



5 November 2008

New stats to help fight childhood obesity

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca today said new data revealed a worrying trend of increasing numbers of children drinking soft drinks daily and spending hours in front of the television.

The statistics have been collected as part of the *Good for Kids. Good for Life* program - Australia's largest-ever obesity prevention trial being run in the Hunter region.

Mr Della Bosca said more than 3700 parents of children from 100 childcare centres; primary schools and secondary schools across the Hunter New England Health region have been surveyed as part of the pilot program.

"Research from this survey shows nearly 25 per cent of all Hunter children are overweight or obese, a worrying situation which is reflected across the state," Mr Della Bosca said.

"The NSW Government is committed to reducing this statistic through initiatives like *Good for Kids. Good for Life*, which is Australia's largest-ever obesity prevention program.

"We are investing \$7.5 million over five years to develop practical information and services to help teach children, parents and carers about healthy weight, healthy eating and physical activity.

"The results from this pilot program will help influence state-wide policy on childhood obesity," he said.

Key findings from the survey carried out by the Centre for Overweight and Obesity and Hunter New England Health show:

- 23 per cent of children aged between children aged 2-15 years are overweight or obese;
- 70 per cent of children are spending more than two hours a day watching TV;
- 22 per cent of children are drinking one or more soft drinks every day (including 16 per cent of preschoolers, aged 2-5 years);
- More than 80 per cent of children ate junk food four or more times a week;
- 58% of children did not consume the recommended daily serves of vegetables
- Around half of the kids surveyed were physically active for at least an hour a day; and
- 70 per cent of children are drinking two cups of water a day.

.../2

Mr Della Bosca said the *Good for Kids* program was about making it easier for parents to raise a happy and healthy child.

“Through this program we are providing parents with helpful tools and information on how they can help their children get active and eat the right foods,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“Parents can access advice through their childcare centres, schools, via the *Good for Kids* interactive website or by calling the free *Good for Kids* helpline on 1300 657 197.”

Mr Della Bosca said there were a number of simple ways to help your child eat and exercise well.

- Encourage your children to drink more water and avoid sugary soft drinks and fruit juices;
- Feed your children less junk food and help to eat more vegies and fruit;
- Set TV limits – no more than two hours of TV or computer time a day; and
- Encourage your children to go outside and play with their friends.

“These are small changes that will greatly benefit our children’s lives in the long run,” Mr Della Bosca added.

For further information visit www.goodforkids.nsw.gov.au

See page 3 for more detailed findings.

**Good for Kids. Good for Life.
Additional Information and Statistics**

Baseline data was collected on 4,008 children from preschool and long day care centres (children aged 2-5 years), primary schools (years K, 2, 4 & 6) and high schools (years 8 & 10) in the Hunter New England region. The information collected included child height, weight, and waist circumference. Children's dietary habits, physical activity behaviours and small screen recreation were also assessed. For these measures, parents reported on behalf of children who were in preschool, kindergarten Years 2 and 4. Children in Years 6, 8 and 10 completed their own surveys. Key findings include:

Pre School Kids

- More than 700 parents of children attending 29 childcare centres completed the survey which found:
 - 16% of boys and 18% of girls aged 2-5 years were overweight or obese
 - 17% of boys and 16% of girls drank one or more cups of soft drink a day
 - 21% of boys and 19% of girls drank more than one cup of fruit juice a day
 - 52% of boys and 50% of girls spent more than two hours a day engaging in small screen recreation, predominantly watching TV, DVDs or video

Primary School Kids

- 35 primary schools in the Hunter New England region participated in the survey. As part of this, 1960 parents of children in Years K, 2, 4 and 6 completed the parent survey which found:
- Height and weight measures were collected from 1808 children in total.
 - 19% of boys and 25% of girls in Years K, 2, 4 and 6 were overweight or obese;
 - 15%, 16%, 22%, 23% of boys in Years K, 2, 4 and 6, respectively, were overweight or obese.
 - 16%, 27%, 32%, 26% of girls in Years K, 2, 4 and 6 respectively, were overweight or obese.
 - 12% of boys and 15% of girls in Years K, 2, 4 and 6 consumed one or more cups of fruit juice per day;
 - 24% of boys and 21% of girls in Years K, 2, 4 and 6 consumed one or more cups of regular soft drink per day;
 - 43% of boys and 40% of girls in Years K, 2, 4 and 6 did not consume the recommended daily serves of vegetables;
 - 25% of boys and 20% of girls in Years K, 2, 4 and 6 did not consume the recommended serves of fruit per day.
 - 72% boys and 61% of girls in Years K, 2, 4 and 6 spent greater than 2 hours per day engaged in small screen recreation, predominantly watching TV, DVDs or videos.
 - 14% of boys and 13% of girls in Years K, 2, 4 and 6 eat confectionary more than 4 times a week

High School Kids

- 35 secondary schools in the Hunter New England region participated in the survey. As part of this, 1120 parents of children in Years 8 and 10 completed the parent survey, and 948 students in Years 8 and 10 completed the student survey.
 - 24% of boys and 24% of girls in Years 8 and 10 were overweight or obese;
 - 27% of boys in 8 and 19% of boys in Year 10 were overweight or obese.
 - 21% of girls in 8 and 27% of girls in Year 10 were overweight or obese.
 - 20% of boys and 15% of girls in Years 8 and 10 consumed one or more cups of fruit juice per day.
 - 19% of boys and 18% of girls in Years 8 and 10 consumed one or more cups of regular soft drink per day;
 - 54% of boys and 60% of girls in Years 8 and 10 did not consume the recommended daily serves of vegetables;
 - 32% of boys and 39% of girls in Years 8 and 10 did not meet the National guidelines for participation in daily physical activity, during summer school terms.
 - The same was true for 27% of boys and 40% of girls in Years 8 and 10, during winter school terms.
 - 87% boys and 73% of girls in Years 8 and 10 spent greater than 2 hours per day engaged in small screen recreation (SSR), predominantly watching TV, DVDs or videos.