



Obesity News

Number 194, 23 December 2014

Obesity News has links to recently published news stories relating to obesity prevention from a variety of online sources.

New Zealand

Obesity prevalence in NZ

[Annual update of Key Results 2013/14: New Zealand Health Survey](#)

The 2013/14 results from the New Zealand Health Survey are out. They show adult and child obesity rates are similar to 2012/13. "Adult and child obesity rates are similar to last year: three out of ten adults (30%) are obese. One in ten children is obese. There has been no significant change in the adult and child obesity rates since 2011/12, but more data is required to confirm whether this represents a slowing in the growth of obesity rates. Pacific adults are 2.5 times as likely to be obese as non-Pacific adults, and Pacific children are 3.2 times as likely to be obese as non-Pacific children. Obesity rates are strongly positively related to socioeconomic deprivation; the obesity rate for children living in the most deprived areas is 2.7 times the rate in the least deprived areas, after adjusting for age, sex and ethnic differences."

[In:](#) Annual update of key results 2013/14: New Zealand Health Survey

Source: Ministry of Health, 11 Dec 2014

[Child obesity rates climbing](#)

New Zealand's child obesity rates continue to climb while rates in other developed countries have flattened or decreased, obesity experts say. They point out the government has failed to prioritise obesity as a major health issue: improving unhealthy diets or reducing childhood obesity currently do not figure as priorities in the latest Statement of Intent of the Minister for Health or as part of the Ministry of Health's annual health targets or five-year public sector targets. Co-author Prof Boyd Swinburn noted that while community-based programmes such as Healthy Families NZ, recently launched by the Government, worked well for disadvantaged white Australian children, the same approach had been shown to have no effect on Pacific and Maori children in South Auckland.

[In:](#) NZ Medical Journal, 28 Nov 2014

Source: Stuff, 28 Nov 2014

[Inaction on obesity is costing us](#)

This DomPost editorial backs up the call for more government focus on tackling obesity (above).

Source: DomPost, 1 Dec 2014

[Latest survey shows problems remain for the health of most NZers](#) **Replay**

Dr Boyd Swinburn has lots to say about the findings on overweight and obesity from the latest health survey. He points out that our rates of childhood obesity seem to be plateauing, but later than other countries, and at a high level. He comments on measures we are taking to reduce childhood obesity – and what else needs to happen.

Source: Radio NZ, Morning report, 23 Dec 2014 (6 mins)

[Hospital dentist calls for action on child dental health](#) **Replay**

Senior public dental health officer Dr Rob Beaglehole comments on the health survey's findings on child oral health and makes the case for taking action on sugary drinks to reduce decay and help prevent obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Source: Radio NZ, Nine to Noon, 23 Dec 2014 (13 mins)

[Public pressure needed to counter child obesity](#)

Government action on tackling obesity is more likely with strong, visible public pressure, says Auckland University's Dr Stefanie Vandevijvere. She suggests some ways local action can help build this pressure.

Source: Auckland University / Scoop, 28 Nov 2014

Food labelling

[The new Health Star Rating system in Australia and New Zealand](#)

This article explains how the voluntary health star rating system works, the foods covered and why it was introduced.

Source: Lexology, 3 Dec 2014

[FSANZ review of the Nutrition Information Panel: have your say](#)

FSANZ (Food Standards Australia and NZ) is seeking comments on a recommendation to simplify the nutrition information panel on food labels. It asks whether "per serving" nutritional information be made voluntary. Closing date for submissions is 13 February 2015.

Source: Food Standards Australia NZ, Dec 2014

[You may be surprised how misleading food labels can be](#)

Nutritionist, Ben Warren explains the sugar content of a store bought muesli bar. "In a nutshell that store bought bar is junk food. Watch this video to understand how you are being misled."

Source: Gareth's World, 5 Dec 2014

NZ - Other

[NZ: A general practice perspective on obesity](#)

A Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners Policy Brief examines obesity from a GP's perspective and identifies some practical advice for GPs around broaching this issue with patients. It acknowledges that this issue goes beyond general practice. Although GPs can give advice on healthy lifestyles, supportive environments play a key role in shaping people's diet choices and physical activity habits. "Curbing the obesity epidemic requires the concerted action of government, society, the food industry, health professionals, individuals and families."

In: Policy Brief, Tackling the growing obesity epidemic...

Source: Royal NZ College of General Practitioners, Dec 2014

[Key recognises children have changed shape since the 1950s](#)

John Key wants to focus on child poverty and social housing next year. He also commented on changes in photos of children in the 1950s and children now, saying the difference was "more exercise and less processed food in the 1950s, along with no computer time". He failed to mention huge increase in marketing junk food.

Source: Otago Daily Times, 13 Dec 2014

[Goal to slim the nation](#)

Health minister Jonathan Coleman wants a healthier, fitter and slimmer New Zealand. He told the Herald "using physical activity and sport to try to address obesity in our young people is something I'm passionate about and focused on."

Source: NZ Herald, 7 Dec 2014

[National Minister's stance on exercise all puff](#)

If the health Minister is serious about tackling obesity, he needs to think seriously about what the nation is eating – and not just concentrate on physical activity.

Source: Gareth's World, 8 Dec 2014

[Scientists are 'undermined by attack campaigns' - expert](#)

Public health is being jeopardised by conflicts of interest in government appointments and by dirty politics, an obesity expert says.

In: Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 2 Dec 2014

Source: Stuff, 5 Dec 2014

[PQ 6. Health Promotion Agency Board](#)

Greens health spokesperson Kevin Hague has many oral questions in the House about food lobbyist Katherine Rich and whether she has a conflict of interest on the Health Promotion Agency board.

Source: Office of the Clerk /Scoop, 4 Dec 2014

[Rich slams conflict of interest claims](#)

Food lobbyist Katherine Rich isn't happy with Kevin Hague.

Source: ODT, 8 Dec 2014

Australia

[Cancer Council: fruit and vegetable claims on some packaged foods debunked](#)

A NSW Cancer Council analysis of 762 fruit and vegetable snacks, soups and juices stocked in supermarkets found that only a third passed the nutrient profiling criteria that would enable them to make health claims under the Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code. Fruit and vegetable claims are not regulated under the code because they refer to specific ingredients rather than nutrients. Claims misled consumers about the nutritional value of products by enthusing about their fruit and vege content when this was minimal.

Source: The Age, 11 Dec 2014

[Australia: Health-washing by Coca-Cola, a call to end unhealthy sponsorship](#)

Crikey summarises why sports clubs or events promoting healthy activities shouldn't accept sponsorship or a "partnership" with Coca Cola.

Source: Crikey, 1 Dec 2014

[Australia: Childhood obesity a risk to State's health](#)

An excellent policy brief released by the Commissioner for Children and Young People WA identifies the significant challenge in addressing overweight and obesity in children and young people. One key point: "A combination of evidence-based community-level programs and population-level strategies will be required."

[In](#): Policy Brief

Source: Commissioner for Children and Young People, 26 Nov 2014

[Australia: The childhood obesity time bomb](#)

Investigates what happened to Australia's national obesity strategy and some state programmes.

Source: ABC Online, 5 Dec 2014

[Australia: Health Star Rating website re-launched](#)

The Assistant Minister for Health Fiona Nash, has reinstated the [Health Star Rating website](#), after the original was pulled down hours after launching in February.

Source: Food Magazine, 8 Dec 2014

[OPC welcomes re-launch of Health Star Rating website](#)

The Federal Government has re-launched the website that facilitates the Health Star Rating label system on packaged foods.

Source: Obesity Policy Coalition, 8 Dec 2014

[Australia: Plain packaging in the age of obesity and Free Trade Agreements?](#)

Australian lawyers discuss the intricacies of the relationship between plain packaging for food - as a response to obesity - and the 'rights' of companies under free trade agreements to use their brands. Food for thought, but not light bedtime reading.

Source: Lexology, 16 Dec 2014

[Australia: Cancer – getting to the fat of the issue](#)

Provides facts on the relationship between obesity and cancer.

Source: The Conversation, 3 Dec 2014

[Australia: Junk Food Injunction Dec 2014](#)

Cancer Council NSW's quarterly newsletter focuses on marketing unhealthy food to children. This issue covers the World Cancer Congress, Parents Jury Fame and Shame awards, studies into the extent of marketing in magazines and through Facebook, a report on some studies about fast food in disadvantaged communities, and an update on the sugary drinks campaign in the US.

United Kingdom

[UK: A sugary drinks duty would save London £39m in healthcare costs](#)

Children's Food Campaign figures show that introducing a 20 pence per litre duty on sugary drinks would benefit Londoners' health, as well as save the NHS and public health budgets £39 million over twenty years.

[In:](#) Children's Health Fund website

Source: Children's Food Campaign, 16 Dec 2014

[UK: Support grows for tax on sugary drinks](#)

Health advisers for Mayor of London Boris Johnson have swung their weight behind calls for a tax on sugary drinks, after new figures claimed the introduction could save London boroughs alone nearly £40m in costs to the NHS.

Source: The Grocer, 16 Dec 2014

[UK: Highest rates of childhood obesity in those living in deprived areas](#)

More than one third of English children are now overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school, according to new NHS figures. Prevalence of childhood obesity varies by local authority.

Source: Health & Social Care Information Centre, 3 Dec 2014

[UK: Childhood obesity surges between ages of seven and 11, study shows](#)

The number of children classed as overweight or obese surges by 40% in the last four years of primary school, a major study has found. It also shows a powerful link between parents' own weight and that of their children. Only a minority of children whose mothers are obese reach 11 still within what is considered a healthy weight.

Source: The Telegraph, 27 Nov 2014

[UK: Scottish health survey reveals risk of childhood obesity](#)

Almost a third of Scots children are at risk of being obese, according to the annual health survey. The survey also said that levels of obesity in Scotland may be stabilising with no increase in the past five years.

Source: BBC, 2 Dec 2014

[UK: We've hit peak obesity, but tough measures still needed to tackle waistlines](#)

There are encouraging signs that adult BMI may have plateaued, but it is clear that tackling obesity is going to remain a key priority for government and public health professionals for some time to come.

Source: The Conversation UK, 2 Dec 2014

[Why food firms should be told what – and what not – to put in their products](#)

Argues that what is missing in campaigns to reduce consumption of unhealthy food is mandatory action on product reformulation. "If you can't change consumers' choices, the only sensible option is to make those choices healthier."

Source: The Conversation UK, 3 Dec 2014

[UK: Labour Plans High-Sugar Children's Food Ban](#)

Labour would outlaw high levels of sugar, fat and salt in children's food and have GPs prescribe exercise, the shadow health secretary has said.

Source: Sky News, 30 Nov 2014

[UK: Food marketing and children's dietary preferences: literature update](#) (PDF)

This literature update covers 5 themes – effect of advertising and branding, advertising and promotion outside the home, regulation of advertising, online advertising, and TV advertising – highlights open access research. It focuses on peer reviewed and commercially published research, with some unpublished material.

Source: UK Heart Forum for the Obesity Learning Centre, Nov 2014

United States

[US: National soda tax needed to reduce obesity and save lives](#)

LA columnist David Lazarus argues the case for a national soda tax, and uses a telling quote from Robert Lustig to counter the argument that what goes into the supermarket trolley is personal choice: "Your personal freedom has already been taken away," he said. "Seventy-four percent of foods available in stores have been spiked with added sugar — for the food industry's benefit, not yours."

Source: LA Times, 8 Dec 2014

[US: The obesity fix](#)

Yale Professor David Katz suggests that we redefine our approaches to health and obesity in an environment where the food industry designs food 'to be as nearly addictive as possible'. He suggests that rather than individualise responsibility for obesity we should approach it like drowning - in which victims have inadequate skills to cope in a high-risk environment.

Source: Linked In, 3 Dec 2014

International

[The war on obesity – heavy weapons](#)

A McKinsey Global Institute study looks at 74 anti-obesity measures around the world, and judges the cost and impact of the 44 for which there were sufficient data. None alone could do much, it concludes, but all 44 together could mean about a fifth of overweight people achieving a reasonable waistline within five to ten years.

Source: The Economist, 22 Nov 2014

[How the world could better fight obesity](#)

An holistic strategy, using a number of interventions, could reverse rising rates of obesity around the world.

In: Overcoming obesity: An initial economic analysis – Discussion paper

Source: McKinsey Global Institute, Nov 2014

[Brain link for obesity and high blood pressure found](#)

The elusive link between obesity and high blood pressure has been pinned down to the action of leptin in the brain, and we might be able to block it with drugs.

[In:](#) Cell, 4 Dec 2014

Source: New Scientist, 4 Dec 2014

Compiled by

Robin White
Fight the Obesity Epidemic (FOE)
PO Box 29-016
Ngaio, Wellington,
New Zealand

[Email us](mailto:action@foe.org.nz) – action [at] foe.org.nz

[FOE on Facebook](#) – join in the discussions

[FOE's website](#) has news about obesity and in depth coverage of some issues.

[Back Issues of Obesity News](#) are on our website

FOE's Robyn Toomath is active on Twitter.



STOP OUR CHILDREN DEVELOPING TYPE 2 DIABETES

FOE New Zealand Trust • PO Box 29-016, Ngaio, Wellington 6443 • action@foe.org.nz • www.foe.org.nz