

People with lower incomes face increased risk of obesity-related illness and death – Public Health Association
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Two health reports released today highlight the increased risk of obesity-related illness and death faced by people with lower incomes, says Public Health Association Director Dr Gay Keating.

The reports are *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer*, from the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research; and *An Indication of New Zealanders' Health 2007*, from the Ministry of Health.

"The international report shows the links between obesity and cancer, while the Ministry of Health report shows that over 50 percent of New Zealanders are overweight or obese. We know that people on lower incomes are more likely to be overweight or obese, meaning they are at greater risk of obesity-related cancer or chronic illness."

She says studies show having a healthy diet is much harder when you are on a lower income because people cannot get appropriate and nutritious food on a regular and reliable basis.

"For example, Maori, Pacific peoples and people on lower incomes are more likely to live in socially deprived areas where it is difficult to access healthy food. These areas also tend to have fewer quality supermarkets, and more fast food outlets.

"Research clearly shows these groups struggle more than other groups to afford and access healthy kai. One fifth of children live in families where food runs out because of money."

She called for Government policies to reduce overweight and obesity to also consider ways of making healthy food more affordable.

"For instance, making fruit and vegetables more affordable by removing GST or providing food vouchers to low income New Zealanders, and ensuring that families get adequate income to buy healthy food could make a big difference. A difference, not just by reducing cancer but by improving health in many ways. And the small cost of these measures will be paid back one hundred fold by the reduced cost to the health system."

For further information:

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