



Press Release

June 12, 2004

Students Relate Self-Image With Body Shape *Hong Kong Gourmet Identifies Need for Health Education and a Balanced Diet*

'*The Fittest Generation - Student Weight Management*', a recent survey conducted by Hong Kong Gourmet Limited, one of Hong Kong's major school caterers, revealed that while the majority of primary and secondary school students enjoy normal weight and height levels, 30% of respondents perceive themselves as excessively fat or overweight. The survey identified a correlation between body shape and self-image in both boys and girls with over 44% of students having taken action to change their body shape and 18% of parents having made attempts to change the physical appearance of their children.

Mr Lo Wing Sun, Assistant Principal of Wah Yan College, Hong Kong, said: "Secondary school students are easily influenced by their peer groups. It is important to help teenagers establish a positive self-image which is vital for their physical and psychological development."

Mr. Ivan Chung, a registered dietitian and Assistant Professor of Hong Kong Polytechnic University, consulted on the survey on weight management for nearly 2,300 primary and secondary students and their parents throughout Hong Kong in May 2004. The average age of primary school respondents was 10 years old while the average age for secondary school respondents was 14 years old.

"Today's younger generation is heavily influenced by the mass media and trends. They are prone to base their own self-image on the shape of their bodies. This is not surprising considering that 59% and 57% of the survey respondents chose watching TV and surfing the Internet respectively as their favourite past-times," Mr. Chung said.

"The key finding of the survey is not that students and their parents are concerned about their body shape but that they tend to use incorrect ways to lose weight. Instead of regular exercise and a balanced diet, some tend to opt for body trimming food and courses to achieve figures that mirror their role models and elevate their own self-image."

The research found that 37% of secondary and primary school students interviewed spend less than 1 hour exercising per week compared with the recommended 40 - 60 minutes per day and 30 - 40 minutes per day for males and females aged under 15 respectively. It also identified that in addition to watching TV and surfing the Internet, sleeping was ranked as one of the most popular activities especially by secondary school girls (52%).

Commissioned by Hong Kong Gourmet to gain an inside view on how students relate to a balanced diet and weight management, the survey findings revealed a preference by primary and secondary school students for luncheon meat, sausages and sushi. Snacks, desserts and instant noodles remained the most popular foods.

Ms. Kitty Chung, Principal of Shap Pat Heung Rural Committee Kung Yik She Primary School, said: "It is vital that we educate students and their parents about healthy living. School is an ideal place to educate students about a balanced diet."

On the other end of the spectrum, 12% of the students surveyed had experienced prominent weight loss, whether naturally or intentionally, in the past three months. The negative effects of extreme weight loss include a reduction in the immunity system causing lethargy and illness, and a reduced metabolism rate that can affect the normal functioning of body organs. Other symptoms include dry and dull skin, yellowish hair and abnormal hormone excretions and irregular menstruation. Children's brain development may also be affected if they take slimming medication improperly.

Mr. Michael Au, Chairman of the Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations, Wan Chai District, commented: "Students' healthy development are closely linked to family. Parents should pay more attention to their children and encourage healthy living concept when they are young."



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Based on the survey findings, Hong Kong Gourmet is taking a number of steps to provide a wider variety of nutritious and healthy lunches for students. The 'Healthy Choices' daily lunch boxes are low in fat, sugar and salt but high in fibre and calcium. They also include a range of vegetarian options. The caterer will also introduce different monthly theme menus such as European style, South East Asia flavor and Japanese special etc., to bring health and taste to student lunches.

Mr. David Kwan, Director and General Manager of Hong Kong Gourmet said that in addition to healthy food preparation methods, such as steaming, baking and using more vegetables and less oil, a large focus will be on education.

"We understand the importance of appearance to students and we aim to assist teachers, parents and students to understand the basic concepts behind a balanced diet by inviting dietitians to deliver talks on healthy eating habits, weight management and balanced meal preparation," Mr. Kwan said.

Established in 2001, Hong Kong Gourmet Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Vitasoy International Holdings Limited. It is a modern central kitchen facility that supplies healthy, nutritious, safe and tasty lunch boxes to primary and secondary schools every day. Hong Kong Gourmet Limited fully implements the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) standards. HACCP is an internationally recognized system with a prevention-based, pro-active approach to food hygiene and safety.

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