

新聞稿 PRESS RELEASE

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Press Announcement from Department of Paediatrics The Chinese University of Hong Kong

An exhibition on "Infant and Childhood Growth and Nutrition" will be held from December 18th to 20th by the Paediatrics Department of The Chinese University of Hong Kong at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Shatin. Apart from the first day (Dec 18), which is for guests and members of the press only, the exhibition is open to the public daily from 2 to 6 pm.

* Hong Kong children has a second-highest blood cholesterol level in the world, which is even higher than the American children? Why? Do all Chinese children have similarly high blood cholesterol levels? Through a series of carefully designed studies on the dietary intake assessment and chemical analysis of the diet, and a comparative study between Hong Kong and Jiangmen in Guangdong Province, it was found that dietary fat consumed by the present Hong Kong children is double that of one or two generations ago. The rapid change did not allow the body mechanism to cope adequately. Therefore, the blood cholesterol level is higher even though the dietary fat is less than that of American children. These findings reminded us of the urgent need to develop a healthy eating habit since early childhood. Otherwise Hong Kong will experience an overwhelming prevalence of coronary heart disease.

* Some people are over-enthusiastic in encouraging children to eat more protein hoping that they can grow taller and bigger. Studies have shown that adequately nourished children could also be short and thin. Over-encouragement to eat more animal protein not only brings about more animal fat intake but also a decrease in intake of other food groups, such as grains and cereals, vegetables (including beans) — which is extremely unhealthy.

* What about milk? Is there over-emphasis on the health benefit of cow's milk in Hong Kong? Traditionally, Chinese babies were weaned off from breast milk by about one year. Cow's milk is not commonly given after one year. Could these babies suffer from dietary calcium deficiency and have higher risk of osteoporosis? Preliminary studies have shown that the ability of calcium absorption by the gut is double among the Chinese compared to the Caucasian. Therefore, the dietary calcium requirement for Chinese can be less than that for the Caucasian. Such difference in calcium handling is just similar to that for dietary fat. Therefore, any nutritional advice for Hong Kong Chinese should be based on scientific studies in relation to their usual dietary practices.

Abstracts of the above-mentioned and related research can be found in a book published by the Department. Besides, a simple aid with photos for the medical profession to advise on local diet was prepared. At the same time, a book entitled "Childhood nutrition and Growth" — a question-and-answer style handbook for child health workers and parents basing on the research findings of the Paediatrics Department — was published by the Chinese University Press.

For press enquiry, please contact Dr. Sophie Leung of the Paediatrics Department (636-2851) or Mrs Shirley Kwok of the Information and Public Relations Office (609-7294).