



Access to healthy food must be made easier, says Obesity Action Coalition

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The Obesity Action Coalition says healthy food needs to be easier to access if we want to see a significant reduction in obesity rates.

Director Leigh Sturgiss was commenting on figures from the New Zealand Health Survey which show the growth in obesity rates has levelled off for children, and has slowed for adults.

“While these results are positive, we need to see much greater reductions in rates of overweight and obesity if we are to improve health and reduce the potential burden on the health system down the track.

“This report also had information on the big reduction in tobacco use. It’s no coincidence that access to and promotion of tobacco has been increasingly restricted over the past 15 years. We need the same to happen for unhealthy foods.”

The report shows that two out of three (63.6%) children had a fizzy drink in the past 7 days. One in five (19.6%) children had three or more fizzy drinks in the past seven days. Seven out of ten (70.9%) children ate fast food in past seven days. One in seven (13.6%) ate fast food twice in past seven days and one in 14 (7.2%) had eaten fast food three or more times in past seven days.

“Currently, it’s easier and often cheaper to buy high fat, high salt and high sugar foods, than healthy foods like fruit or vegetables. People should have access to healthy foods regardless of their income.”

She says we are overwhelmed by promotions for fast food and sugary drinks, and it is a big ask to expect programmes that promote healthy eating – such as the Feeding our Futures campaign – to redress the balance.

“There is strong evidence that advertising and marketing food has an effect on what children prefer, buy and eat. Television is the main means of marketing to children and this report notes that television viewing is strongly associated with obesity in children.

“But the promotion of unhealthy food is also seen across other areas, such as sponsorship, and packaging and point of sales promotions. Some promotions, such as netball awards sponsored by McDonalds, are shameless targeting of kids. Again, we need to take a leaf out of the tobacco control book and ban advertising and sponsorship of unhealthy foods.”

For further information

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