**Healthy Canteen Kit**

Recently launched by the Department of Education, the ‘Go for your life’ Healthy Canteen Kit includes policies for schools on the types of foods suitable for supply in the canteen and other school food services.

**Everyday foods & drinks**
These should be promoted as the main choice and include breads, vegetables, fruits, reduced or low fat dairy foods, lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs and legumes, and water.

**Select Carefully foods & drinks**
These should not dominate the menu, and should be offered as small servings and only on certain days of the week or for a limited serving time. They include full fat dairy products, processed meats, snack food bars, cakes, muffins, sweet biscuits and slices.

**Occasionally products**
These products should only be made available to students twice a term. They have no or little nutritional value and can be high in saturated fat, added sugar and added salt. They include deep fried foods, savoury snack foods, full fat ice creams, ice confections and icy poles.


**Filling the Gaps Regional Forums**

These forums will provide Kids – ‘Go for your life’ updates, expert nutrition and physical activity/active play presentations along with regional specific presentations addressing local barriers to improving child nutrition and physical activity/active play opportunities for 0–12 year olds within a range of settings.

- **Loddon Mallee – Swan Hill**
  Murray Downs Resort 6 March
- **Melbourne**
  Royal Children’s Hospital, Melbourne (DIETitians only) 20 April
  (Maternal & Child Health nurses) 23 April

All forums are half day events, times to be advised. For further information or to reserve your place at a regional forum, please email mary.nitts@mod.edu.au or call Mary on (03) 9345 4883.

**Welcome to the first edition of kidsnews**

Welcome to the first edition of kidsnews – a quarterly newsletter from Kids – ‘Go for your life’ that will provide updates on the Kids – ‘Go for your life’ initiative and information on our healthy eating and physical activity messages.

- **Kids – ‘Go for your life’** is a statewide initiative funded by the State Government and managed by Diabetes Australia – Vic and The Cancer Council Victoria. Kids – ‘Go for your life’ is leading the way to create healthier Victorian children who enjoy healthy eating and physical activity every day.

During the development of the initiative, we have learnt what works well from programs including Be Active Eat Well in Calac, Run & Champ in Geelong, Fun + Healthy in Moreland, and SunSmart at The Cancer Council Victoria. Learning from the success of these programs and consulting with a wide range of schools, early childhood services, organisations and individuals has helped us develop a statewide strategy promoting healthy eating and physical activity for children.

Since its inception, Kids – ‘Go for your life’ has made a huge impact on communities across Victoria. In fact, no other program in Australia matches our approach to improving eating habits and physical activity levels of children.

**Kids – ‘Go for your life’** aims to prevent and reduce childhood overweight and obesity by supporting children’s settings such as child care centres, kindergartens, family day care and primary schools, as well as local communities, health professionals and families in the promotion of healthy eating and physical activity to children every day. The idea is for children to establish healthy habits at an early age so the principles of good health are taken from childhood, through their teenage years and into adulthood.

Promoting healthy eating and physical activity will benefit children in a number of ways. There is little doubt children who eat a nutritious diet and spend time being active will experience better concentration and learning, improved confidence, a sense of belonging to a group, and have more energy to play. Physical benefits also include healthy teeth and bones, a healthy weight, improved muscle development, increased fitness, and improved posture, coordination and flexibility.

Creating healthy habits for children begins at home, in child care, kindergarten and at primary school. It is essential we continue to work together to achieve our goal – a healthy future for our children.

**Dr Suzy Honisett**
Manager, Kids – ‘Go for your life’
Across all areas of Kids – ‘Go for your life’ we will be promoting the following key healthy eating and physical activity messages:

Healthy habits with the Kids – ‘Go for your life’ award program

One of the major areas where we will be promoting these key healthy messages is in the Kids – ‘Go for your life’ award program. Similar to the Cancer Council’s SunSmart program, our award program recognises and awards early childhood services and primary schools for implementing strategies that support healthy eating and active play.

As part of the statewide program, schools and services will be provided ideas, tools and resources to help create a healthier environment for children.

To receive the Kids – ‘Go for your life’ award, early childhood services and schools need to:

1. Sign up as a Kids – ‘Go for your life’ Member by completing an application form found at www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au/kids
2. When we receive completed membership forms, we will send out a Starter Pack, which includes information, tips and ideas about how to meet healthy eating and physical activity criteria
3. When early childhood services and schools have met all of the criteria they can apply to be an award service or school and receive a Kids – ‘Go for your life’ sign for their front gate.

Meeting the award criteria

Kids – ‘Go for your life’ works with a number of partnering programs, which help services and schools to meet the award criteria:

Start Right Eat Right

Start Right Eat Right is an award scheme of the Lady Govie Child Centre recognising best practice in nutrition and food service in long day care centres. The award provides opportunities for child care centres to enhance ongoing staff training, develop and evaluate menus and nutrition policies and improve communication with families.

Smiles 4 Miles

Dental Health Services Victoria devised Smiles 4 Miles to improve the oral health of young children in our community. The primary focus is on promoting good health, through simple messages: Eat Well, Drink Well, Clean Well.

‘Go for your life’

Institute Carriean Advisory Service Nutrition Australia’s ‘Go for your life’ Healthy Carriean Advisory Service provides information and practical ideas on providing and promoting healthy food options at school canteens for Victorian primary schools.

Fruit + Veg program

The Victorian Home Economics and Textiles Teachers’ Association (VHETTA) Fruit + Veg program was developed to increase the consumption of fruit and vegetables by primary school children by providing teacher training and curriculum resources related to fruits and vegetables.

Filling the Gaps

The Royal Children’s Hospital and Murdoch Childrens Research Institute are also supporting the work of Kids – ‘Go for your life’ by developing a range of healthy eating and physical activity tip sheets for families with children aged 0-12. Two additional tip sheets are currently being developed, focusing on ‘sometimes’ foods and active play for children aged 0-5 years. Filling the Gaps will also be providing professional development relating to healthy eating and physical activity ‘best practice’ for professionals.

For more information on how to meet the award criteria visit: www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au/kids

The story so far...

Kids – ‘Go for your life’ has reached some major milestones in its first year of operation. In January 2006, The Kids – ‘Go for your life’ team came on board and a strategic plan was developed with key partners including the Heart Foundation, VicHealth, Kinect, Deakin University and the Departments of Human Services and Education & Training.

★ A broad range of organisations and individuals were consulted and working groups established within the areas of primary schools, early childhood and local government, to help guide the work of Kids – ‘Go for your life’.
★ Partnerships were developed with 12 local governments, who provided funding to employ Local Government Coordinators to drive local action for Kids – ‘Go for your life’. This fantastic team of coordinators (pictured below) is now working to implement Kids – ‘Go for your life’ across the following local government areas: City of Casey, Campaspe Shire Council, Greater Shepparton City Council, LaTrobe City Council, Wellington Shire Council, Central Goldfields Shire Council, Greater Geelong City Council, Whittlesea City Council, Hobson’s Bay City Council, Frankston City Council, Moira Shire and Strathbogie Shire.
★ Based on research undertaken within primary schools and early childhood services, to determine current needs in the area of children’s health and barriers to action, the Awards program was developed.
★ In June, Kids – ‘Go for your life’ launched its Awards program at an event attracting media and over 40 health organisations. The launch was held at Debney Meadows Primary School in Flemington, the first school to be recognised as a Kids – ‘Go for your life’ Award School for successfully achieving the program’s criteria.

Casey City Council was the first local government area to implement the Awards program and an overwhelming 11,000 children are involved from early childhood services and primary schools across the municipality.

★ A Kids – ‘Go for your life’ forum was held in early December in Melbourne with over 130 health professionals from across the state. This forum was the first of nine to be run across all regions of Victoria.
★ With the scene well and truly set, the Award program will now roll out across Victoria and work will continue with families, health professionals and communities to support the health of children.

Is the onus on parents to ensure children are leading a healthy, active life?

Ultimately the onus is on parents, but it is the responsibility of the community at large – governments, schools, anyone with a responsibility for children – to reinforce teaching about healthy lives at home. So rather than work against what parents are trying to do, they need to create an environment that makes it easier for them. The way junk food is promoted today is an example of how things are made difficult for parents.

Why is it so important for children to develop healthy habits at an early age?

Healthy eating and activity is as important to children as learning to read and write. If children don’t develop an understanding of why it’s important to be healthy, it is not only detrimental to their health, but down the track it also affects other things like productivity, self-worth and confidence.

Sometimes it’s easier just to give in to children. Is it right to say ‘No’ sometimes?

Children need guidance and structure. They need to know what’s right and wrong when it comes to their health. Saying no is sometimes justified. Kids need to learn from an early age they can’t have everything otherwise their expectations about life become distorted. Over-protecting kids from the realities of life may set them up for failure later on.

Will programs like Kids – ‘Go for your life’ make a difference to children’s health?

Our culture has changed dramatically over the last 20 years. We need to re-set cultural norms about nutrition and activity. People drive everywhere now instead of walking and we spend too much inactive time in front of computer screens in free time instead of getting active outdoors. Things have become unbalanced and today’s kids think it’s normal. Programs like Kids – ‘Go for your life’ help remind us of what is real and put things back into perspective.

Q: Is the onus on parents to ensure children are leading a healthy, active life?

Q: Why is it so important for children to develop healthy habits at an early age?

Q: Sometimes it’s easier just to give in to children. Is it right to say ‘No’ sometimes?

Q: Will programs like Kids – ‘Go for your life’ make a difference to children’s health?