

The concerns that many health professionals have on the types of foods being sold in New Zealand schools is that it is affecting the health of the children as they are not learning the most important basics of health and healthy eating. Approximately one-third of children in New Zealand aged 5 to 14 years are either overweight or obese and fewer than half eat the recommended two servings of fruit per day.(2) The biggest influences on our children are marketing by fast food companies; peer influences also economic influences, schools and parents. Fundraising in schools has now become a major way to get money coming into schools, as schools need to raise funds for sporting activities and even some renovations and school trips.

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Canteens and sausage sizzles are some examples of events and places providing food for our children every day but they don't provide the right foods that young or growing children need to be healthy. Many foods nowadays in the school canteens consist of energy dense and nutrient poor foods such as; pies, sausage rolls, cakes, pizzas, hot chips, potato chips, donuts and fizzy drinks, as more than half of all students (58%) brought some or most of their food and drink from the school canteen (2). If these types of foods are being provided to our children on a daily basis this is almost teaching our children to not make the right food choices, as in schools they have very little alternative options to unhealthy and greasy foods. Throughout New Zealand's 50 primary and high schools surveyed in 2005, 68% of schools did not have fruit on the menu. Now that the government and dieticians have tried to change some of the schools eating cultures this percentage has dropped to 30% in 2009. With very little support of eating options in schools this then leads to an increase in the obesity in our children as fatty and greasy foods are more popular than a crisp apple due to poor food options and little emphasis on healthy eating. Also many schools depend on the bestselling foods to make more money so they provide what the children want which is not necessarily the best options for them but the money makers.

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Also the consumption of unhealthy foods and takeaways are due to social influences; many children may not see eating healthy as a very popular option, as which friend would want to swap a sausage roll for a nice crisp apple at lunchtimes in the school playgrounds. This then causes the children to think that because everyone else is eating sausage rolls, so should I have them too. More education is needed about healthy food choices both in schools and at home. Parental input is lacking these days as parents could possibly be too busy to make school lunches for their children; may not have enough money for healthy options and possibly have poor cooking skills.

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We did an experiment with some year 7 and 8 students on a morning tea with a mixture of healthy and none healthy foods. After the experiment was finished we found that the unhealthy foods were the first to be eaten and the healthy food we had many leftovers. The savouries, hot chips, and lolly cake were eaten first with the fruit kebabs, muffins and sandwiches being the least popular. When children have the option to have healthy foods they choose the unhealthy foods due to the taste and also poor emphasis on healthy eating throughout their schooling and the effects on their health. "Children do not have the maturity and cognitive development to make the healthiest food choices particularly in a society where they are heavily targeted by the food industry. We cannot expect the children and young people to make the healthiest food choices unless we make the healthier choices cheaper and accessible." (2).

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Many schools teach about healthy eating and the 5+ a day quota but many children and schools when it comes to buying foods from the canteens and the fundraising foods they just

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want the children fed and to buy the food not so much promote healthy eating as, when it comes to making money in schools they want to make more of a profit out of it than worry about health and spend more money and get a less profit due to the expense of healthy foods and the unhealthy popularity over healthy. Reports state that 15.5% of schools had purpose built canteen facilities and over half ran a food service for profit (31% profit to the school and 24.5% profit to the contractors (6). This shows that canteens are a major fundraiser for schools. Healthy foods these days cost a lot more than the non-healthy foods, so healthy foods wouldn't make the best income to a fundraiser compared to that of the unhealthy foods. Due to the popularity of a product and the cost, would you rather a \$2 sausage from a sausage sizzle compared to a \$3-4 sandwich roll, it's your choice but which would you think will sell better at a fundraiser?

The Healthy school food and beverage legislation was introduced to all the schools in 2007. The feedback presented (7) showed that schools were making good progress in improving the school food environment and were starting to see better eating habits. Children eating healthier food were seen to have an increase in improved behaviours and concentration in the classroom. But this legislation in schools didn't last long as in (7) February 2009 Anne Tolley the Minister of Education at that time removed the guidelines and directives that schools sell healthy foods as she believed that parents should have the freedom of choice and the government shouldn't have the power to say what can and can't be sold in schools. So now schools have reverted back to selling fatty foods high in sugar to their students as they are cheaper and easier to heat up in the microwave with less preparing time even if it undermines the health of the children.

Multinational food industries such as fast food companies like McDonalds and also Cadbury chocolate have become an increasing part in the way schools fundraise. McDonalds are used in schools sports team or clubs in the player of the day certificates along with a voucher for free cheeseburger or fries. This is a good motivation for the children to want to work hard and support their team and play the best they can, but in the end the way the child is being rewarded with something unhealthy is strange. I understand that McDonalds can be a treat for children but after a sports game generally not the best idea. Cadbury chocolate bars, the most effective way of fundraising today, why. Because everyone loves chocolate, these bars sell for \$2.50 for an 85g block each. And this is cash, the type of cash that is just sitting around in many people's wallets just waiting for the school children to come knocking.

When you're a child many don't worry about their waist line but when they grow up and are in their mid 40's everyone worries about their waist line but why do people not seem to be bothered by the size of our children. Overweight children will become overweight adults. 'Childhood obesity has immediate effects on physical health and well-being (such as orthopaedic problems and lowered fitness), future disease risk (such as increased blood pressure and adverse blood lipid levels) and mental health.'(8) Young people become self-conscious and lose friends due to lack of confidence and low self-esteem, so overall these aspects of personal wellbeing are not met and they are not going to develop into healthy, happy adults. Junk food is affecting our society with greater health costs for people with type two diabetes; increased sizing needed for hospital beds, doorways, lifts, seating on buses, cars and trains. This will then impact on other things like education, upgrading new things like roads etc.

(References 1 to 8 were listed.)