



Australian Divisions of **General Practice**

NEWS RELEASE



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On-Line Forum on Childhood and Adolescent Obesity

Dr Rob Walters, Chair of the Australian Divisions of General Practice, announced that an On-Line Forum on Childhood and Adolescent Obesity will be held today from 12pm and 2pm EST.

The On-Line Forum will be hosted by the National Divisions Youth Alliance and will feature leading nutritionist, Dr Rosemary Stanton, as keynote speaker. Other participants in the Forum include Divisions of General Practice, the Coalition on Food Advertising to Children, the Australian Physiotherapy Association, Nutrition Australia, Young Media Australia and the Australian Parents Council.

“The rate of obesity among Australian children has doubled in the past ten years. Children as young as five years old are already showing the early signs of blood vessel damage that can cause heart disease later in life. We need to act now to stop this disturbing trend among our children,” Dr Walters said.

“GPs play a crucial role in the identification and ongoing management of obesity. This Forum will bring general practice together with other key partners in reducing the rates of obesity among Australian children, such as parents, dieticians and physiotherapists.

“To beat this growing health problem we need to look at all aspects of the obesity equation – diet, education and exercise. This Forum will provide an exciting opportunity for GPs, Divisions and others working to reduce childhood obesity to come together to discuss how this can be achieved,” Dr Walters said.

Dr Rosemary Stanton, Keynote Speaker at the Obesity Forum, warned that putting children on restricted or low energy diets to lose weight could cause more harm than good.

“Weight loss diets are not suitable for children. A sensible approach to nutrition and physical exercise is the only way to achieve sustained weight loss and increase children’s health and well-being over the long term,” Dr Stanton said.

“When treating obesity among young children it is vital that the parents are also involved. Parents act as important role models for their children and need to be actively involved in improving their children’s diet and lifestyle. GPs are often the first port of call for parents concerned about their children’s weight and play an important part in linking families with other community services and supports.

“As children move into adolescence, GPs need to be aware of, and respond to, the specific physical and mental health needs of young people in relation to body image, dietary preferences and their increasingly independent lifestyles.

“I welcome the involvement of GPs, parents, dieticians, physiotherapists, researchers and others in this Forum and am delighted to be working with the National Divisions Youth Alliance on this important health issue,” Dr Stanton said.

To register for the Forum email ndya@adgp.com.au

For comment:

Dr Rob Walters, ADGP Chair, 0418 127 123

Dr Rosemary Stanton, 02 4465 1711

For further information:

Jennifer Doggett, Communications Manager 02 6228 0822 or 0403 325 980