



Media Release
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NZ's childhood obesity needs 'addressing urgently'

Action to reduce New Zealand's alarming childhood obesity rate needs to focus on the physical and social environments we live in, says the New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine.

A third of all Kiwi children are now overweight or obese, which the College says "must be urgently addressed to improve their current and future health".

"Interventions at an individual level alone are unlikely to be successful in the long term," says the president-elect of the College, Dr Felicity Dumble.

"We need to adapt our environment and change our social norms so that it's easier for our children to establish and maintain a healthy weight."

The College recently released a policy statement addressing childhood obesity; the policy recognised the issue as a significant public health challenge.

Dr Dumble says the College recognises the government's commitment to addressing childhood obesity, but says New Zealand's childhood obesity plan should be reviewed and amended as a matter of urgency, to fully reflect the World Health Organization's (WHO) report titled [Ending Childhood Obesity](#).

"If all of our nation's children are to be healthy there must be a higher priority placed on addressing the issues causing childhood obesity," she says.

The WHO Report was released earlier this year, stating no single intervention can halt the "rise of the growing obesity epidemic".

It says that preventing and treating obesity requires a government-wide approach, in which policies across all sectors take health into account, avoid harmful impacts and thus improve population health and health equity.

In line with the WHO report, Dr Dumble says the College strongly supports three strategic objectives to help reduce childhood obesity in New Zealand;

- Tackle the obesogenic environment and norms
- Reduce the risk of obesity by addressing critical elements in the life course
- Treat children who are obese to improve their current and future health.

ENDS

For more information, contact Jane Dancer, General Manager, New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine on 021 800 418

For a copy of the New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine's Childhood Obesity Policy Statement, [click here](#)