

## Free healthcare screenings for residents of rental flats to include more checks



Volunteers from the National Dental Centre Singapore conducting a dental examination for a resident in the Neighbourhood Health Service in 2017. PHOTO: NUS YONG LOO LIN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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SINGAPORE - Free annual healthcare screenings for residents of rental HDB flats will be expanded to include more health checks.

The programme, started by medical students from the National University of Singapore Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine in 2007, brings health screening programmes to the doorsteps of rental flat residents throughout Singapore.

Previously, residents in the Neighbourhood Health Service were screened for health issues such as chronic diseases, cancer and dental and vision problems. From this year, they will also have mental health checks for depression and hearing tests and be taught how to avoid falls.

This year's health checks will bring together five screening programmes under one roof for the residents of Kampong Glam and Leng Kee in Queenstown. The screenings will be done at Kampong Glam Community Centre and Leng Kee Community Centre over two days at each location.

The five screening programmes for the residents are SingHealth and the National Healthcare Group's chronic disease screenings, the National Dental Centre Singapore and Singapore Eye Research Institute's oral health and vision screenings, the SingHealth community falls prevention programme and Singapore Cancer Society's cancer screenings.

While the medical students will conduct simpler tests, such as taking blood pressure measurements, the healthcare experts from the various organisations will conduct the more complicated checks.

"The students had decided to expand this year's screening efforts to cover a wider range of clinical conditions as they found that residents living in HDB rental blocks are four times less likely than the average Singaporean to go for regular health check-ups," said Associate Professor Gerald Koh of the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health at NUS, referring to a 2009 study.



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Another 2009 study found that residents living in rental blocks are likely to be at higher risk of having chronic disease, depression and cognitive impairment.

The students will also follow up with the residents after the screening to help identify residents who have fallen through the cracks and reconnect them back to the healthcare system.

Over the years, more than 5,000 residents in nine different districts have been screened, including Taman Jurong and Eunos Crescent.

Said student Benjamin Tan Kye Jyn, 19, who is co-leading the project this year: "We are deeply humbled that although we are students, we managed to bring the nation's key players together

to organise an integrated, holistic screening for the residents in need."