

NSA Concurrent Oral Session 1: Public Health Nutrition

5+ a day: Are we getting the message across?

PAL Ashfield-Watt, E Stewart and J Scheffer

Institute of Food, Nutrition and Human Health, Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand

Background - Increasing fruit and vegetable intakes is important for promoting health and preventing chronic disease. National 5-a-day campaigns which encourage consumers to eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables daily have been established in 18 countries. The 5+ a day campaign was launched in New Zealand in 1994.

Design - Nationwide market research involving household shoppers was conducted by independent research consultants for the 5+ a day campaign in 1999 (n=200, at six NZ towns/cities) and 2000 (n=520 at 16 NZ towns/cities). The 1999 questionnaire focused on awareness and understanding of the 5+ a day campaign. The 2000 questionnaire focused on attitudes to health and on intakes of convenience foods, fruits and vegetables.

Outcomes - Information on attitudes to healthy eating obtained by Likert scale responses were converted to a Healthy Attitude Index. Positive attitude towards healthy eating was influenced by educational attainment ($P<0.05$) and occupation ($P<0.001$) and was associated with lower consumption of convenience/takeaway foods of the respondents, their <5 year old children and their 5-15 yr old children (all $P<0.001$). The 5+ a day logo was recognised by 87.5% of respondents, while 70.5% of all respondents identified the five servings a day message from the 5+ a day logo regardless of whether they had seen it before. The meaning of the hand in the logo was less clear with only 2.5% identifying the 'serving size' element of the logo. Television, supermarkets, magazines, GP waiting rooms, school and green grocers were the major sources of 5+ a day information.

Conclusions - The 5+ a day logo is widely recognised and understood in terms of the message to eat more fruit and vegetables. The serving size element is less well understood. In New Zealand the 5+ a day message promotes positive attitudes towards healthy eating which are associated with healthier eating habits.

“Everything in my lunchbox is healthy – except for the spoon ... and the chocolate.”

AC Bell¹, PJ Kremer¹, BA Swinburn²

¹*School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences, Waterfront Campus, Deakin University, VIC 3217*

²*School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences, Burwood Campus, Deakin University, VIC 3125*

Background – In an environment where childhood obesity is increasing, improving the 'healthiness' of school lunches is an important strategy for helping to reverse the epidemic.

Objective - To describe foods and beverages consumed at school in terms of number of serves, contribution to energy intake and frequency in lunchboxes.

Design – Baseline (cross-sectional) data on school food consumption were collected as part of the Sentinel Site for Obesity Prevention in the Barwon South West Region of Victoria. To date, data have been collected from 1001 children aged 4 – 12 years. Food and beverage intake was assessed using a School Food Checklist.

Outcomes – A typical lunch consisted of a meat or cheese filled sandwich (0.9 serves), two biscuits (1.8 serves), a piece of fruit (0.8 serves), a muesli/fruit bar (0.5 serves) and some other snack, and either a fruit drink (0.7 serves) and/or water (0.5 serves). On average school foods provided 3029 kJ and the major sources of this energy were bread (20%), biscuits (14%), fruit drinks (9%), fruit (8%), cakes/buns (8%) and muesli/fruit bars (7%). Biscuits were the most common energy dense snack, present in 59% of lunches. Thirty-nine percent of children had muesli/fruit bars, 36% had packaged snacks (potato, corn chips) and 26% had chocolate/lollies. Fruit drinks were present in 40% of lunches and water in 26%. Most schools offered a canteen service at least 1 day/week and 10% of children reported using the canteen. Fast foods (pies, chips) were the most frequently purchased items.

Conclusions - Not everything in children's lunchboxes was healthy. A reduction in fruit drinks and energy dense snacks such as biscuits, cakes/buns and muesli bars as well as the promotion of healthy sandwiches, fruit and water would improve the 'healthiness' of school lunches.