

# HE·AL

Guide to **H**ealthy **E**ating & **A**ctive **L**iving

## Eat Right, Move More – Prioritise Health & Wellness



Published by



A joint initiative by





# Nutrition Month Malaysia National Steering Committee 2025

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**Nutrition Month Malaysia (NMM)** is managed and implemented by professional bodies and supported by the private sector. The initiative reflects the spirit of partnership that is essential to facilitate the dissemination of appropriate nutrition information to the general public for the well-being of all.

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Malaysian Dietitians' Association



Malaysian Society of Body Composition

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**Dr Tee E Siong, KMN**

Chairman,  
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National Steering  
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and  
Immediate-Past President,  
Nutrition Society of  
Malaysia

# Eat Right, Move More

## Prioritise Health & Wellness

The double burden of malnutrition continues to be a major public health concern in Malaysia, as highlighted in the latest National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2023. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, and obesity remain as serious health problems. On the other hand, there are significant undernutrition problems like growth retardation and micronutrient deficiencies among certain segments of the population.

Various intervention programmes have been implemented to address these malnutrition problems. However, many Malaysians still struggle to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle. It is time to shift our focus from treatment to prevention by making nutrition and physical activity a priority in our daily lives.

For over two decades, Nutrition Month Malaysia has been committed to promoting a healthier lifestyle among Malaysians through engaging activities and reliable nutrition education. This year's theme, "Eat Right, Move More – Prioritise Health & Wellness," encourages Malaysians to take immediate and meaningful steps toward better health. By emphasising balanced nutrition and an active lifestyle, NMM aims to instill a mindset that values prevention and long-term well-being.

Through collaborative efforts between health professionals and corporate partners, NMM 2025 will provide accessible and practical resources to help Malaysians make informed choices about their diet and physical activity. From engaging campaigns to expert-led initiatives, this year's activities are designed to empower individuals and families to take charge and prioritise their health.

Set calendar to take action today! Small, consistent lifestyle changes—such as making healthier food choices and scheduling exercises and physical activities into daily routines—can lead to significant long-term health benefits. Together, we can build a healthier nation by prioritising wellness in every aspect of life.

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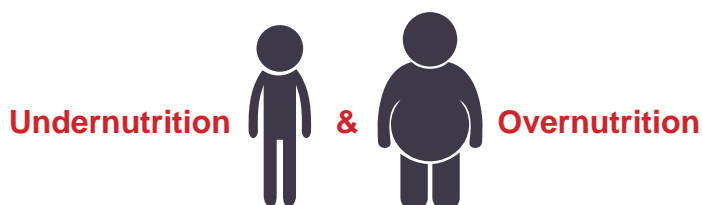
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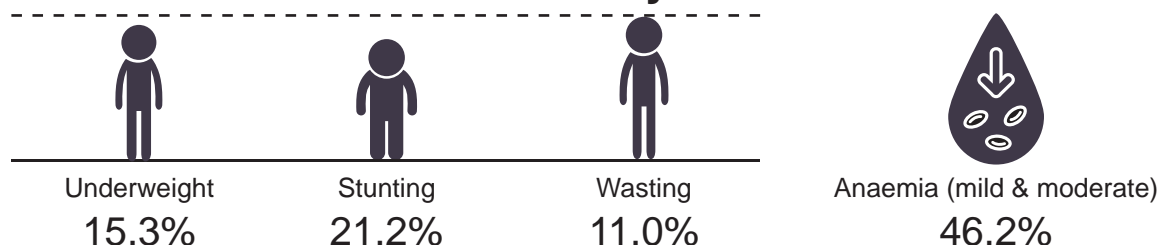
# Provide Right Nutrition for Your

## Malnutrition impacts children's physical health & development

Malaysian children affected by the double burden of malnutrition

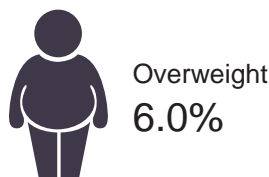


## Undernutrition in children below 5 years old



Long-term impact: Poor cognition, educational performance and physical health

## Overnutrition in children below 5 years old



Long-term impact: increase risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), affect cognitive, educational, emotional & social well-being

Malnutrition can exist in all age groups

## Prioritise good nutrition early; healthy lifelong habits begin in childhood



Practise exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months (*and continue to breastfeed up to 2 years old*)



Introduce appropriate complementary feeding from 6 months in addition to breast milk



Provide balanced meals - to achieve optimal growth and development and better school performance

**Additional tip: Expose young children to a variety of healthy foods**

# Child

## Prevent nutritional imbalance by practising healthy eating habits



Follow the 'quarter-quarter-half' concept



Prioritise whole foods that are nutrient dense – including iron-rich foods



Maintain regular meal timing & serve age-appropriate portions



Encourage active lifestyle by doing outdoor physical activities

## MYTHS ON CHILD FEEDING

***"Picky eaters will grow out of it—just let them eat what they want."***

**Fact:** Picky eating can persist and lead to nutrient deficiencies. They must be exposed to different foods gradually.



***"Multivitamins are important and should be given to every child."***

**Fact:** Multivitamins cannot replace a varied balanced diet. They should only be given under the guidance of a nutritionist/dietitian. Excessive intake can be harmful.



***"Milk alone is enough to meet a child's nutritional needs."***

**Fact:** Milk alone is not enough since growing children need other food groups: fruits, vegetables, protein, and whole grains.



***Prioritise healthy eating from young to set a strong foundation for overall health and well-being in the future!***



# Manage & Maintain a Healthy Body Through Mindful Eating

**Many Malaysians have a weight issue!**



**Did you know that 2 in 5 adults in Malaysia have metabolic syndrome?**

- They have 3 or more risk factors such as the following:



abdominal obesity



high blood pressure



high blood sugar



high blood triglycerides/cholesterol

**1 in 2 adults are overweight or obese**

- They have increased risk of NCDs such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and certain types of cancer



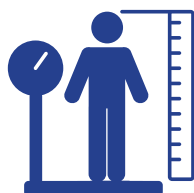
- More than 3/4 of people with metabolic syndrome have abdominal obesity

**Abdominal obesity:** Excess fat around abdomen region; increases risk of NCDs

## Am I overweight or obese?

Check using one of the following.

You are overweight if the results are above the normal values shown in the tables below:



### Body Mass Index (BMI)

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight (kg)}}{\text{Height} \times \text{Height (m}^2\text{)}}$$

≥ 25.0 kg/m<sup>2</sup>



### Waist circumference

Male

Female

≥ 90 cm /  
≥ 35 inches

≥ 80 cm /  
≥ 32 inches



### Body fat %

Male

Female

≥ 25%

≥ 35%

Refer to page 16 for normal values of BMI, waist circumference and body fat percentage.

# Weight

## Maintaining & managing healthy body weight



Remember: balance your food intake and physical activity



Have regular meal times and avoid skipping meals



Be aware of hunger and fullness cues; eat slowly – savour each bite and chew thoroughly; eat without distraction – turn off devices; make nourishing choices; eat modest portions



Pay attention to your meals, making eating an intentional act; engage your senses during meals – colours, textures, flavours and aromas; appreciate your food; notice the effects food has on your feeling and body

## MYTHS ON FAD DIETS

***“Cutting out carbs is the key to losing weight.”***

**Fact:** Carbohydrates are important for energy. Focus on healthy carbohydrate foods like whole grains.



***“Skipping meals helps you lose weight faster.”***

**Fact:** Skipping meals are not encouraged, as it may lead to overeating on next meals.



***“Intermittent fasting works, regardless of what you eat.”***

**Fact:** People who practise intermittent fasting should still eat wholesome meals that are varied and balanced.

***“We should always opt for fat-free foods.”***

**Fact:** We do need appropriate amount and types of fat in our daily diet to perform essential functions.



***Mindful eating is a safe and sustainable way to manage and maintain healthy body weight!***

# Choose Healthier Options When

## Smart Choices: Tips for Eating Healthier When Dining Out

Hectic days, too much unfinished work, many social gatherings, no time to cook...?

Eating out or having takeaways is a common choice.

It is still possible to find healthier options amid the many unhealthy meals when eating out!

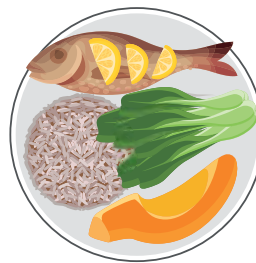
If you need to eat out or order meal deliveries, here are some tips:



Look for outlets that offer healthier meal options



Select grilled, baked, or steamed options rather than fried foods



Go for meals rich in whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and lean meat



Opt for smaller portions or share meals to avoid overeating

## Hype behind Viral/Trendy foods

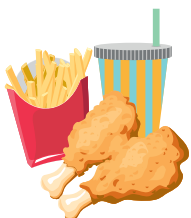
Yes, they may be trendy and popular. But do watch out for the following and make wiser choices.



Many of these foods are packed with excess calories, sugar, or unhealthy fats



Large portion sizes or “all-you-can-eat” concepts promoted online can lead to overeating



These foods often lack essential nutrients like dietary fibre, protein, and vitamins



Foods are often marketed as “exclusive” or “monthly flavour,” prompting impulsive consumption without consideration for health



# Eating Out



## Tips to Stay Healthy Amid “Viral” Trends



Opt for a smaller portion and share it with friends or family



Understand what's in the meal and how it fits into your overall diet



Look for options that promote balanced meals, plant-based ingredients, or creative uses of whole foods



Be mindful of time spent on food-centric social media channels to reduce temptation

## MYTHS

### ABOUT EATING OUT

**“Eating out gives you the same quality as home-cooked meals.”**

**Truth:** When eating out, you have less control over ingredients like salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats compared to home-cooked meals.



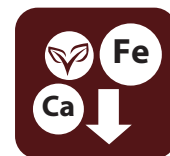
**“Eating out is cheaper than cooking at home.”**

**Truth:** While a single meal outside may seem affordable, feeding a family of 4-5 can be much more expensive than preparing meals at home.



**“Eating out frequently is fine for my child as long as they eat enough.”**

**Truth:** While kids may get enough calories, out-of-home meals often lack key nutrients like iron, calcium and dietary fibre.



**Choose healthier options if you have to eat out;  
but the best way to good health is home-cooked meals!**

# Cook More Often at Home - To Enjoy Healthier Meals & Save

**Cooking at Home**

VS

**Eating Out**



healthier ingredients

+



healthier cooking methods

→



healthier & tastier meals



lower risk of malnutrition



unbalanced meals

+



excessive salt/sugar/oil

+



less healthy cooking methods

→



higher risk of chronic diseases

## Food preparation and healthier ingredients are key to healthier meals:

Examples: Choose lean cuts of meat, use whole grains, generous amounts of veggies

### Healthier cooking methods → healthier and tastier meals:



Healthier Cooking Practices

- Swap frying/deep frying with healthier cooking methods, for example: grilling, baking/roasting, steaming, stir-frying, soup/boiling, stewing
- Use less sugar, oil and salt

## No More Excuses Not to Cook!

***“Cooking at home is time-consuming.”***

**Truth:** With proper planning and simple recipes, home cooking can save both time and money.



***“You need expensive ingredients to cook healthy meals.”***

**Truth:** Healthy meals can be prepared using affordable, locally sourced ingredients like beans, whole grains and vegetables. Shop smart e.g. buying in bulk and using leftovers.

***“Cooking requires special skills.”***

**Truth:** Many simple and quick recipes require only basic skills. Anyone can cook nutritious meals at home; start with simple recipes.

***“Cooking at home means giving up flavour and variety.”***

**Truth:** Home-cooked meals offer endless variety and flavour options. Use different herbs and spices to whip up different exciting cuisines.



**For a healthier family, cook more often at home; it's worth the effort!**

# Money

## Cooking at Home Made Easy

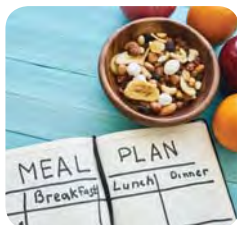
Time-saving tips for a more efficient way of preparing home-cooked meals!



Prepare larger portions and freeze the extras for quick reheating on busy days. Examples: Soups, stews, curries, or pasta sauces.



Minimise clean-up and cooking time with simple dishes like stir-fries and sheet pan meals. Example: *nasi goreng*.



Create a weekly meal plan to streamline grocery shopping and reduce decision fatigue. Focus on recipes with overlapping ingredients to save prep time.



Use time-saving kitchen appliances like a pressure cooker or food processor.



Chop vegetables, marinate meats, prepare condiments like chopped garlic/onion/ginger on weekends. Store ingredients in airtight containers to maintain their freshness.



Assign simple tasks to kids and get everyone involved from young.

## Boost Flavours with Herbs and Spices

Using herbs and spices in cooking is an easy way to reduce salt and enhance both the flavour and nutritional value of your meals. Many herbs and spices are rich in antioxidants.

### Delicious herbs and spices for any dishes



**Malay cuisine:**  
cloves, cinnamon,  
star anise, five  
spices



**Chinese cuisine:**  
garlic, ginger,  
coriander, five  
spices, black  
pepper



**Indian cuisine:**  
turmeric, cumin,  
coriander, garam  
masala, cardamom



**Thai cuisine:**  
basil, kaffir lime  
leaf



**Italian cuisine:**  
basil, oregano,  
rosemary, thyme,  
garlic

# Superfoods for Better Health

## Superfoods are nutrient-rich



PACKED WITH

vitamins

fibre

bioactive compounds  
(phytonutrients)



may offer  
significant  
health  
benefits



## Superfoods are often rich in phytonutrients

Phytonutrients are:

- Natural bioactive compounds found mostly in plants that contribute to their colour, flavour, and disease-protecting properties.
- May serve as antioxidants, and provide health benefits, e.g. protecting against chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

## Boost Diet with Superfoods

Many foods in the daily diet are superfoods. See examples below:



Packed with essential vitamins A, C, and K, and minerals like iron and phytonutrients like carotenoids.



Rich in vitamins, antioxidants, and fibre, which support healthy digestion and immunity.



Provide essential nutrients such as fibre, vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients (e.g. plant sterol) and antioxidants.



High in fibre, rich in healthy fats, source of protein, antioxidants and minerals.

Good for a healthy heart and support cognitive functions.

Rich in antioxidants that may help boost metabolism, support brain function, and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.



Source of probiotics (good bacteria) that promote a healthy gut and improve immunity.



Known for boosting immunity, reducing inflammation, and adding natural flavour to meals.

## Common phytonutrients in “superfoods”

**Flavonoids** – in many fruits and vegetables

- **antioxidants:** protect against cell damage
- **anti-inflammatory:** may reduce chronic disease risk
- **support heart health:** improve blood flow and reduce blood pressure



**Carotenoids** – in many orange, yellow, red fruits and vegetables

- **some converted to vitamin A:** essential for eye health and immunity
- **others as antioxidants:** protect against cell damage, supports skin health

**Allicin** – in garlic and leeks

- **antibacterial & antiviral**
- **anti-inflammatory:** helps fight infections
- **supports heart health:** lowers blood pressure and cholesterol



**Curcuminoids** – in turmeric root

- **anti-inflammatory, antioxidant:** may help with arthritis and chronic diseases; may reduce risk of neurodegenerative diseases



### MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SUPERFOODS

**“Superfoods are best consumed as supplements in pill or powder form.”**

**Truth:** Superfoods are most healthful when consumed as whole foods, to get the full spectrum of nutrients contained in them.



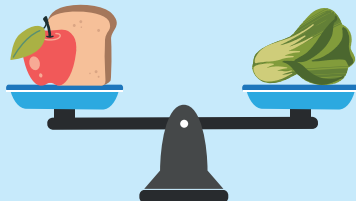
**“Focusing on one nutrient or superfood is the best way to improve health.”**

**Truth:** Nutrients in whole foods work together; so it's important to eat a variety of nutrient-dense foods for the best results.



**“One superfood can provide all the nutrients we need and protect us from chronic diseases.”**

**Truth:** No single food can provide all the nutrients needed. A variety of foods is key to a balanced diet for the prevention of diseases.



**“Consuming several superfoods are sufficient to protect us from chronic diseases.”**

**Truth:** Superfoods can be part of a healthful diet, but we still need a varied healthy diet and active lifestyle.



**Boost your health with balanced meals containing a variety of food groups (including superfoods) and consumed in moderation!**



# Move More for Physical & Mental

## Be Active Now for Healthier You



### **Enhances mood:**

Exercise stimulates the release of endorphins that create feelings of happiness and improve productivity.

### **Reduces stress:**

Lowers levels of stress hormones like cortisol while improving overall energy levels and sleep quality.



### **Supports mobility:**

Helps maintain and improve muscle mass, strength and bone density.

### **Reduces the risk of chronic disease:**

Helps regulate blood pressure, improve blood sugar levels, lower bad cholesterol (LDL) and increase good cholesterol (HDL).



**Helps balance energy intake** (calories consumed) with energy expenditure (calories burned).

**Increases muscle mass**, which boosts your metabolism.

**Reduces the likelihood of weight regain** after weight loss.

*Don't make excuses; move more for your physical and mental wellness!*



# Wellness

## Make Movement a Daily Habit



Incorporate simple, everyday activities. These low-impact movements can seamlessly fit into your lifestyle and make a big difference over time.



Opt for longer-duration exercises to boost calorie expenditure. Joining sports or fitness classes can add variety and keep your workouts engaging and interesting.



Explore fun and creative activities with family or friends to make physical activity enjoyable. Be consistent and make exercise part of your lifestyle so it feels less like a chore.

## Tailored Tips for Different Ages



### Children & teens

Encourage sports (e.g. soccer, swimming), group activities (e.g. dancing) and playful activities such as tag, hopscotch, or skipping rope.



### Adults

Focus on mixing strength training (e.g. weightlifting), flexibility exercises (e.g. yoga) and cardio exercises (e.g. running, cycling, pickleball).



### Seniors/elderly

Go for low-impact activities (e.g. walking, tai-chi), social engagement (community class), balance and stability.

## MYTHS ABOUT STAYING ACTIVE

***“Only adults need to exercise regularly.”***

**Fact:** Physical activity is important at all ages. Regular exercise helps children develop healthy habits, supports their growth, and enhances their academic performance.



***“Exercise is only beneficial for weight loss.”***

**Fact:** Exercise offers many more other benefits. It improves cardiovascular health, strengthens muscles and bones, enhances mood, increases energy levels, and improve sleep quality.



# Monitor Your Health Indicators

National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2023:



adults aged 18 years old and above **DID NOT** do any health screening in the past 12 months.

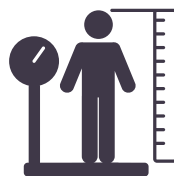
Stay proactive about your health: do regular check-ups to understand and monitor key health indicators.

Early detection enables prevention and management of health issues before they become serious.



## Key Health Metrics to Monitor:

AIM for normal values of:



Body Mass Index (BMI)

18.5 – 24.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup>



Total Cholesterol Level

< 5.2 mmol/L



Waist Circumference

Male

Female

< 90 cm /  
< 35 inches

< 80 cm /  
< 32 inches



Blood Pressure

< 120 – 129 mm/Hg  
(Systolic)

< 80 – 84 mm/Hg  
(Diastolic)



Body Fat %

Male

Female

< 25%

< 35%



Blood Glucose Level

< 7.8 mmol/L (random)

< 5.6 mmol/L (fasting)

Knowing these numbers enables informed health decisions and guides lifestyle changes.

Scan here to learn more about the various health indicators and why you should monitor them.



For children, it is best to monitor their BMI-for-age every 6 months to assess whether their growth is on track and whether they are receiving optimal nutrition. Scan here to learn more!



# Regularly

## Schedule Regular Check-ups

### Why It Matters:

Routine screenings help detect potential health issues early, even when no symptoms are present.



### How Often:

For adults above 30 years old, schedule health screening annually. Individuals with a family history should screen earlier and more regularly.



### What to Share:

Provide detailed information about illness, including family history, to help your doctor recommend personalised screening.

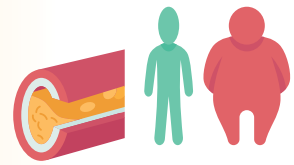


## MYTHS VS FACTS

### Understanding Health Indicators

#### ***“If you’re thin, you won’t have high cholesterol.”***

**Fact:** High blood cholesterol not only occurs among overweight/obese persons. Thin individuals can also have high cholesterol due to genetics, poor diet, or a sedentary lifestyle. Regular check-ups are essential for everyone, regardless of size.



#### ***“If you’re young, you don’t need to monitor your health.”***

**Fact:** Many chronic diseases start to develop from a young age; therefore it is important to do health screening from young.



#### ***“Family history is the sole determinant of your health outcome.”***

**Fact:** While family history increases your risk of certain health conditions, lifestyle factors like diet, exercise, and regular health monitoring play a significant role in managing and reducing those risks.



#### ***“Vegetarians do not suffer from heart disease.”***

**Fact:** Vegetarians can still be at risk for heart diseases. Factors like excessive consumption of fried foods, lack of exercise, and genetic predisposition can still contribute to problems and conditions related to the heart.



#### ***Key to better safeguard your health:***

- ***Be proactive – monitor your health indicators regularly***
- ***Knowing your health metrics allows you to take prompt preventive and management actions***



Eat Well, Live Well.



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Brand in Japan\*

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During Race

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after race

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**Good Gut. Good Life.**

Sarkawi, M., Raja Ali, R. A., Abd Wahab, N., & Mokhtar, N. M. (2021) Influence of Lactobacillus containing cultured milk drink to depression scores in irritable bowel syndrome subjects. J. Gastroenterol. and Hepatol., 36(10), 247. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jgh.15607>

Mokhtar, N. M., Jaafar, N. M., Chan, S., et al IDDF2018-ABS-0203 Modulation of intestinal dysbiosis in patients with constipation-predominant irritable bowel syndrome using lactobacillus-containing cultured milk drink Gut 2018;67:A70. [https://gut.bmj.com/content/67/Suppl\\_2/A70.2](https://gut.bmj.com/content/67/Suppl_2/A70.2)

\*Clinical research done by the GUT Research Group, Faculty of Medicine, UKM

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of Yakult**

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85 Years

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## NOTES



# A Nation-Wide Community Nutrition Promotion Programme Since 2002

## Achievements of NMM

Aimed to promote greater awareness of healthy eating and active living among Malaysians, it is a strategic partnership between three professional bodies, namely, **Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM)**, **Malaysian Dietitians' Association (MDA)**, **Malaysian Society of Body Composition (MSBC)**. Corporate company support and partnership from 2008 enabled more educational materials and activities and greater outreach to the community.

### Family Carnivals

- Organised 17 major fun-filled carnivals and 3 virtual fairs



### School & Kindergarten Roadshows

- Visited 160 primary schools and provided healthy eating and active living messages
- Visited 175 kindergartens and conducted interactive nutrition activities



### Publications for Public

- Published 17 practical nutrition guidebooks, 5 recipe books and 1 mini-booklet



### Educational Materials for School Children & Preschoolers

- Published comic book and activity book for primary school children
- Published DVD and worksheets for preschoolers



### Educational Press Articles

- Published over 124 articles in English, Bahasa Malaysia & Chinese newspapers



### Mass Media Promotions

- Disseminated messages through radio, television & website



Visit our website to obtain more information on educational materials from the Nutrition Month Malaysia programme. We also welcome feedback/queries. To reach us, please contact:

Chairman, Nutrition Month Malaysia  
Email: [president@nutriweb.org.my](mailto:president@nutriweb.org.my)  
Website: [www.nutritionmonthmalaysia.org.my](http://www.nutritionmonthmalaysia.org.my)

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