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Oil boards to follow sugar boards

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Calcutta: The CBSE has asked its schools to promote healthy meals and encourage physical activity among students to counter obesity and raise awareness about unhealthy oil consumption in diets.

In a circular sent last week, the CBSE directed schools to encourage students to use stairs and organise short exercise breaks. The directive follows the board's May instruction to schools to set up "sugar boards".

"All schools must sensitise their students and staff by promoting healthy meals and physical activity in schools

through the availability of nutritious, healthier food options (more fruits, vegetables, and low-fat options, and by limiting availability of sugary drinks and high-fat snacks) and activity initiatives (such as encouraging use of stairs, organising short exercise breaks, and facilitating walking routes)," the circular stated.

Some ways schools can raise awareness are by setting up "oil boards" in common areas like cafeterias, lobbies and meeting rooms.

The board said there is a sharp rise in obesity among children.

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CBSE suggests oil boards

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"As per the National Family Health Survey 2019-21, over one in five adults in urban areas are overweight or obese... Prevalence of childhood obesity is impacted mostly by poor dietary habits and reduced physical activity," the CBSE circular said.

Schools can print health messages on official stationery like letterheads, envelopes and publications to reinforce daily reminders on fighting obesity, the board has said.

Many new-age schools are vertical buildings, which have classes on higher floors, and students are not used to

taking the stairs.

"Unless it is morning, when children have to go to classrooms with schoolbags, they are supposed to take the staircase up to the third floor. When they have to move from one floor to another, and if they are carrying only a notebook and a pen, they are not supposed to use the lift," said Satabdi Bhattacharjee, principal, The Newtown School.

At South Point, addressing students about healthy dietary habits has become a part of the morning assembly.

One of the challenges schools confront is children's overdependence on gadgets, which naturally takes them

away from physical exercise.

Metro had reported how several schools saw a slump in after-class sports and students not signing up for them. The numbers keep dwindling more in higher classes, many school principals said.

"Earlier, students had only academics and play in their lives, but that is gradually changing. They are having to deal with far more complex issues like peer pressure, disjointed families, and going back to empty homes — all of which distract them and they cannot take up something even if they want," said Meena Kak, director, Lakshmi Pat Singhania Academy.