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**Experts advise appropriate nutrition for every mental
developmental stage**

*Dutch Lady Malaysia offers sneak preview of insightful workshop on children's
developmental milestones to be held in 2015*

Petaling Jaya, 18 November 2014 – Experts in psychology, nutrition and paediatrics advise Malaysian parents to provide nutrition that matches the needs of young children's various cognitive developmental stages, so as to optimise the nutritional support for healthy mental development. This was shared at the preview of Dutch Lady Milk Industries (Dutch Lady Malaysia)'s *SMART STEPS -- Uncover the Power of Nutrition to your Child's Development* workshop, to be held in January 2015.

Concurring on this view were Dr. Alvin Ng Lai Oon, Associate Professor at Sunway University's Department of Psychology; Professor Dr. Poh Bee Koon, Head of Nutritional Sciences Programme at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM); and Dr. Yong Junina Fadzil, Consultant Paediatrician. All three experts are designated speakers of the workshop, designed to inform parents on how young brains grow; their development and milestones; and the importance of providing vital nutrients at every stage to better support children's mental development.

On the rationale of conducting the workshop, Anja Henze, Marketing Director of Dutch Lady Malaysia said: "One of the key findings in SEANUTS or Southeast Asian Nutrition Surveys -- a health and nutrition study conducted on children in four countries including Malaysia, indicates that a child's IQ (intelligence quotient) level or cognitive performance is influenced by his or her nutrition status. As such, Dutch Lady Malaysia as a leading dairy company recognises the need to educate parents on nutrition in the perspective of children's mental development."

Dr. Ng, who is also the Cognitive Development Investigator for SEANUTS (or South East Asian Nutrition Surveys), started the preview by presenting the mentioned research. Conducted on children up to 12 years old in Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia, it investigated the relationship between the children's nutrition status and their cognitive performance. In Malaysia, the study showed that undernutrition (thin, underweight and stunted) and overnutrition (overweight, obese and severely obese) children have higher probability of scoring below average and low non-verbal IQ.

Professor Poh, who is also Principal Investigator for SEANUTS Malaysia, concluded: "Nutrition is an important influencing factor to continuous growth and development

throughout the childhood period. Lack of healthy food leads to stunted physical growth, slowed or reduced brain development, and also the increase in suppression of the body's immune system. The SEANUTS cognitive performance study clearly establishes nutrition's impact on a child's mental development and intelligence."

Looking at developmental milestones

Dr. Ng started the experts' discussion by providing insights into a child's mental development. "A child is an active learner and cognitive development refers to how he gathers, sorts, and processes information from around him, and uses the information to perceive, gain understanding and learn about his world. In other words, children learn and acquire intelligence and smartness as they develop mentally," he continued.

To monitor if a child is developing normally or healthily, parents and healthcare providers look to developmental milestones or abilities that a child achieves at different age. Dr. Ng explained that unlike physical milestones, such as a child's first walk, first run, or first star-jump, cognitive or mental development milestones are not as obvious. Ability to uncover toys under a cloth and matching shapes and colours may be physical moves, but they require mental processing and smartness to achieve them.

Adding to Dr. Ng's explanation, Dr. Yong Junina said there are various development milestones that parents should monitor, including mental, physical, emotional and social. "The various aspects of a child's development and their milestones enable parents to monitor a child's overall growth and development. Paediatrician usually estimates a child's progress abilities through parents' observations and descriptions of these milestones," she said.

Dr. Ng agreed with Dr. Yong Junina that milestones provide a better understanding of a child's development and that mental and physical development are closely linked. "From one to two years of age, a child's more developed vision and ability to walk and move around independently allows him to see, touch and feel more things and people. It is when curiosity is heightened that drives him to discover more of his world," he said. "At age two to four is when his gross and fine motor skills are more refined, coupled with more sophisticated language skills a child can explore the world like he never had before. As such, his ability to be curious and to explore forms the foundation to his further learning and application of what he learns later in childhood," he added.

Building 'smooth highways'

When asked specifically how nutrition helps support a child's mental development, Dr. Ng gave the following example: "Imagine the roads of a highway as your child's brain. The vital nutrients you provide him will ensure a smooth surfaced road without any pot holes; and the activities you do to stimulate his brains, such as play and interactions, are the cars that are moving on the highway. While the right nutrition helps to build the brain, stimulation from parents and caregivers help to develop his curiosity, exploration, creativity and learning – in another words, smartness!"



Professor Dr. Poh affirmed that different essential nutrients are required at various stages of development for a healthy and active brain. "It is important for young children to develop the brain and muscular system to achieve the milestones to walk and talk. Many nutrients support the brain development and growth process, such as protein, amino acids, DHA, magnesium, B-vitamins, and calcium," said Professor Poh.

She further explained that these nutrients play an important role in supporting the mental growth process as it is associated with behavioural performance as well. "Just to name a few -- magnesium plays an interesting role in learning and memory and is essential for energy availability in the brain; it is helpful for children four years onwards who are learning to apply what they learnt through creative processes. Besides supporting bone development and smooth muscle function, Vitamin D actually protects a child's eyes and vision, an essential tool when he is curious," described Professor Poh.

Dutch Lady Malaysia's *SMART STEPS -- Uncover the Power of Nutrition to your Child's Development* workshop is opened to parents with children one to six years. Learn how young brain grows and find out what are the other nutrients vital for each stage of your child's mental development; ways to stimulate your child's learning and how to better monitor your child's development with milestones. The workshop will also feature interactive and fun activities for both parents and children. Parents get to learn simple techniques on fluency building and cognitive stimulation, and how such activities can help children 'grow smarter' holistically.

Registration for the workshop will commence on 1 December 2014. To register or for more information of the workshop, call toll-free line 1800-22-1233 (Monday to Friday, 10.00am to 6.00pm) or email at mail@bridgespr.com.my.

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About Dutch Lady Milk Industries Berhad

Incorporated in 1963, Dutch Lady Milk Industries Berhad (Dutch Lady Malaysia) is the leading dairy company in Malaysia. It is owned by one of the largest dairy cooperative companies in the world, Royal FrieslandCampina NV, a Dutch multinational dairy company.

Dutch Lady Malaysia was the first milk company to be listed on Bursa Malaysia in 1968 and the first to introduce Growing Up Milk in Malaysia in 1988. Dutch Lady Malaysia, awarded as the Company of the Year 2014 by The Edge Billion Ringgit Club manufactures and sells a wide range of quality dairy products for the home and export market, with all products enjoying a strong following in brands like Dutch Lady and FrisoGold.

Through a unique collaboration between FrieslandCampina and four international research teams/universities, we initiated the South East Asian Nutrition Surveys (SEANUTS) study in 2009, involving four countries – Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand. SEANUTS is the largest and most extensive nutrition and health study ever done in South-East Asia, wherein 16,744 children up to 12 years old were surveyed over a four-year period.

More information can be found on www.dutchlady.com.my.





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