

Excerpts from Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's speech at the launch of the National Healthy Lifestyle Campaign, 2 Sep 2002

In Singapore, we lead by example, so I thought that the best way of telling you about healthy living is to let you know what our Ministers do - both the healthy things, and the unhealthy things. For this purpose, I sent them a questionnaire to which they willingly responded.

I chose to focus on the current Health Minister, Lim Hng Kiang, and two former Health Ministers, George Yeo and Yeo Cheow Tong. They are, or were, in charge of the country's health. Let us see if they themselves lead healthy lifestyles. To be fair, I shall subject myself to scrutiny too, since I was once Health Minister.

I also zeroed in on the new Ministers of State, since the responsibility of looking after Singapore will soon fall on their shoulders. Politics is a marathon, not a 100-metre dash. I wanted to know if these new Ministers of State had the physical stamina to last the arduous political race!

[...]

Chan Soo Sen exercises everyday at the gym. He spends about 30 minutes on the stationary bicycle, and then 15 minutes on weights and sit-ups. He has reached a stage where he feels guilty if he misses his daily exercise.

Ng Eng Hen jogs 3 to 5 times a week. The more tired he feels, the more he needs to run. He says that all feelings of lethargy disappear after five minutes of jogging. Khaw Boon Wan is a lunch-time exerciser, working out every other day on the treadmill. He says that this also encourages a light lunch. George Yeo works out three times a week - jogging or gym.

On the other hand, Vivian Balakrishnan exercises less than once a week. His constraint is time. Balaji Sadasivan tells me that he "tries" to exercise once a week - golf, which is certainly not an aerobic exercise. As for Cedric Foo, in his attempt to answer my query as to how often he exercised, he sheepishly replied that he occasionally kicks a football around with his 10-year old boy in his small garden!

I can understand their difficulty fitting exercise into their day. Many of us have to accommodate a hectic work schedule, family life, social engagements, rest and exercise, all into 24 hours. So often, exercise gets sacrificed. But we must make the effort. Regular exercise will enhance our work performance, and make us feel good.

[...]

In sum, looking at the responses from my Ministers, I would group them into three categories. The "Health Nuts" would comprise Soo Sen, Eng Hen and George Yeo. The "Health Conscious" would comprise Hng Kiang, Cheow Tong, Boon Wan, Tharman and myself. As for Vivian, Balaji, and Cedric Foo, I will group them under the category of "Room for Improvement". I am sure that after today's publicity, they will change their health habits dramatically!