

Media Release

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PARENTS NEED SUPPORT TO MAKE THE HEALTHY CHOICE

Health promotion Foundation VicHealth has today welcomed the release of the latest [RCH National Child Health Poll](#) which shows parents are struggling to make the healthy choice for their families.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said she was alarmed to see that over a quarter of parents surveyed thought juice was a healthier option than water and a third thought their kids needed sports drink to recover from physical activity.

“This study clearly shows we are not doing enough to support parents to make the healthy choice for their children,” Ms Rechter said.

“Fruit juice and sports drinks contain a whopping amount of sugar yet if parents think these drinks are ‘healthy’ we certainly need to make food labelling much easier to understand.

“Our current food labelling system isn’t good enough – you shouldn’t have to be a nutritionist to understand if a product is healthy or not.”

Ms Rechter said while the Health Star Rating system is a good start VicHealth wants it to be mandatory and across all products.

“We’d also like to see Health Star Rating show if a product has added sugar and be boosted by a consumer education program – these results show we clearly need it,” she said.

Ms Rechter said families were constantly bombarded by mixed-messaging about food, making it tricky for parents to make healthy choices.

“Sadly the world we live in is rife with junk food sponsorship and advertising, including high-fat foods and sugary drinks like soft drinks, iced teas and sports drinks,” she said.

“This is particularly evident in the sporting world, with junk-food companies latching on to the healthy and positive association with sport to try and sell their products.

“Research has shown a clear link between the marketing of unhealthy products and consumer behaviour, particularly in the case of children.

“It is also often the case that foods that are most prominently displayed and close to the checkout are unhealthy. By simply changing up the layout of our supermarkets and canteens we can make a big difference.

“We are in the middle of an obesity epidemic – two in three Victorian adults, and one in four of our children, are overweight or obese.

“There has been some great work happening to promote healthy food in Victoria, like the introduction of mandatory kilojoule labelling and the removal of sugary drinks from display in many kid-friendly environments like pools and sports venues.

“Yet up against the deep pockets of Big Food we need to do more if we are to make a dent in the rapidly rising rates of obesity and ill-health that comes with it.

“We know parents want to make the right choices for their families – it is critical we take action to help them do so.”

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