

AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



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Kids' weight, poor nutrition, add to chronic disease burden

New research showing nearly one in four Australian children are overweight or obese highlights the need for the Government to take urgent action to avert a future legacy of escalating rates of chronic disease, according to an alliance of five non-government health organisations.

Commenting on results of the *National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey* (www.health.gov.au/nutritionmonitoring), Chair of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance, Professor Ian Olver, said the impact of childhood overweight and obesity rates on future levels of chronic disease should "ring alarm bells for every parent".

"Overweight children are likely to become overweight adults, putting them at increased risk of developing chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, kidney disease and cancer," Professor Olver said.

The alliance also expressed concern about poor physical activity and nutrition results from the survey, pointing to increased risk of chronic disease. "We are especially alarmed by the low levels of fruit and vegetable consumption among adolescents," Professor Olver said. "Only 1% of Australian 14-16 year-olds eat the required amount of fruit and just 5% eat enough vegetables."

"What we need is a comprehensive strategy led by the Government that includes a suite of interventions from awareness raising campaigns to physical activity programs to restrictions on junk food advertising to children, if we are to have any chance of making a difference.

"At least now we have definitive, objective national data on rates of obesity and overweight among children, as well as comprehensive information on their nutritional intake and physical activity levels, data that has not been collected at a national level since 1995."

Professor Olver said the survey data would be invaluable in guiding the development of intervention programs and, with a commitment to future national surveys, would enable the Government to properly evaluate their effectiveness.

"An ongoing national nutrition and physical activity survey program, which includes objective measurements of biomedical and other nutrition and physical activity indicators and which covers not just children, but adults and population groups at most risk, must become a regular and indispensable part of our national health data collections," he said.

The members of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance are: Cancer Council Australia, Diabetes Australia, Kidney Health Australia, the National Heart Foundation of Australia and the National Stroke Foundation

Media Contact: Franca Marine, 0432 567 413, franca.marine@cancer.org.au
Glen Turner 0412 443 212 glen.turner@cancer.org.au