

# **Eat Smart, Get Fit - A Weight Management Programme for Students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities**

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## **Abstract**

*The 'Eat Smart, Get Fit!' Programme is a school-wide weight management programme targeted at students to manage his/her obesity. APSN Tanglin School caters to students, aged 13 to 16, with mild intellectual disability (MID). It is widely recognized that people with intellectual disability (ID) are significantly more at risk of health problems. In some measure, this is due to unhealthy diet and minimal opportunities to be physically active (Bergstrom, 2014). With the aim to address most of these issues, the Physical Education (PE) Department started a weight management programme to provide support and increase health awareness for identified students. The primary objective is for students to lose 5% of their weight at the end of the programme.*

*A team of eight special education teachers from the school's PE Department planned, managed and implemented the 9-month long programme, which was held once a week. Students were identified based on the measurement of their body mass index (BMI). A total of 21 students whose BMI falls within the 'overweight' category attended the weekly one-hour programme. The programme adopted a twopronged approach - 'physical activity' and 'nutrition'. Students completed a series of cardio exercises using exercise machines such as the treadmill and cross trainers in the school and community gym. Exercising in the community gym served to expose students to the community sports resources so that they will continue to engage in lifelong physical activity. To promote and address the challenge on nutrition, students were introduced to the importance and elements of the food pyramid. They were taught to differentiate between 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' food choices. Weekly goals were subsequently implemented to exclude sugary drinks, students were encouraged to consume more plain water and at least three or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily. Students' weight were monitored fortnightly to ensure the progress of the intervention.*

*This paper will further describe the implementation process and discuss the limitations and challenges faced in this programme. Finally, possible future plans which may include the need for a more effective progress monitoring process to achieve better outcomes will also be reviewed.*

*Key words: healthy weight, obesity, nutrition, physical activity, body mass index (BMI)*