



RESEARCHER PROFILE

Dr Karen Campbell

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Contact

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Dr Karen Campbell works in the Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research (C-PAN) at Deakin University, Australia’s premier research institution concerned with the population health aspects of nutrition and physical activity.

Childhood diet is associated with both child and adult health outcomes. Poor diet in childhood may lead to higher body weight, higher risks for cardiovascular disease and diet-related cancers. It is also known that child and adult dietary intakes are strongly related; the foods a child learns to prefer in the first few years of life will inform the foods they will eat as an adult. This knowledge underscores the fundamental importance of the early years as a key time to influence health across the life-course.

Despite this knowledge, childhood diet remains poor and as such will add to the burden of disease throughout life. It is important that we consider all opportunities to influence factors likely to affect the ways in which children learn to prefer foods. Such factors include policy governing food pricing, food advertising and labelling, food provided to children in care or at school, and of course the role of the parents or carers – the primary providers of children’s food.

Karen’s research describes the determinants of eating behaviours in children and assesses the opportunities to influence these behaviours. Her research is ultimately concerned with the design and implementation of research that takes an innovative approach to promoting healthy eating in children. Her research is focused on supporting parents – through pregnancy and early childhood – to raise healthy children. Central to her research is the assessment of the ways in which parents’ social networks can facilitate the uptake of knowledge and skills related to both child and adult health.

VicHealth support has enabled Karen to rapidly build the evidence base in this area. “My Fellowship has enabled me to be focused on growing this area of research. As a VicHealth Fellow I have secured both national and international grants to support research in the field. My active program of research enables me to train honours, PhD and post-doctoral students, all of whom are concerned seeking effective ways to promote child health”.

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