

Qatar Foundation Combats Hypertension

Overuse of salt is this year's theme at 'Nutrition Awareness Month'

Doha, 25 March 2014 – Qatar Foundation's Food and Nutrition Services Department held a 'Nutrition Awareness Month' campaign aimed at educating staff and students about how a healthy lifestyle can combat hypertension.

'Yes for a Healthier Life' focused on underlying causes, prevention and the role of salt in relation to high blood pressure.

High blood pressure is responsible for 12.8 percent of all deaths around the world, which amounts to 7.5 million people annually. In addition, 32.9 percent of Qataris suffer from hypertension, one third of whom ignore their diagnosis.

The awareness campaign was part of an ongoing commitment by Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development to provide employees and students at Education City with various initiatives to improve their lifestyle for a better future.

Joelle Hamamji Seyoury, Food and Nutrition Services Manager at the Qatar Foundation Support Services Directorate said: "In support of Qatar National Vision 2030, it's our mission to address community development issues. By raising social awareness through this campaign, we aim to highlight the importance of leading a healthier lifestyle."

Explaining the significance of 'Nutrition Awareness Month' further, she added: "This year, we chose to address the subject of hypertension and the role that salt plays. Through various activities, our objective is to empower our participants by reducing their sodium intake and improving their health. All of our activities cater to Qatar Foundation's students and employees. They represent a microcosm of the larger Qatari society and therefore, the health challenges faced by the nation are also being experienced by our small community."

With the help of Qatar Biobank, a database has been created to quantify the number of people that suffer, or may suffer, from hypertension in the future. By visiting 11 different locations within Qatar Foundation, data was collected from 300 participants.

Activities during 'Nutritional Awareness Month' were led in part by Pascale Hadchiti Richa, Nutrition Services Supervisor at Qatar Foundation's Food and Nutrition Services. Among the initiatives organised

were workshops, healthy cooking sessions and smart food shopping, as studies indicate that high salt consumption is due to canned or processed food and not because of home cooking.

“Through our healthy cooking classes, participants were shown how they could lower their salt intake during meal preparation,” said Mrs Hadchiti. “To coincide with this was a smart food shopping excursion led by nutrition and cooking expert Peggy Cotsopoulos from the USA. Selecting low sodium items, Peggy showed participants how to read nutritional stickers on different products. She also presented various dietary habits, where salt intake is often ignored.”

In addition, a workshop was organised in cooperation with the Supreme Health Council, Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, Aspire Zone Foundation and Hamad Medical Corporation. During this initiative, three behavioural attitudes linked to hypertension were discussed, including smoking, lack of physical activity and unhealthy diets.

To support these findings, statistics show that 14.7 percent of Qatari adults smoke regularly while 71.3 percent are not physically active. Further to this, it was found that 91.1 percent of Qatari adults eat less than the recommended level of five portions of fruits or vegetables daily.

At each activity, a collection of brochures and booklets were distributed to explain the importance of reducing salt intake, while addressing dietary myths. A 21-day plan was also incorporated with healthy and delicious alternatives to help reduce sodium intake.

As part of their ongoing commitment to health and nutrition, the Food and Nutrition Services Department at Qatar Foundation offers year-long awareness campaigns that target different age categories. A team of three nutrition specialists supervise a clinic that provides free health and nutrition consultations to Qatar Foundation students, employees and their families. The department also oversees all food services provided at QF institutions.

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Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

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Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Emir, QF is chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

QF's work encompasses education, research and community development. World-class universities are brought to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. At the same time, QF builds Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercializing solutions through key sciences. The Foundation also works to foster a progressive society while enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.

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