

All Queenslanders, all cancers

HEALTH SURVEY Voryday RESULTS



Queensland has the highest rates of both adult and child obesity nationally, with 65 per cent of adults and 28 per cent of children weighing in as overweight or obese.

As overweight and obesity increases the risk of cancer, among other chronic diseases, we have a joint role to play in enabling the Queensland community to live healthier lives. Cancer Council Queensland's Everyday Health Survey provided a unique opportunity for the community to share their thoughts, attitudes and behaviours about food and healthy living.

Results from the survey identified junk food marketing and advertising as a key priority area for action with approximately 90% of respondents reporting a high level of concern about the packaging and promotion of unhealthy foods specifically targeting children.

Findings also revealed food literacy as an area of concern with many respondents unaware of the fundamental dietary requirements for healthy living. A variety of educational strategies are therefore required to improve nutritional knowledge and understanding.

Results revealed the Queensland community has a high level of interest in food labels with 60% of respondents actively reading nutritional panels and labels. However, the community also reported difficulty in reading and understanding food labels and found them unhelpful in supporting healthy food choices. This community feedback adds weight to calls for the adoption of mandatory five star food labelling.

The community expressed high concern about the availability of sugar sweetened beverages, expressing support for measures to reduce the availability of sugar-sweetened beverages in workplaces, government institutions, health care settings and other public places.

Survey respondents also reported that product placement and in-store promotion influenced their food choices and suggested junk free checkouts as a way of encouraging healthier choices when grocery shopping.

Overall the Everyday Health Survey provides a snapshot of the common concerns and attitudes towards nutrition in the Queensland community. Collaboratively we can take positive action to implement targeted strategies to help all Queenslanders live healthier and happier lives and reduce their risks of cancer.

Overview of project

Cancer Council Queensland is committed to reducing cancer risk in the Queensland population, with one third of cancers preventable through healthy lifestyle behaviours.

The Everyday Health Survey investigated diet and lifestyle habits in order to improve community health and wellbeing. The survey was open for one month (February-March 2016) and focused on factors such as nutrition, food marketing, and consumer psychology and behaviour.

Respondents

- 840 people completed the survey.
- 815 responses were analysed, with 25 respondents from outside of Queensland.
- 51% of respondents were from Brisbane with the remaining 49% from regional Queensland.
- Two thirds of respondents were aged between 30-64 years with 22% aged 18-29 years and 12% aged 65 or older.
- The majority of respondents were female (84%).
- Most respondents had a high level of education with 41% having a bachelor degree and 23% having a diploma or certificate.



Key findings

Junk food advertising and marketing to children

The overwhelming majority of respondents reported a high level of concern for how unhealthy food is marketed to children. Respondents expressed concern for the packaging and placement of unhealthy products, promotional strategies such as incentives and use of popular personalities, access to unhealthy foods through vending machines, advertising on television, on the internet, in magazines and on social media and junk food companies' involvement in the sponsorship of children's sport.

Areas of concern in the advertising and marketing of unhealthy foods to children	% of respondents either very concerned or concerned
The packaging of unhealthy foods designed to appeal to children	92%
Using popular personalities or characteristics to promote unhealthy food to children	90%
Unhealthy foods sold in vending machines in schools	89%
Positioning of unhealthy foods at supermarkets checkouts	88%
Promotions, such as toys and give-aways with unhealthy food	87%
Ads on TV promoting unhealthy foods at times when children watch TV	90%
School fundraising activities involving unhealthy food	77%
Unhealthy food advertising in children's magazines	84%
Unhealthy food companies sponsoring children's sport	79%.
Unhealthy food marketing on the internet and social media	78%
Outdoor ads, such as billboards and posters promoting unhealthy food	75%





Food Literacy

Results from the Everyday Health Survey highlight the need for stronger community education about food and the recommended intake of nutrients for healthy living and reduced cancer risk. The majority of respondents failed to accurately identify basic nutritional requirements for good health. Specifically,

- 60% did not know the recommended daily adult energy intake (8700kj).
- 94% did not know the daily suggested target for an adult's sodium (salt) intake.
- 69% did not know the daily recommended intake of fibre for adults.
- 60% did not know what made up one serve of vegetables.
- 63% did not know the recommended weekly limit of cooked lean red meat (455g).
- 15% did not know that an unhealthy diet can increase cancer risk.

Further, 10% of respondents stated that their biggest barrier to eating healthy food was confusion about what constitutes a 'healthy meal'.

The Everyday Health Survey asked respondents about where they accessed information about food and healthy eating. Alarmingly, most respondents accessed this information through unqualified sources such as Google, friends and family, and social media. Respondents called for health organisations to provide information to help them stay healthy by distributing healthy recipe ideas (29%), practical tips, (27%), new statistics (13%) and social media posts (11%).

Food labelling

Results from the survey reveal the Queensland community is interested in the ingredients of the food they eat with the majority of respondents (60%) reporting that they read food labels 'always' or 'most of the time'. Further, 75% of respondents 'always' or 'sometimes' take notice of the sugar, sodium (salt) and saturated fat levels when reading food panels. Despite a strong interest in food labelling, the community expressed a dissatisfaction with the current labelling system reporting issues such as small font, complicated information and an inability to decipher a healthy choice from an unhealthy choice. In addition, 50% of respondents failed to identify the Health Star (5 star) rating as a voluntary food labelling system in Queensland. These findings provide support for the introduction of a mandatory labelling scheme in Queensland.

Food purchasing behaviour

Respondents differed in their approach to grocery shopping. Over a third (35%) said they plan their weekly meals and write a list before grocery shopping, while another third (33%) wait until they are in store before making decisions about what to purchase. Respondents reported that their food choices while grocery shopping are most influenced by price (32%), the nutritional value of food products (36%) and what foods are in season (27%). Respondents also reported product placement as a key influence on their food choices while grocery shopping and suggested the implementation of confectionary-free checkouts to reduce impulse purchases of discretionary foods.

Ideas from the community for healthier living

The Everyday Health Survey asked the community to share their strategies for making healthier food choices while grocery shopping.

Five key strategies emerged:

- Reduce the cost and/or increase specials on healthy foods, including fruit and vegetables.
- Display mandatory, easy-to-read front of pack food labels on all packaged products.
- · Provide quick, healthy and easy recipe ideas in store.
- Ensure fruit and vegetables are fresh and in season.
- Address supermarket layouts i.e. remove unhealthy junk food items from eye level and at checkout aisles.

The survey also asked respondents about what changes they would like to see in their community to support healthier food choices.

The top ideas were to:

- Restrict the number of fast food outlets.
- · Remove unhealthy vending machines from schools, workplaces, sporting clubs and health care facilities.
- Restrict 'junk food' adverting, especially to children.
- Increase the price of 'junk food' and sugar sweetened beverages and reduce the price of healthy food products.
- Restrict energy drinks to 18+ year olds.
- · Make healthy food more accessible, in particular at community sporting events.
- · Create confectionary free checkouts at super markets.
- Support mandatory front-of-pack labelling.
- Encourage community and school garden projects and cooking classes.
- Provide more simplistic nutrition education.





Results from the Everyday Health Survey emphasise the need for greater action to support Queenslanders to make better food choices and live healthier lives.

Cancer Council Queensland's policy priorities include the following measures:

- Mandatory evidence-based front-of-pack food labelling (such as 'Multiple Traffic Lights') across all retail grocery food products.
- Restrictions on marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children across all media.
- Regulations to require nutrient profiling of foods making health and nutrition claims.
- Increased nutritional guality of processed foods through product reformulation and innovation.
- Targeted strategies to increase physical activity and healthy eating and reduce obesity prevalence in indigenous, low socio-economic, and rural and remote communities.
- Active consideration of fiscal levers such as taxation incentives, grants, pricing and subsidies to encourage physical activity and healthy diets.
- · Restrictions on the sale of sugar-sweetened beverages in all schools (primary and secondary) and places frequented by children, such as activity centres and at children's sports and events (with adequate resources to ensure effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation).
- Active consideration of steps to reduce the availability of sugar-sweetened beverages in workplaces, government institutions, health care settings and other public places.
- Exploration of specific food labelling initiatives such as sodium/salt warnings and exercise equivalent nutrition information.

These priorities require joint action by Federal and State Governments and the community and must be supported by adequately funded, effective social marketing campaigns, underpinned by complementary policies and programs.

Current Queensland Government action in this area includes investment in the Healthier Happier campaign, new laws to implement kilojoule menu labelling in fast food outlets, and the establishment of a Queensland Health Promotion Commission.

Cancer Council Queensland commends the Queensland Government on its actions and would welcome further joint action to explore and implement the policy and regulatory measures suggested above.

For our part, Cancer Council Queensland will continue to engage with the community and all levels of government to advocate for health promotion. We look forward to launching the next survey in the Everyday Health series soon.







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