

MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Publication

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL PLEDGES COMMITMENT TO GO PLASTIC-LITE

NUH has also committed to reduce its waste generated by 60 per cent by end 2030 in a series of whole-of-hospital sustainable initiatives

SINGAPORE — On 14 June 2024, the National University Hospital (NUH) is proud to announce its commitment to environmental sustainability by moving towards a plastic-lite campus. This announcement comes as part of the hospital's Green Day 2024 event, which includes the launch of various green initiatives on its grounds, such as more community gardens and the unveiling of a new recycling corner.

In a significant move, the hospital is phasing out the use of small plastic bags at its pharmacies across the campus, which can cut the use of up to 480,000 small plastic bags a year with the support of patients and members of the public. This move aligns with NUH's ongoing efforts to implement environmentally friendly practices in a sector that is both affected by, and a key contributor to, climate change.

Retail tenants are partnering with the hospital to cut the use of plastic bags as part of the collaborative efforts to go plastic-lite.

Mr Jeremy Lee, Assistant Chief Operating Officer of NUH, said, "We are dedicated to not only providing exceptional healthcare but also to being responsible stewards of our environment. The green initiatives across the campus, involving not only staff of the hospital but also our patients and retail tenants, reflect the multi-pronged whole-of-hospital effort in taking steps to leave a healthier planet for future generations."

Patient and community involvement crucial to sustainability

Patients are strongly encouraged to join the hospital in this collective journey to becoming more sustainable, by bringing their own reusable bags when they anticipate the collection of prescriptions in large amounts.

NUH has also launched ongoing public education programmes to engage patients and the community, aimed at raising awareness of the environmental impact of plastic use and to encourage sustainable practices.

"Our patients and community are at the heart of our sustainability efforts," added Mr Lee. "Their involvement and support are crucial to the success of our green initiatives. This is beyond just about reducing plastic use; it is about fostering a mindset change towards more sustainable healthcare and a greener future for all."

Staff-led green initiatives

The hospital also proudly recognises staff-led initiatives through the inaugural “NUH Incredible Care For Our Planet Award”. Three platinum and four gold award projects are celebrated at NUH Green Day 2024. These innovative projects include:

- ***Aircon and Mechanical Ventilation (ACMV) setback in NUH Medical Centre Operating Theatres***

Operating Theatres (OTs) are the most energy-intensive service in the hospital, due to the need for strict temperature, humidity, pressure, and air quality controls, along with high-intensity lighting and specialised equipment.

Current international guidelines suggest that air exchange designed for older OTs can be reduced during non-operating hours. In early 2022, a pilot project in an OT was conducted to investigate the feasibility of doing so. The results showed that by optimising air exchange rates, OTs can reduce energy use by up to 40 per cent without compromising safety. The optimised protocol is being progressively rolled out across 29 OTs at NUH since 2023. The initiative at NUH Medical Centre has reduced its energy consumption by 2.8 per cent.

- ***Reduction of food waste from in-patient meals***

Patients were often observed to have excess food that goes to waste. In a study on consumption patterns done in consultation with dietitians at the hospital, default carbohydrate servings for patients without special dietary requirements were reduced from 180g to 150g per meal. The initiative reduces wastage of almost 2,000kg of rice per year while maintaining patients’ nutritional intake. Patients requiring more carbohydrates can easily request for more.

- ***Food waste digester at bin centre***

With effect from June last year, NUH kitchens has started to separate food waste from general waste, depositing food waste into a digester to be digested with organic enzymes. This diverts 11 to 15 tonnes of food waste from incineration monthly, significantly reducing the hospital’s carbon footprint.

Beyond plastic-lite

In November 2022, NUH launched a hospital-wide initiative to recycle IV fluid bags made of PVC, the first hospital in Singapore to do so¹. New efforts such as the launch of a recycling corner and community gardens are set to boost NUH’s sustainability efforts. The new NUH community gardens not only enhance the campus environment but also offer opportunities for patients and staff to engage in gardening, fostering a stronger sense of community and environmental stewardship.

The initiatives are aligned with the National University Health System (NUHS) Green Plan Roadmap, which lays out key strategies to reduce waste across the healthcare

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<https://www.nuhs.edu.sg/sites/nuhs/NUHS%20Assets/News%20Documents/NUHS%20Corp/Media%20Releases/2023/Media-Release-NUH-kick-starts-IV-fluid-bags-recycling-drive.pdf>

cluster and its entities. These include reducing papers and packaging, looking into food wastage, increasing waste recycling, and building a culture of environmentally conscious behaviour through education.

Since 2022, the entities within the NUHS healthcare cluster, including NUH, Ng Teng Fong General Hospital, Alexandra Hospital and the National University Polyclinics, have stopped the purchase of single-use bottled water and use of disposables at all in-house events. Efforts have also been strengthened to reduce plastic bag usage in pharmacies across NUHS institutions, by charging for the use of plastic bags. This serves as a nudge to shift consumer behaviour towards a more sustainable habit of using reusable bags.

Chinese Glossary

National University Hospital (NUH)	国立大学医院 (国大医院)
Mr Jeremy Lee Assistant Chief Operating Officer National University Hospital (NUH)	李汶津先生 助理营运总监 国立大学医院 (国大医院)
National University Health System (NUHS) Green Plan Roadmap	国大医学组织环保计划路线图
NUH Green Day 2024	国大医院环保日 2024
NUH Incredible Care For Our Planet Award	国大医院关爱地球奖

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About the National University Hospital (NUH)

The National University Hospital (NUH) is Singapore's leading university hospital. While the hospital at Kent Ridge first received its patients on 24 June 1985, our legacy started from 1905, the date of the founding of what is today the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine. NUH is the principal teaching hospital of the medical school.

Our unique identity as a university hospital is a key attraction for healthcare professionals who aspire to do more than practise tertiary medical care. We offer an environment where research and teaching are an integral part of medicine, and continue to shape medicine and transform care for the community we care for.

We are an academic medical centre with over 1,200 beds, serving more than one million patients a year with over 50 medical, surgical and dental specialties. NUH is the only public and not-for-profit hospital in Singapore to provide trusted care for adults, women and children under one roof, including the only paediatric kidney and liver transplant programme in the country.

The NUH is a key member of the National University Health System (NUHS), one of three public healthcare clusters in Singapore.