

Wednesday 14 August 2019

Nutrition for under-2's: understanding intake for life-long health

As diet-related chronic conditions escalate, understanding the diets of Australian children aged 0-2 years is critical to build life-long, healthy habits.

Professor Jane Scott, Fellow of the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) and Professor of Public Health Nutrition Research at Curtin University, is calling on the Australian Government to invest in a national infant diet and nutrition survey to help establish specific dietary guidelines for children aged 0-2 years.

“In the first two years of a child’s life, food and nutrition play a significant role. During this time, not only does a child experience high rates of growth and development, but they also begin to establish their food preferences,” said Prof. Scott.

Presenting at the [DAA 36th National Conference](#) Childhood Health Plenary session today, Prof. Scott highlights the alarming nutrition report card for Australian infants (aged 0-2yrs), particularly as children transition from liquids to solids.

“While Australian has national data on breastfeeding practices, little is known about the food choices of children aged 0-2 years as they transition from a milk-based diet to the family diet,” said Prof. Scott.

Limited state and community-based research examining this transition, paints a worrying picture, indicating:

- One in five toddlers’ diets are low in iron
- Discretionary ‘junk’ foods are introduced early, with intake increasing in a child’s second year of life
- Over 50% of children at 18 months consume more than the recommended daily upper levels of sodium intake (1000mg/day)
- Seven in ten children aged 24 months consume more than 5% of their energy from free sugars (found in soft drinks, fruit juices and processed foods).

“Increased consumption of salt and processed ‘junk’ foods, are key contributors to health conditions such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes – meaning we aren’t setting our kids up with healthy food habits,” said Prof. Scott.

Prof. Scott suggests taking note from other first world counterparts, such as the UK and USA, who conduct national diet and nutrition infant and toddler surveys.

MEDIA RELEASE

“If the Australian Government funded a national infant diet and nutrition survey, this would allow more detailed food and nutrition recommendations to be available for parents, helping to reduce confusion around what foods are best for children.”

This survey would also form part of the development of a new National Nutrition Policy, which Australia has not updated in 26 years.

“We know prevention is better than a cure and encouraging healthy habits in their first 1000 days is integral to giving Australian children the best start in life.”

ENDS

**For further information or to organise an interview with Prof. Jane Scott, APD contact DAA:
Pattie King: 0409 661 920 or Trish Kirkland: 0459 491 545**

Background:

About the Dietitians Association of Australia National Conference:

The DAA National Conference is being held from 12-14 August 2019 at the Gold Coast Conference and Exhibition Centre. For more information and program details, visit: daa2019.com.au. Follow the conversation via twitter [@DAA_Feed](https://twitter.com/DAA_Feed) and share your interest using #DAA2019.

Press passes can be made available for interested media (including Australian-based journalists) to attend sessions at the conference. To request a press pass, please contact Pattie King 0409 661 920.