



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.



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GPs respond to junk food advertising concerns

General Practitioners are promoting health eating guidelines for local children in response to alarming results from a national audit of junk food advertising showing high exposure to junk food advertising by children.

In response to the Australian Division of General Practice (ADGP) audit which reveals that Australian children are exposed to an average of 68 junk food advertisements a week, the ADGP and the National Divisions Youth Alliance has endorsed Nutrition Australia's Dietary Guidelines for children and adolescents for promotion to parents throughout Queensland.

"By simply watching their normal amount of TV, children and young people in Queensland and around Australia areas were exposed to an average of three hours and 22 minutes of junk food advertising on television during the past Summer holidays, according to the audit," said ADGP Chair Dr Rob Walters today.

"This is the equivalent of watching one and a half full-length movies of junk food ads over the holiday period," he said.

Dr Walters says this audit shows that more than 99 per cent of food advertisements on television are for foods with little nutritional value – which means that children are receiving an overwhelmingly distorted message about diet from TV.

"GPs report seeing more children than ever before with Type 2 Diabetes – a disease associated with a poor diet and lack of exercise. The increase in Type 2 Diabetes has serious health, social and economic consequences for Australia's future," he said.

"Obesity is a risk factor for the two biggest killers of Australians today - heart disease and stroke - and disease processes for these conditions are starting to develop in our children in their formative years.

"Queensland GPs and the local Divisions of General Practice are concerned that the high level of junk food advertising in the media is undermining the efforts of parents, teachers, doctors and health authorities to teach children healthy eating habits."

ADGP recorded and analysed 50 hours of child-targeted television on commercial television stations during the January holiday period. The main findings of ADGP's Junk Food Advertising Audit were:

- Over 99 per cent of food advertisements broadcast during children's TV programming are for junk food (food high in fat, sugar and/or salt with little nutritional value).
- There is an average of one junk food advertisement per ad break during children's television programs.
- The main categories of foods advertised are: fast food (hamburgers, pizza and fried chicken); soft drink; chocolate confectionery; and ice cream.
- Children watching an average of two and half hours of television per day during the holiday period would have been exposed to 406 advertising messages encouraging them to eat junk food.

ADGP has sent the audit results to every federal Member of Parliament across Australia to stimulate debate on this important topic.

The National Divisions Youth Alliance, in conjunction with the Coalition of Food Advertising to Children will conduct two national on-line forums for GPs and parents on the issue in March.

Parents are encouraged to visit their local GP if they have concerns about their child's weight and level of physical activity.

The ADGP is the peak body representing GPs throughout the Australian community. 94 per cent of GPs are members of their local Division of General Practice.

The National Divisions Youth Alliance, managed under the auspice of the ADGP, aims to support GPs and Divisions to improve health outcomes for children and young people.

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The Junk Food Advertising Audit is available on the ADGP website at www.adgp.com.au

Information on the national on-line forum can be found on the NDYA website at <http://ndya.adgp.com.au>

Nutrition Australia's Dietary Guidelines for children and adolescents can be found on the Nutrition Australia website at www.nutritionaustralia.org