

HEALTH REPORT

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POLL SHOWS THE WAY TOWARDS HEALTHIER FAMILY EATING

New research released today reveals that many Australian parents are unaware of simple nutrition recommendations which can help combat the fight against childhood obesity.

A key finding is that half of Australian adults surveyed mistakenly believe it is acceptable for children to consume two to three fruit juice drinks every day. Additionally, one-in-10 believes that children can drink as much fruit juice as they want.

Perceived as a drink that can be consumed frequently, the Dietitians Association of Australia warns that fruit juice can be a nutrition trap for children.

"Large amounts of juice can reduce a child's appetite for other healthy foods and the extra kilojoules may increase the risk of gaining weight," said Claire Hewat APD, Executive Director of the Dietitians Association of Australia.

"Water and milk are the best drinks for children.

"Many people believe that juice is healthy because it is made from fruit, however it is not a complete substitute for fresh fruit. Encouraging children to eat fresh fruit instead of drinking juice not only teaches them about different textures and tastes but also supplies them with fibre." said Claire Hewat APD.

How much fruit juice children should drink is just one of the misunderstandings held by Australians about healthy eating habits, according to the research.

The research, published in the latest issue of the Pfizer Australia Health Report, was conducted by Stollznow Research for the Dietitians Association of Australia and researched-based medicines company, Pfizer Australia.

An interesting finding from the survey was that two-in-five children want to be more involved in meal preparation at home.

"Involving children in shopping, teaching them to prepare easy healthy meals and eating together as a family are all great ways to teach children good eating habits.



"Healthy eating habits really need to involve the whole family. While most people in a family situation eat dinner together, the survey found that 50 percent of family dinners are eaten while watching television," said Claire Hewat APD.

The survey also revealed a significant link in eating habits between adults and children. For example, the same percentage of Australian children and adults are skipping breakfast.

Most adults surveyed understand their eating habits influence those of children and feel reasonably knowledgeable about the right mix of foods for their family.

"Setting a good example for children through healthy eating practices is essential, especially in the fight against children being overweight or even obese.

"We need to work together to encourage our kids to eat healthier. The incidence of childhood obesity in Australia has tripled in the decade from 1985-1995. The average 10-15 year old in 1995 ate over 10 percent more kilojoules than the same aged child did in 1985," says Claire Hewat APD.

"As food providers and role models, adults need to keep in mind the important role they play in preventing childhood obesity," said Claire Hewat APD.

Key tips from the Dietitians Association of Australia are:

- Set a good example for children through healthy eating
- Limit fruit juice and replace with fresh fruit, water or milk
- Make time for breakfast
- Encourage children to help with food preparation
- Turn off the TV – sit down at the table and enjoy dinner as a family

To assist with educating the public about childhood nutrition, the Dietitians Association of Australia has collaborated with Pfizer Australia to produce this month's edition of the Pfizer Australia Health Report. Filled with useful information, free copies can be requested by phoning **1800 675 229** or by visiting www.healthreport.com.au where people can also sign-up for email alerts of future editions.

For more information on food and nutrition visit the Dietitians Association of Australia website www.daa.asn.au.

The findings on Australian perceptions of diet and meal choices are based on responses from 941 adults in households with children under 18 years of age and 239 children aged between 10 and 18 years. The research was conducted in August 2004 by independent consultants Stollznow Research.

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NB: INTERVIEWS WITH EXPERTS ARE AVAILABLE IN EACH STATE.

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