



## HEALTHY CANTEEN FOOD

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### PROGRAMME

# Healthy canteen food

**I**N an effort to improve knowledge and practices related to healthy eating, healthy food menus and recipes for the school canteen, as well as physical activities for adolescents, Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Taman Tun Dr Ismail (SMK TTDI), Kuala Lumpur recently launched the Healthy School Canteen Project.

The programme is an initiative by a team from UCSI University, led by Professor Dr Mirnalini Kandiah, a professor of Public Health Nutrition, and supported by the Ministry of Health's Nutrition Division.

As a pilot programme that was carried out for eight weeks between March and May this year, the school's canteen operator underwent a healthy menu planning guide as well as a healthy food preparation guide that qualified them for a Healthy School Canteen certificate by the Health Ministry.

Among the guidelines the canteen needed to adhere to was to prepare food that are optimal for growth and development, and consequently decreasing and minimising the risk of getting chronic diseases later in life.



*Muhammad Faris Aiman Mohd Hidayah during the launch and award of the Healthy Cafeteria certificate at SMK TTDI.*

The team from UCSI conducted a needs analysis on more than 1000 respondents from 10 schools in Kuala Lumpur, and a focus group discussion in four schools, including SMK TTDI, before concluding that there is a need to carry out a programme to help students, parents, teachers as well as canteen operators to improve nutrition intake, the way food is prepared and to increase students' physical activities to meet the guidelines for children and adolescents set by the Ministry of Health.

In her speech representing the director of the Ministry of Health's Nutrition Division, the



*SMK TTDI canteen receives the Healthy Cafeteria certificate at SMK TTDI.*  
PIC BY ZUNNUR AL SHAFIQ

deputy director, Zaiton Daud said: "As children are considered the country's assets, it is important that they practise healthy eating."

"Likewise, since they are in school for long periods of time, sometimes for more than eight hours a day, it is timely that we instil in them healthy eating practices," she added.

"It has been found that more than 14 per cent of secondary school students are obese, and because of this we need to create an environment for students to adopt healthy and good nutrition intake following the Ministry of Health dietary guidelines for children and adolescents," said Minarlini.

On top of the recommended steps undertaken, SMK TTDI has set up a Canteen Scout

unit comprising 10 students that were hand-picked to facilitate the programme. Muhammad Faris Aiman Mohd Hidayah, 16, is proud to have been selected as a canteen scout. He said: "I have been following the guidelines given for my dietary intake and exercising on my own. So far I have lost around 10 kilogrammes. I want to lose some more though as I still feel I am not fit enough."

The canteen scouts also helps to facilitate the programme at the canteen during recesses. They will be the eyes and ears of the Healthy Canteen Programme and help with its implementation at school.

The school also won the best short video competition on healthy food intake.

