

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ***Novartis Singapore and the Singapore Heart Foundation Launch 'Beat the Block' Campaign to Raise Awareness of High Blood Cholesterol***

- *Local survey reveals critical misconceptions and gaps in blood cholesterol management among people living in Singapore.*
- *Almost one in three deaths in Singapore is attributed to cardiovascular disease, underscoring the urgent need to improve blood cholesterol management.<sup>1</sup>*
- *Beat the Block was launched to raise awareness of optimal low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) levels, a critical starting point in managing heart health.*

**Singapore, 30 September 2025** — Novartis Singapore (Novartis) and the Singapore Heart Foundation (SHF) have jointly launched *Beat the Block* — a blood cholesterol management education campaign. Designed to address critical knowledge gaps identified in a joint survey, the campaign offers science-based information and practical tools to help people in Singapore manage their heart health.

While the prevalence of high blood cholesterol (hypercholesterolemia) among people living in Singapore has decreased from 39.1% in 2020 to 31.9% in 2022, cardiovascular disease (CVD) remains the top killer in the country, accounting for approximately one in three deaths.<sup>2</sup> The survey commissioned by Novartis and SHF and conducted by IQVIA revealed widespread blood cholesterol management misconceptions, underscoring the urgent need for increased awareness and proactive management of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) levels to prevent CVD-related deaths.

Talking about the urgency of this campaign, Mr. Geoffrey Ong, Chief Executive Officer, Singapore Heart Foundation said: “As the Singapore Heart Foundation marks its 55th anniversary in 2025, this campaign serves as a timely reminder of our mission to build resilient hearts for a healthier Singapore. Heart health is not merely a medical concern — it is fundamental to the strength and vitality of individuals, families, and communities. By spotlighting the importance of blood cholesterol management, we reinforce the prevention of cardiovascular disease and help reduce preventable disability and premature death. Misconceptions that downplay its significance can lead to inaction and serious health consequences. It is essential to educate the public on the importance of effectively managing blood cholesterol to prevent long-term health issues and potentially even loss of life.”

#### **Addressing Misconceptions in Blood Cholesterol Management**

The survey painted a concerning picture. Approximately 80% of cardiovascular disease is preventable, including heart disease and stroke,<sup>3</sup> and the link between high blood cholesterol and

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cardiovascular disease is well understood — yet only 36% of respondents strongly agree that high blood cholesterol requires urgent attention.<sup>4</sup>

While a healthy lifestyle forms the bedrock of good health, it alone may not be sufficient to manage blood cholesterol. In some cases, cholesterol-lowering medication is necessary, but people living in Singapore are hesitant about these treatments. In fact, the survey revealed several common misconceptions: 93% of respondents think that diet and exercise are equally as effective in lowering blood cholesterol as prescription medication; 72% believe the long-term use of statins can damage the kidneys and liver; and 60% fear that the long-term use of statins could lead to a higher risk of cancer.<sup>4</sup>

The survey also found that, among respondents diagnosed with high blood cholesterol, approximately three in 10 do not take medication, with the most common reason being fear of safety and side effects.<sup>4</sup> Among patients who were taking medication, 37% of respondents report being non-compliant with their prescriptions. When asked why, the top responses were the belief that their blood cholesterol levels were already under control, feeling fine despite missing doses, concerns about long-term side effects as well as already taking too many pills to manage other health conditions.<sup>4</sup> These indicate a significant gap in understanding the ongoing need for proactive blood cholesterol management and timely intervention.

The consequences of neglecting blood cholesterol management can be severe, including an increased risk of cardiovascular events. Alarming, less than one-third of all respondents know their total blood cholesterol levels or the optimal range.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Bernard Kwok, an accomplished cardiologist and Immediate-Past Honorary Treasurer of the Singapore Heart Foundation's Board of Directors, shares: "High blood cholesterol is silent and has no symptom. It can impact anyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or perceived fitness levels. It is crucial for all adults to regularly check their blood cholesterol levels and consult their doctors to manage heart health." Dr. Kwok is also Past-President of the Singapore Cardiac Society and founding President of the Heart Failure Society (Singapore).

### **Introducing the Cardiovascular Risk Calculator**

One of the key tools offered through the *Beat the Block* campaign is the Cardiovascular Risk Calculator. It is built on the recalibrated Singapore-modified Framingham Risk Score (SG-FRS-2023) and estimates an individual's 10-year risk of developing coronary artery disease (CAD). The calculation is based on inputs such as age, sex, race, total and HDL cholesterol, systolic blood pressure, use of blood pressure medication, diabetes status and smoking status. In addition to risk estimation, the calculator also provides a recommended LDL-C target tailored to the user's profile.

LDL-C is a critical parameter in managing blood cholesterol. Often referred to as "bad" cholesterol, high levels of LDL-C can lead to the buildup of plaques in arteries, increasing the risk of CVD. Understanding and managing LDL-C levels is essential for preventing heart attacks and strokes.

"*Beat the Block* addresses the misconception that health maintenance is only necessary for diseases with obvious or immediate effects. By spotlighting facts and serving periodic reminders, we encourage individuals to recognise the importance of proactive blood cholesterol management, even when the consequences are not immediately visible. Effective management includes not only

lifestyle changes but also adherence to prescribed medications, crucial for controlling blood cholesterol levels and preventing complications. The Singapore Heart Foundation's mission is to champion heart health, and to alleviate the impact of cardiovascular disease and stroke. Our collaboration with Singapore Heart Foundation through this campaign aims to achieve that.” says Ms. Poh Hwee Tee, Country President of Novartis Singapore and Asian Emerging Markets.

The online survey engaged 1,000 Singapore citizens and permanent residents, evenly split between patients and caregivers diagnosed with hypercholesterolemia and those who have not been diagnosed with hypercholesterolemia. Respondents were between the age range of 21 to 75, with balanced representation of both genders and fair distribution of patients receiving treatment across public and private settings.

To learn more about the *Beat the Block* campaign and access the Cardiovascular Risk Calculator, please visit: <http://beattheblock.sg>.

*Note: The fieldwork for the survey was conducted between April and June 2023.*

#### References

1. Singapore Heart Foundation. Heart Disease Statistics. Available at: <https://www.myheart.org.sg/health/heart-disease-statistics/> [Last accessed: September 8, 2025]
2. Singapore Heart Foundation. High Blood Cholesterol. Available at: <https://www.myheart.org.sg/health/risk-factors/high-blood-cholesterol/> [Last accessed: September 8, 2025]
3. World Heart Foundation. Prevention. Available at: <https://world-heart-federation.org/what-we-do/prevention/>. [Last accessed: September 8, 2025].
4. Actual results of a survey titled ‘The knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour of Singaporeans towards cholesterol management’ commissioned by Singapore Heart Foundation and Novartis and conducted by IQVIA in 2023 - data on file.

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### **About the “Beat the Block” Campaign**

Beat the Block is a blood cholesterol management education campaign jointly led by Novartis Singapore and the Singapore Heart Foundation. It is designed to provide holistic, science-backed information and actionable tools to help people living in Singapore care for their hearts, starting with knowing their blood cholesterol numbers.

### **About Novartis**

Novartis is an innovative medicines company. Every day, we work to reimagine medicine to improve and extend people’s lives so that patients, healthcare professionals and societies are empowered in the face of serious disease. Our medicines reach nearly 300 million people worldwide.

Reimagine medicine with us: Visit us at <https://www.novartis.com> and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#).

### **About Singapore Heart Foundation**

The Singapore Heart Foundation (SHF) is a social service agency at the forefront of the battle against heart disease since 1970. Driven by an unwavering vision of a healthier Singapore population, SHF is dedicated to promoting better heart health for every individual living in Singapore, through evidence-based information and practices that keep every heart beating healthily.

Through strategic life-saving initiatives underlined by the three core pillars of Prevention, Rehabilitation and Resuscitation, SHF upholds its enduring mission to champion heart health and to alleviate the impact of cardiovascular disease and stroke. It aims to prevent not only physical suffering but also the premature loss of precious lives.

With three Heart Wellness Centres (HWC) located across the island, heart patients and those at risk can enrol in a highly subsidised, structured community-based cardiac rehabilitation programme, priced at just \$5 per session. SHF also extends a helping hand to those in need by providing financial assistance to heart patients in the moments of crisis and ensuring that they receive the timely support and medical care that they require.

Community First Responders (CFRs), trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the use of automated external defibrillators (AED), play a pivotal role in SHF’s mission to better heart health. SHF also provides CPR and AED courses to train more CFRs with the objective of building a nation of lifesavers. The Foundation also plays an integral role in ensuring the accessibility and serviceability of AEDs islandwide.

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