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Get your kid activated

PepsiCo's Get Active programme aims to add healthy action to your kid's life

Suman Tarafdar

PANKAJ Gupta may be the name his parents lovingly chose, but his classmates refer to him as *motu* — inspired by his physical shape. As experts have been observing for a while, childhood obesity is growing alarming fast among affluent kids, especially in India's metros. And as Anoop Mishra, a WHO obesity expert warns, the effects are long lasting, often stretching well into adulthood.

It was to tackle this that Swashrit, a non-government organisation (NGO), is promoting its Get Active campaign in schools to encourage children to be more active. "Sedentary lifestyle is a major killer," says Bhavna Barmi, a senior clinical psychologist. The campaign, which was launched about two years ago, has a team of doctors, nutritionists, psychologists and lifestyle experts working with member schools to provide healthy and active alternatives to the children.

All those involved — teachers, parents, health professionals — admit the task is humongous. "We are just scratching the surface," says Nina Sehgal, principal, Delhi Public School, Noida. "Most children do not get even 30 minutes of play or exercise daily." Experts blame the lack of time and space as the obsta-



cles.

"Get Active reaches out to about 80 schools in Delhi and Mumbai and is changing the habits of many children in these schools," points out Barmi. These children have started coming out with a number of innovative suggestions, whether it is about what they eat or how they play, she says. "Children, especially girls, often have to be coerced to play," says Sehgal. Get Active has helped Swati not feel as tired as she used to, Chetan to concentrate better in class and Sanjay not to get tired while playing soccer.

Supporting this programme is

PepsiCo, whose colas may not be the favourite among health experts, but as Sucheta Govil, ED, innovation, PepsiCo points out, the company has a lot of healthier alternatives to offer, including juices, oatmeal etc. "Committed to creating a healthier future, we are providing a range of product options that encourage fit lifestyles," says Govil. She also says that supporting programmes like Get Active makes the company "incredibly proud" as it is part of social responsibility leading to a healthier future. Hopefully, that is when Pankaj will possibly not be called *motu* any more.