



JOEL SELWOOD

(MICHELLE KELCEY)

HEALTHY CATS

THE GEELONG CATS ARE PLAYING THEIR PART TO KEEP THE LOCAL COMMUNITY HEALTHY AND ACTIVE, WRITES **JULIA MILLARD**

Geelong health statistics reveal that a staggering 56 per cent of the region's adults are overweight or obese. Adding to that, just 5 per cent of adults in Geelong eat enough vegetables each day, while only 42 per cent eat enough fruit. Geelong also is the sixth highest area in Victoria for soft drink consumption.

To combat these statistics, Healthy Together Geelong is partnering with Geelong Cats to encourage change in the community. Posters in workplaces, schools and kindergartens, short videos and healthy food options at Cats' home games, plus the *Healthy Cats* recipe book are just a part of the movement.

Cats captain Joel Selwood has taken on the role of Healthy Together Geelong's Health Champion and is empowering young people to make good choices, to eat healthy food and to get active for at least 30 minutes a day, either by kicking the footy or taking a walk.

Colourful posters of Joel are taped to the walls in 79 Geelong kindergartens, 65 schools and 81 workplaces that reach about 62,000 people in Geelong.

"I think that as part of the footy club, we are community leaders and we have huge influence. We often get out to primary and secondary schools where it's likely to have an impact and to help children with their food choices," Joel says.

"I've been a professional footballer for a long time, so for me it became second nature but for other people it's about finding

things that they love. That's how it started for me and being healthy and fit was a part of my everyday living. There's no perfect way to do it, just do what you enjoy.

"It's more about children getting out and enjoying what they do, whether it's walking to school or as simple as while they are at school getting out and getting active in their lunch break. In Geelong we do have a high obesity rate so we are trying to give children better choices, an understanding and encouraging them through Healthy Together Geelong."

Joel says starting healthy habits, such as eating well and staying active, at a young age gives great confidence. Children can then pass on their healthy habits to future generations or even encourage their parents to make lifestyle changes.

The Cats are also encouraging healthy eating and exercise with short videos used on screen at home games. The videos are also on the Cats website and the Healthy Together Geelong website.

Footy fans also have new healthy food options at home games. No longer do they need a hot dog or pie in hand as new options include hot soup, sandwiches and fruit.

"We are very lucky that we have our own stadium to ourselves, so we get to set it up the way that we want to. And it's a community effort, like it is with everything we do at the Geelong footy club, to make sure that we do give back to the community and teaming with Healthy Together Geelong helps us to achieve that," Joel says.



Geelong Cats and Healthy Together Geelong have also teamed up to produce the *Healthy Cats* recipe book featuring 46 recipes collected from Cats players.

Each recipe was assessed using Nutrition Australia's Traffic Light guidelines – a system of green, amber and red ticks according to their nutrition content.

Green is for everyday meals, amber is for sometimes meals, and red should be eaten rarely. The book is mostly filled with green-ticked recipes and the rest have an amber tick. There are no red items.

A class set of the *Healthy Cats* recipe books has been distributed to all schools in the Greater Geelong region. The aim is to encourage families to enjoy cooking fresh and healthy meals at home.

Joel, who's in his ninth year with the Cats, says *Healthy Cats* is a great resource that the footballers are able to hand to school children, club members and participants at football clinics.



» You can find the *Healthy Cats* book and more health tips and facts by visiting: geelongaustralia.com.au/healthygeelong or geelongcats.com.au/healthygeelong



JOEL SELWOOD'S AVOCADO & CORN PASTA

Serves 4

Ingredients

400g fettuccine
 ½ cup mushrooms, sliced
 2 chicken breasts, diced
 1 can creamed corn
 1 large avocado, diced
 1 cup 97 per cent fat-free sundried tomatoes
 1 cup light evaporated milk
 2 spring onions, chopped

Method

- Cook pasta as per instructions on packet.
- In a frying pan, cook chicken until browned.
- Add everything else and cook until heated through.
- Add spring onions at the end.
- Serve on top of pasta, with parmesan.

(SUPPLIED)

“WE DO HAVE A HIGH OBESITY RATE SO WE ARE TRYING TO GIVE CHILDREN BETTER CHOICES”

“We get to send a message that these are little easy meals to put together that are cost effective, and it gives them an idea what AFL footballers eat. Parents can use it as an incentive for kids to use – so for example they could say ‘if you want to be big and strong like Harry Taylor you can eat this,’” Joel says.

Because Joel is the captain his recipe features at the front of the *Healthy Cats* book. He has chosen to share his avocado and corn pasta dish.

“It's a dish that I have a fair bit pre-game. We have a nutritionist here at the club who talks about what we should be putting into our bodies before games and obviously pasta was a big one with carbohydrates in pasta,” he says.

The meal takes only about 10-15 minutes to make and it has a green tick. ●

jmillard@theweeklyreview.com.au



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