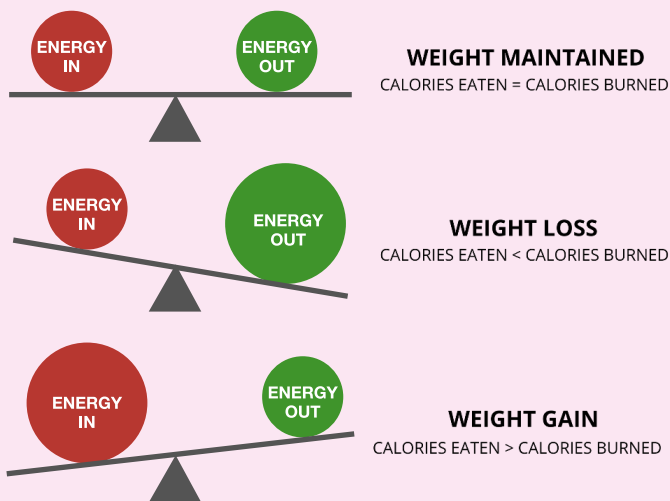
**AUTHOR**  
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ActiveHealth Coach

Guan Zhi is an Active Health Coach with Sports Singapore and has a Bachelor's Degree in Sport Science and Management from Nanyang Technological University. He is also Exercise is Medicine Singapore (EIMS) certified and a NSCA Certified Strength & Conditioning Specialist (CSCS). With a strong passion for health and wellness, he hopes to promote health literacy in the community and help Singaporeans better achieve their personal health and fitness goals through sustainable means.

## Manage Obesity with Exercise

The prevalence of obesity in Singapore has been increasing steadily over the years since 2010, with the rate peaking in 2019/2020. Based on the 2019/2020 National Population Health Survey, 10.5% of Singapore residents aged 18 to 74 years were obese.

One of the contributing factors to obesity is a lack of energy balance, where the amount of calories consumed consistently exceeds the amount of calories expended, leading to a state of energy surplus and weight gain over time. It is therefore reasonable to conceive that people with relatively higher daily energy expenditure would be less likely to gain weight, compared to those who have lower energy expenditures.



Various factors influence our daily energy expenditure, such as our basal metabolic rate (which determines calories burnt while performing basic functions for life) and level of physical activity (which is most controllable and viable to increase energy output).

Physical activity refers to any bodily movement produced by contraction of skeletal muscles that increase energy expenditure beyond resting levels, such as walking, weights training or sports.



Staying active through increased levels of physical activity increases our daily energy expenditure. Along with a well-balanced diet, this would likely improve energy balance and is an effective weight loss strategy over time with the amount of calories expended constantly exceeding calories consumed.

## EXAMPLES OF AEROBIC & MUSCLE STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES BY TYPE

AEROBIC ←	MULTICOMPONENT	→ MUSCLE STRENGTHENING
Jogging Leisure Dancing Rope Skipping Running	Cycling Kayaking Circuit Training Racquet Sports	Tai Chi Pilates Weight Training

(Credit table: Adopted from: Singapore Physical Activity Guidelines Pg 27)

## How much physical activity is enough?

Based on the Singapore Physical Activity Guidelines, it is recommended to perform 150-300 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity (MVPA) per week for optimal health benefits. To reduce body weight or maintain a recent weight loss, individuals should try working towards achieving closer to 300 minutes of MVPA weekly.

Lucky for us, any duration or intensity of physical activity is better than none and one should limit the amount of time spent being sedentary, particularly recreational screen time.

Strength training should also be included to achieve a holistic exercise program. Perform exercises targeting all major muscle groups for at least twice a week to build stronger muscles, joints and bones. Having more muscle mass helps to boost our metabolism, allowing us to burn more calories at rest.

## How much weight loss is safe?

Shedding pounds too quickly by inducing a large caloric deficit daily through a very low-calorie diet and/or intensive exercise regime is often not sustainable. It could also potentially put you at risk of many health problems, such as muscle loss, nutritional deficiencies and decreased metabolism.

Instead, focus on losing weight at a slow but steady pace through sustainable means such as adopting healthy eating habits and lifestyle practices. A healthy rate of weight loss would be not more than 0.5 to 1kg per week or 10% of your body weight over 6 months.

### Boost your daily levels of physical activity in just 60 seconds!

*If you have any medical or musculoskeletal conditions that might affect your ability to be physically active, please consult your doctor or a healthcare professional first.*

## Try out the Side-to-Side Lunges!

*This exercise helps to work on your lower body muscular fitness*



- Start with legs shoulder-width apart and toes pointed forward.
- Step out wide to the right while keeping the other foot flat.
- Bend your right knee while keeping the other straight. Push your hip backwards and lean slightly forward to maintain balance.
- Without rising to a standing position, shift weight to left side and repeat.

## Keep your workouts SAFER

**S**ustainability of physical activity: Assess your readiness for physical activity through pre-participation tools such as the Get Active questionnaire. Whenever in doubt, consult a medical professional before you begin exercising.

**A**wareness of the environment and your condition: Avoid exercising under too hot or humid conditions. Dress light and hydrate regularly.

**F**itness: If you have not exercised recently, start slow and build up on the duration and intensity gradually. Incorporate at least 5-10 minutes of warm-up and cool-down before and after exercising.

**E**xercise with a buddy: Having someone to exercise with can further motivate you in your pursuit towards your health and fitness goals. Additionally, it provides an extra pair of eyes to supervise and hands to care should anything unforeseen happens.

**R**est: Listen to your body and ensure adequate rest through proper nutrition and sleep to reap the rewards of your labour.

## Where Can I Learn More?

Staying active helps to keep obesity at bay. However, being physically active should not only be seen as a silver bullet that helps us to maintain or lose weight. Instead, it should be pursued because of the spectrum of benefits it provides to our overall health and well-being.

If you wish to learn more about how you can harness the power of exercise to help you fight obesity, join our Manage Obesity with Exercise program guided by our Active Health Coaches at an Active Health Lab nearest to you!

**CLICK HERE TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT  
MANAGE OBESITY WITH EXERCISE PROGRAM**



**INGREDIENTS:**

- Prawns – 300 g (11 oz), peeled, tails left intact
- Red, yellow and green capsicums – ½ of each, cored, seeded and cut into large pieces
- Shiitake mushrooms – 8, medium-sized, caps wiped and stems removed
- Leek – 1 stalk, cut into 2.5-cm (1-in) lengths
- Olive oil – 2 Tbsp
- Onion (medium) – ¼, peeled and finely diced
- Black peppercorns – 2 Tbsp, crushed
- Red chilli – ½, finely chopped

**Marinade:**

- Avocado – ¼, peeled, pitted and mashed
- Red chilli – ½, finely chopped
- Coriander leaf (cilantro) – ½ sprig, finely chopped
- Salt – a pinch
- Ground black pepper – a pinch
- Lemon juice – 2 Tbsp
- Garlic – 1 clove, peeled and finely chopped

**Salsa:**

- Tomato – 2 medium, seeded and finely diced
- Chinese coriander (cilantro) – 1 sprig, finely chopped
- Garlic – 2 cloves, finely chopped
- White wine vinegar – 2 Tbsp
- Salt – a pinch
- Lemon juice – 1 Tsp

These low-calorie prawn skewers are almost effortless to prepare, and are high in taste while being low in calories. Guaranteed to be a hit during parties or special occasions!



*Live Well by Eating Right!*

## Avocado Prawn Skewers with Tomato Salsa

Preparation Time: 2 hours and 30 minutes | Serves 4

**PER SERVING**

Calories	189 kcal	Cholesterol	146.3 g
Carbohydrate	13.8 g	Fibre	1.9 g
Fat	7.8 g		

*This recipe is brought to you by the Dietetic & Food Services Department, Changi General Hospital*

**METHOD:**

- ① Prepare salsa. In a glass, china or non-metallic bowl, combine ingredients and mix well. Refrigerate and leave aside for at least 2 hours.
- ② Prepare marinade. In a mixing bowl, combine ingredients and mix well. Place prawns in to steep, then leave aside to marinate for 10 minutes.
- ③ Preheat grill to high, and oven to 150°C (300°F).
- ④ Thread prawns on skewers, alternating them with capsicums, mushrooms, leeks and onions. Place on grilling rack and grill for 30 seconds to 1 minute on each side, or until slightly charred. Remove from heat, then place in the oven to bake for 4 minutes, or until prawns change colour and are cooked. Remove from heat and place on a serving platter.
- ⑤ Drain salsa and place in a side dish or alongside prawn skewers. Serve immediately.

**CONTACT US!**

SEND IN YOUR INQUIRIES TO:

- ECHO Programme: [echo@cgh.com.sg](mailto:echo@cgh.com.sg)  
Visit ECHO website: <https://www.singhealth.com.sg/rhs/keep-well/Health-Screening-in-the-East>
- Health Up! Programme: [health.up@singhealth.com.sg](mailto:health.up@singhealth.com.sg)  
Visit Health Up! website: <https://www.singhealth.com.sg/rhs/health-up>



# Mild to Moderate Medical Conditions?

# Your GP can **treat it!**



The GPFirst Programme is an initiative by Changi General Hospital's A&E Department in partnership with over 170 participating GP clinics in eastern Singapore.

Patients with mild to moderate symptoms are encouraged to seek treatment at the GP clinics first instead of going to the A&E.

**Should the patient be given an A&E referral from the GPFirst GP, he or she will:**

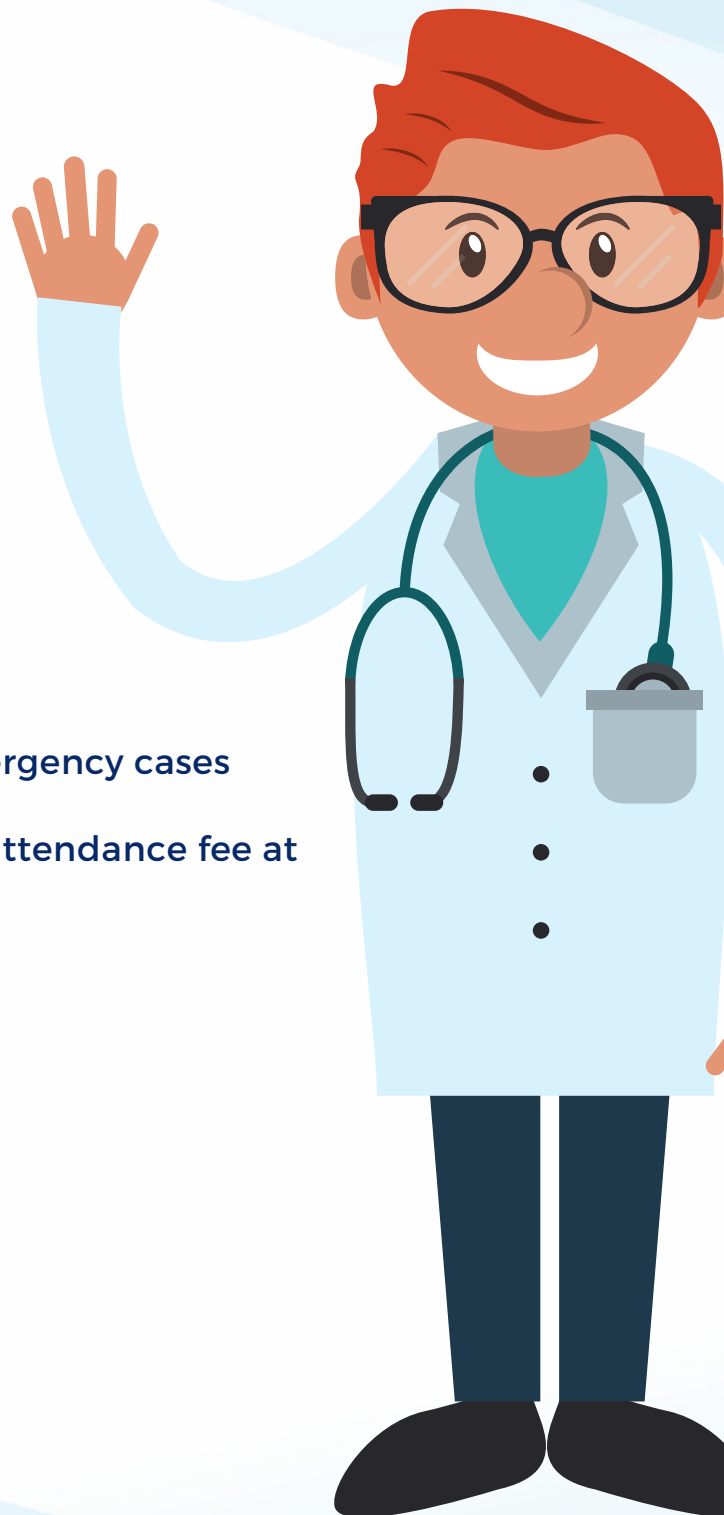
- ✓ Be accorded higher priority over non-emergency cases
- ✓ Receive a \$50 subsidy\* on the prevailing attendance fee at CGH A&E

For more information, visit [www.GPFirst.sg](http://www.GPFirst.sg)

Like us on Facebook at  [gpfirst.sg](https://www.facebook.com/gpfirst.sg)

\*Terms and Conditions apply

**GPFIRST**  
YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR, YOUR FIRST STOP



ALWAYS WANTED TO GET HEALTHIER  
BUT TOO BUSY TO ACT?

Health Up!™

Keep Well, Get Well and Live Well  
A SingHealth community programme



# IS THE PROGRAMME FOR YOU!

*Health Up! is a SingHealth initiative that aims to encourage individuals to adopt healthy lifestyle habits and complete age-appropriate health screenings.*

Kickstart your journey to better health now!

- **Complete the Onboarding Survey** to help us understand your health status and lifestyle habits
- **Receive a Health Action Plan Personalised for You (H.A.P.P.Y)** based on your current health and fitness levels
- **Be recommended to selected health screening(s)\*** if you are eligible
- **Get connected to various fitness activities** and pick up health and wellness tips from trained professionals



Register [now!](#)

Only open to:  
Singapore Citizens & PRs  
Aged 40 and above  
Living in the East



\*Obesity, Diabetes, Hypertension, High Cholesterol, Selected Cancer Screenings (i.e. Colon, Cervical and Breast) based on recommendation and eligibility. Subsidised fees applicable. For more enquiries, visit <https://www.singhealth.com.sg/rhs/health-up>

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