

AGENCIES FOR NUTRITION ACTION Media Release

Parents can help kids with healthy eating and activity – despite 'obesogenic' environment

See: Media Backgrounder – ANA Report:

<http://www.pha.org.nz/media/ANAlaunchmediabackgrounderJune08.pdf>.

New Zealand parents can take the power back when it comes to healthy eating, new research showed today. The Agencies for Nutrition Action (ANA) commissioned report *Does the family environment contribute to food habits or behaviours and physical activity in children?* shows the home environment and families have a big influence on children's food habits and physical activity. The report was released at the Public Health Association conference in Waitangi.

Co-author Rob Quigley says the report is good news for parents, many of whom have to fight to give their kids a healthy lifestyle, because of today's 'obesogenic' environment.

"Parents are facing an uphill battle when it comes to encouraging their kids to eat healthy foods and to be physically active. On top of children being bombarded with advertising for high fat, high sugar foods, we live in a society where it's cheaper to buy fizzy drink than milk and safer to take the car to the dairy than to walk. But this report shows there are practical everyday things parents can do to take back control."

As well as making healthy meals and having nutritious snacks in the house, parents are advised to be positive role models, by eating a healthy diet themselves and being physically active. "Encouraging walking and cycling for short trips by children – and parents can join in too – is a practical way to boost activity in the whole family".

Mr Quigley says helping your kids eat well, can also be as simple as spending more time around the dinner table.

"A good work-life balance can positively affect children's food and activity patterns. New Zealand families can prioritise quality time planning, preparing and eating food together.

"Work commitments in family time can often interfere with valuable time spent eating together and can be damaging to family food and activity patterns. Parents can help their children by making time to eat positively as a family, chatting together and avoiding arguments."

The report also reveals how important it is for parents to encourage and support children in their choices.

“Making children feel confident enough to make healthy dietary choices is half the battle. It’s a good idea to give feedback to your child about his or her healthy eating efforts,” Mr Quigley says.

“It’s not always easy for children to eat well, especially when they are with their friends, so congratulate successful behaviour - small victories and boosting confidence are critical for success.

“There are always ways parents can empower themselves – and give their children the healthiest start possible in life.”

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