Kids – ‘Go for your life’
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Message from the manager

A recent Kids – ‘Go for your life’ survey of over 3000 parents found close to half (46%) of school-aged children were eating ‘sometimes’ foods, such as confectionery, biscuits, cake and ice cream daily. It also found over half (54%) of children involved in the survey were drinking sweet drinks, such as soft drink, fruit juices, cordial and sports drinks daily.

‘Sometimes’ foods are high in sugar, salt and fats, but low in nutrients and can displace healthier food options. Similarly, sweet drinks are a major source of refined sugar in children’s diets and can lead to excess weight gain, small appetite, tooth decay and fussy eating.

The current Kids – ‘Go for your life’ campaign, Limit ‘Sometimes’ Foods, supports limiting children’s consumption of ‘sometimes’ foods and drinks and promotes everyday options, including vegetables and legumes, fruits, cereals, milk and milk products, lean meat and water, which provide nutrients needed for growth and development.

Not only is this campaign important for the health and wellbeing of children, but also important when considering the environmental impacts of food choices. Plant based foods and unprocessed, unpackaged foods cause the least greenhouse gas emissions.

Choosing everyday foods with little packaging not only helps to promote our own health and wellbeing, but also promotes the health and wellbeing of the environment. Two great reasons to limit ‘sometimes’ foods and drinks.

Dr Suzy Honisett
Kids – ‘Go for your life’ Manager

Hobsons Bay shines

Lyn, a care provider with Hobsons Bay family day care, wanted a creative way to introduce the concepts behind their Kids – ‘Go for your life’ Award and, in particular, the ‘sometimes’ food message to the children in her care.

Lyn started encouraging the children to place ‘sometimes’ foods brought to her house in their lunchboxes to be placed in a large basket. By the third day the children saw the activity as a game and became really proactive taking these items out of their lunchboxes themselves and putting them into the basket. Lyn also discussed the ‘sometimes’ foods placed in the basket and why eating healthy food was important.

Lyn offered the children other foods to replace those that were going into the ‘sometimes’ basket. She provided healthier foods, such as fruits, vegetables and home made cooked snacks to the children.

At the end of the week Lyn presented the ‘sometimes’ basket to the parents and asked them what they thought of the contents. It was full of all types of snack items that the children had learnt were ‘sometimes’ foods, such as chips, sweet biscuits, lollies, snack bars, muesli bars, and chocolates, as well as cordials, lemonades and fruit drinks. The parents were amazed at the number of items that were collected over one week.

Since this activity, Lyn has seen a change in the behaviour of the parents and the children. If the children bring ‘sometimes’ food into care they are aware these are snacks and should be eaten only on the odd occasion. The families are more aware of what foods are suitable for sending along to care and the children have learnt healthy food choices and see it as an ongoing fun activity.
How can families entice children to make healthier choices? Below are some points to help promote healthy options and drinks and limit ‘sometimes’ foods at home.

**Role model**

Children’s tastes and food habits are influenced by parents and caregivers. Research has shown that food preferences begin in the womb when flavours are transmitted through the amniotic fluid. It is important therefore to set a healthy example for children by ensuring that children see parents and caregivers enjoying a variety of fruits and vegetables regularly.

**Eat a healthy breakfast**

Breakfast is not only filling, but improves concentration, memory and provides essential energy to last children throughout the day. Children who consume a healthy breakfast are less likely to look to ‘sometimes’ foods to fill the void.

**Eat together**

Mealtime is an important opportunity for children to see the whole family eating healthy meals. Sitting down with children to eat together around a table, without distractions provides a valuable time to share. This time can be used to talk about what the family is eating and how it was made. It is important not to offer meal options to children as trying to meet everyone’s taste preferences creates unnecessary work and prevents children experiencing new foods. Let children decide when they’re full and to recognise their body’s natural satiety messages.

**Involve your child in the shopping and food preparation**

Grocery shopping and food preparation are essential skills, which will serve children throughout their life. Cooking teaches children to identify flavours, recognise ingredients and become familiar with the textures of foods.

When children have been involved in making a meal, they are more inclined to taste and experiment with new foods.

**Use positive language**

Taste is a cognitive process, so if we believe a food is going to be delicious we’re more likely to enjoy eating it. People can be pre-programmed to think a dish tastes good so ensure that language around healthy food is positive and avoid discussing personal food likes and dislikes around children.

**Colours and textures**

Make meals look enticing by filling the plate with loads of colourful, crunchy vegetables.

*Written by Jane Hill, Home Economics Victoria*

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**Cranbourne South’s luscious lunchbox**

Cranbourne South Primary School introduced a ‘Luscious Lunchbox’ award system in their school to promote healthy lunchbox options to students and parents and help them become a Kids – ‘Go for your life’ Award School.

A large lunchbox display was set up in the school entrance to promote healthy lunchbox contents and showcase the weekly winner of the ‘Luscious Lunchbox’ award.

The student that brings in the most luscious lunchbox, filled with healthy options such as fruits, salads, wholegrain breads, boiled eggs and yoghurt, is provided with a certificate of achievement and is photographed with their lunchbox. This photograph is displayed in the school entrance ‘Luscious Lunchbox’ display, giving other children and parents ideas about healthy options to include in their lunchbox.

Teachers also reinforce these messages across the school promoting the class ‘Luscious Lunchbox’.

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**Limit ‘sometimes’ food and drink at home**

Cranbourne South’s luscious lunchbox

Cranbourne South Primary School introduced a ‘Luscious Lunchbox’ award system in their school to promote healthy lunchbox options to students and parents and help them become a Kids – ‘Go for your life’ Award School.
Tinternvale Primary School in East Ringwood, was recently successful in increasing the number of students walking to school by 109% as part of their inaugural ‘Walk To School Day’.

A spot survey conducted the day before ‘Walk To School Day’ showed that only 44% of students walked to school that morning. However on ‘Walk To School Day’, 92% of students walked to school.

Tinternvale helped to increase the number of children walking by:

• Stationing teachers and volunteers at strategic positions around the roads leading to the school, which enabled busy parents to drop their children off on their way to work in the care of a responsible adult to walk the rest of the distance to school.

• Promoting the ‘Walk To School Day’ event with articles in the school newsletter about the benefit of walking and placing promotional posters around the school.

• Holding morning activities for the walkers, including a healthy breakfast organised by staff, parents and volunteers.

• Awarding pedometers to the class level with the greatest increase in walkers, and awarding a perpetual golden shoe trophy.

Level 4 received the golden shoe trophy, which will be awarded on a yearly basis to the year level that records the greatest increase in walkers on annual ‘Walk To School Days’.

VicHealth reported that in 2008, 322 schools and 60,004 students participated in the ‘Walk to School Day’. Tinternvale Primary School was listed as one of the top 10 performing schools in the state.

Discussions are currently being held within the school community about how to encourage more students to walk to school on a regular basis. ‘Walk To School Days’ will be held each term to keep the momentum about walking to school at a high level in the school community.

‘Walk To School Day’ is helping Tinternvale Primary School work towards becoming Kids – ‘Go for your life’ Award School and was funded with a grant from Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Eastern Metropolitan Region.

David Hodgett, local MP, was on hand to award pedometers to the students from Level 4 who registered the greatest increase in the number of students walking to school. Kirrily George, the Acting Assistant Principal, also commended the students on their excellent participation and reinforced that walking to school also had the added benefit of reducing car traffic around the school and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
In 2009, The Parents Jury is lobbying the hospitality industry for healthier children’s food and drink options at restaurants, entertainment and sport venues as part of the ‘Healthy Menus, Healthy Venues’ campaign.

A members’ opinion poll revealed that 60% of parents were dissatisfied with the food available to children when eating out of the home. Nearly half of the respondents said they avoid venues that don’t offer healthier options.

Parents Jury member and mother of two Jacqi Deighan says that as nearly one in four Australian children are either overweight or obese, restaurants and venues must take a more socially responsible approach to their menu planning.

“We need to move beyond the current culture that assumes that children won’t eat anything other than chips, nuggets, ice creams and soft drink,” Jacqi said.

The poll also revealed that when choosing a restaurant, parents prioritise healthy age-appropriate children’s options over the presence of playground facilities or speedy service.

“There’s no reason why a child shouldn’t have a meal that’s as tasty and nutritious as the regular menu items,” Jacqi said.

In response to parents’ concerns, The Parents Jury will lobby the hospitality industry to provide basic nutrition training to student chefs and to establish industry-wide guidelines for healthy children’s food and drink.

They will also be urging state governments to apply their existing school nutrition guidelines to entertainment and sport venues, which will limit the availability of high fat, sugar and salt products at these locations.

“The hospitality and catering industries should seize the opportunity to play a major role in promoting food as part of a healthy lifestyle to children,” said The Parents Jury spokesperson Craig Sinclair.

The Parents Jury is an online network of over 3,800 Australian parents who wish to voice their views and to collectively advocate for the improvement of children’s food and physical activity environments.

The Parents Jury is supported by Cancer Council Australia; Diabetes Australia Vic, QLD & WA; the Australian and New Zealand Obesity Society (ANZOS); and VicHealth.
La Kosta child care centre ran a children's bike education program late in 2008 to promote the Kids – ‘Go for your life’ healthy messages: ‘Move, Play and Go’ and ‘Stride and Ride’.

The program provided an opportunity to encourage physical activity as well as a sense of road safety for children attending the child care centre. Parents, the local school-crossing supervisor and community members all supported the program.

The centre’s car park was converted into simulated roads, roundabouts, a children’s school crossing, railway lights, traffic lights, street signs, and footpaths. The Active Traffic Management Company provided the equipment and signs and children brought their bikes and helmets from home.

The local school-crossing supervisor ran sessions for the children, including an indoor session where children and parents participated in discussion on road safety. The children then practiced these learnings in the simulated outdoor road environment. Children also learnt about pedestrian safety by acting as pedestrians at the zebra crossings and light crossings.

Since this program was introduced, some children have started riding their bikes to the centre on a daily basis and have become more aware of road safety. La Kosta child care has been awarded as a Kids - ‘Go for your life’ Service.
Tips to limit ‘sometimes’ food and drinks

Primary schools and early childhood settings are important places to teach children about the best food and drink choices. Healthy eating is important for improved concentration, learning and overall healthier children. Children learn quickly and are influenced by friends and popular trends. Therefore, this is the perfect time for children to learn about the importance of healthy eating.

Replace ‘sometimes’ food and drinks with healthier alternatives.

It can be confusing to know what foods are ‘sometimes’ choices and what foods are suitable to have every day. ‘Sometimes’ foods and drinks are those which are energy dense and nutrient poor, and are not contained in the five foods groups of the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.

Children should be encouraged to replace ‘sometimes’ foods with healthier alternatives as listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>‘Sometimes’ choices</th>
<th>Everyday options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School lunches</td>
<td>Pies, sausage rolls, hot dogs</td>
<td>Sandwich, roll or wrap with fillings such as cheese, tuna, egg, vegemite, cold lean meats, grated carrot, avocado and lettuce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>Potato chips, corn chips</td>
<td>Fresh or tinned vegetables such as carrot, cucumber, canned corn, beetroot, capsicum, mushrooms, baked beans and cherry tomatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>Dried fruit bars, strips and dried fruit</td>
<td>Fresh fruit or tinned fruit in natural juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy food</td>
<td>Dairy desserts, ice cream</td>
<td>Reduced fat cheese, yoghurt and milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biscuits and cakes</td>
<td>Sweet and ‘oven baked’ biscuits, sweet cereal bars, cakes and donuts</td>
<td>High fibre dry biscuits, fruit or vegetable muffins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinks</td>
<td>Fruit juice, cordial, sports and energy drinks, flavoured milk, flavoured mineral water, soft drink</td>
<td>Water and reduced-fat milk are the best drinks for children. (Full fat milk should be given to children up to two years of age, then reduced-fat milk can be introduced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack foods</td>
<td>Lollies, chocolate</td>
<td>Fresh fruit and cut-up vegetables are the best snack foods for children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How much ‘sometimes’ food and drink is too much?

Parents should be encouraged to limit children’s access of ‘sometimes’ food and drinks to small serves, no more than one or two times per week. Parents decide which healthy foods to offer and children decide if and how much they will eat. Be patient when offering healthy meals and snacks and keep trying!

By introducing a variety of healthy foods from a young age, children will learn to eat familiar foods and healthy habits are likely to remain later in life. Finding new and inventive ways to reward children instead of using ‘sometimes’ food is important also.

Did you know that 50–80% of food advertised during children’s television programs are non-nutritious or ‘sometimes’ foods?

Be aware of ‘sometimes’ food marketing aimed at children. Most of the foods promoted are high in fat, salt, sugar and of little nutritive value. It is a good idea to talk to children about why food advertisements are made, discuss healthier options and even encourage active alternatives to watching television.

Written by Filling The Gaps, Royal Children’s Hospital and Murdoch Children’s Research Institute.
School confectionery – Out!

From the start of 2009, confectionery should not be available for sale in Victorian government primary and secondary school food services.

This is the next phase of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s ‘Go for your life’ School Canteen and Other School Food Services Policy that has been implemented in schools since 2007. This policy applies to food services provided by Victorian government schools, and applied to on-site canteens, external lunch order services, vending machines, and school events such as excursion, celebrations and sports days. The policy encourages a whole of school approach and should be reflected across all areas of the school that involve food, such as fundraising.

To download a copy of the confectionery policy, including a definition and comprehensive checklist of what is considered to be confectionery and tips to successfully provide healthier alternatives for students, visit www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schooloperations/healthycanteen/confectionery.htm

Frequently asked questions

Can I still sell ice creams in the canteen?

Yes. There are many dairy-based ice creams that are reduced fat and suitable for sale as an amber snack in the canteen. The great thing about reduced fat ice creams is that they also contain positive nutrients too – they are a good source of calcium for growing bones. They are also a very popular canteen treat with kids in hot weather and something that cannot be provided in the lunchbox.

There are many suitable brands of commercial dairy-based ice creams available that are suitable for sale in the canteen. Check out the canteens buyers’ guides below for suitable brands:

VSCT School Canteen Online Buying Guide
www.vsca.org.au/Activities/BG.htm

FOCiS Registered Products List
www.focis.com.au - Click on ‘Registered Products & Services’

Healthy Kids School Canteen Buyers’ Guide
http://buyersguide.healthy-kids.com.au
Click on ‘Buyers Guide Online’

Note: In Victoria, icy poles and crushes must be based on pure fruit juice (95–100%) to be suitable as amber products. There are some icy poles listed in buyers’ guides that are not made from pure juice, so always double check.

Remember, if in doubt, always use the ‘Go for your life’ Nutrient Criteria for Occasionally Food (found on page 13 of the ‘Go for your life’ Food Planner or on the Food Planner Poster in the ‘Go for your life’ Canteens Kit) to assess whether a frozen dairy-based dessert is suitable for the canteen. Or, give the canteens line a call to check: 1300 73 98 99.

What about fundraising – does the Confectionery Policy Apply?

While fundraising activities are not specifically identified as a food service within the school environment, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development encourages schools not to undertake fundraising activities that involve confectionery. See the School Confectionery Guidelines component of the ‘Go for your life’ Healthy Canteen Kit at www.education.vic.gov.au/goforyourlife for advice regarding what is considered to be confectionery.

Fundraising activities that promote a whole-school approach to healthy eating are encouraged. The school’s food service, curriculum programs and other school activities involving food should complement each other to create a culture in which nutritious foods and a healthy lifestyle are actively chosen. This culture should involve the entire school environment.

Many schools have been conducting profitable fundraising with healthy fundraising activities such as toothbrush drives, with the added bonus of promoting healthy messages at the same time. For ideas for healthy fundraising activities, refer to page 40 of the ‘Go for your life’ Healthy Canteen Kit – Getting Started: www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schooloperations/healthycanteen/gettingstarted.htm

There is further information about healthy fundraising alternates on The Parents Jury website at: www.parentsjury.org.au/tpj_browse.asp?ContainerID=tpj_fundraising

The ‘Go for your life’ Canteens Advisory Service, managed by Nutrition Australia, provides information sessions, phoneline advice and menu assessments to Victorian primary schools to support them in implementing this new confectionery policy. For more information, phone 1300 73 98 99 or visit www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au
**Services:**
Albion Park College Childcare Centre  
Altona Meadows Child Care Centre  
Ballam Park Preschool  
Campaspe Family Day Care  
Clifton Springs Preschool  
Croydon North Kindergarten  
Echuca Road Kindergarten  
Gordon Street Preschool  
Greenwood Park Kindergarten  
Grovedale Kindergarten  
Highpoint Kinder Haven  
Hobsons Bay Family Day Care  
James Cook Kindergarten  
La Kosta Childcare Centre  
Lady Gowrie Child Centre  
Lake View Children’s Centre  
Leopold Kindergarten  
Lyndhurst Children’s Centre  
Mountain View Children’s Centre  
Nadia Child Minding Centre & Kindergarten  
Normanby Street Preschool  
St Albans Park Kindergarten  
Sunkids – Rosebud  
Tunstall Square Kindergarten  
Verdun Drive CCC  
Woodlands Preschool  
Yarra Valley Preschool

**Schools:**
Altona North Primary School  
Bell Park North Primary School  
Boisdale Consolidated School  
Chiltern Primary School  
Clifton Springs Primary School  
Cobram Special Development Primary School  
Colac Primary School  
Drouin Primary School  
Drysdale Primary School  
Eastwood Primary School  
Epping Primary School  
Fairfield Primary School  
Fitzroy Primary School  
Geelong East Primary School  
Gembrook Primary School  
Gladstone Views Primary School  
Gowrie Street Primary School (Shepparton)  
Greenhills Primary School  
Haslem Street Primary School – Kyabram  
Holy Trinity Primary School (1893)  
Invergordon Primary School  
Moreland Primary School  
Morwell Park Primary School  
Mountain Gate Primary School  
Mt Evelyn Special Developmental School  
Newport Gardens Primary School  
Nyah District Primary School  
Rosedale Primary School  
Sale Primary School  
St Bernard’s Primary School  
St Joseph’s School (1309)  
St Mary’s Primary School – Altona  
St Patrick’s Parish Primary School (599)  
Warrnambool Primary School  
Watsonia North Primary School  
Winters Flat Primary School

**Save the date**

*The next Kids – Go for your life’ Health Professionals’ Forum will be themed Limit ‘Sometimes’ Foods.*

Forum details are:
Date: Wednesday 22 April 2009  
Time: 9.30am – 3.30pm  
Venue: Treacy Conference Centre,  
Parkville  
Cost: Free

The forum will provide an exciting opportunity to hear of news from the field for all those health professionals working to improve healthy eating for children.

The Royal Children’s Hospital will run a workshop on communicating sensitive issues, such as healthy weight and diet, to children and families.

The forum will also feature an interactive panel with speakers from:
- The Royal Children’s Hospital, who are currently developing nutrition and physical activity guidelines for early childhood services
- Nutrition Australia’s Canteens Advisory Service
- the Obesity Policy Coalition.

Kids – ‘Go for your life’ will also provide an update of their activities.

The forum is open to all members of the Kids – ‘Go for your life’ Health Professionals’ Network. Those who are not members can find out more about the Network and sign up for free by visiting:  

**Fruit + Veg week 2009**

A reminder that Fruit + Veg Week 2009 is running from 11 to 15 May. All Victorian primary schools are invited to take part in celebrations.

For further details about how your school can be involved in Fruit + Veg Week contact Jane Hill, Fruit + Veg Coordinator on (03) 9888 2240 or fruitveg@hev.com.au

**Got any ideas?**

*We’d love to hear your feedback!* Please send any comments, questions or story ideas to media@kidsgoforyourlife.org.au