

MEDIA ALERT

Wednesday 23 November 2016

Sugary foods and drinks: Decades of advice from dietitians

The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) has been calling for measures to reduce the amount of discretionary foods (such as sugar-sweetened beverages) in the Australian diet for years. It's good to see this issue finally getting some traction, including through the release of a Grattan Institute report reiterating calls for a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages. DAA looks forward to seeing public policy initiatives seriously considered by the Australian Government, as a result of this renewed push.

The Dietitians Association of Australia:

Supports health authority recommendations on sugar

The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend limiting foods and drinks containing added sugars such as confectionary, sugar-sweetened soft drinks and cordials, fruit drinks, vitamin waters, energy and sports drinks.

The World Health Organisation recommends cutting free sugars (which includes added sugars, honey, syrups and fruit juices) to less than 10 per cent of total energy (or kilojoule) intake or 12 teaspoons per day.

Supports measures to reduce consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages

DAA supports any measure which effectively reduces consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, like soft drinks, energy drinks and cordial, as one part of the solution to improve the nutrition and health of Australians, particularly young Australians where they will have the biggest impact.

If a 'sugar tax' were to go ahead, DAA believes this would need to be at a high rate, to make a difference in achieving behaviour change (that is, cutting intake of sugar-sweetened beverages among individuals).

The Association also feels the money generated from such as tax should go towards health promotion interventions. If a tax is introduced, DAA calls strongly for any revenue to be directed to supporting public health nutrition measures.

DAA understands the reality that making sugar-sweetened beverages more expensive may not stop people buying them, especially those who are least able to afford these. The GST is already applied to discretionary (or junk) foods, whereas core foods are exempt from the GST.

DAA considers that introducing a 'sugar tax' is part of the solution, but there are other important factors to consider. Obesity, for example, is a complex condition and sugar is not the only cause.

DAA asserts work needs to be done on many fronts, in a comprehensive and coordinated way, to get Australians eating a better-quality diet, which will help address issues such as obesity and diet-related chronic diseases.

DAA calls for broader measures to reduce the consumption of all discretionary (or 'junk') foods. This needs to include:

- Educating Australians on the benefits of nutritious foods, and appropriate portion sizes
- Reformulating foods to make them healthier
- Combatting nutrition misinformation and
- Improving access to Accredited Practising Dietitians.

ENDS

For further information or to organise an interview, contact Felicity Curtain at DAA on 0409 661 920.

Note to Editors: The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the professional body representing dietitians nationally. Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government, Medicare, the Department of Veteran Affairs and most private health funds as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia. For more information visit www.daa.asn.au. For the Media section on the DAA website contains DAA's media releases and position on topical nutrition issues in the media.