Suggested Reference


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Kai Time in ECE
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Kai Time in ECE is a one-off online survey collecting information about nutrition and physical activity practices and policies for 3-4 year olds in licensed Early Childhood Education (ECE) services in Auckland, Counties Manukau and Waikato. The survey results will be used in PhD research on the influence of childcare on preschool dietary patterns and body size.

Why is this research needed?
Early Childhood Education (ECE) is an increasingly important area of young children’s lives; 95% of 3-4 year olds attended ECE, and for an average of 22 hours a week. New Zealand children start ECE services at an earlier age, and attend for more hours per day, than ever before.

The ECE environment has the potential to influence a child’s diet, food preferences, eating behaviours and physical activity for a lifetime. There are currently some great initiatives in ECE services to support children’s health and wellbeing. However, the last survey on New Zealand’s ECE food and nutrition environment was done five years ago and that study was unable to link what is happening in ECE services with child health outcomes.*

The Kai Time in ECE survey updates our knowledge on the environments where New Zealand children increasingly play, learn and grow, and helps us understand how these environments contribute to preschool dietary patterns and body size.

What has been achieved so far?
Figure 1: Progress to date on the Kai Time in ECE Survey

- Defined aims and objectives
- Reviewed existing survey tools and measurement instruments
- Consulted with ECE sector representatives and organisations
- Conceived framework for survey instrument, selected questions using validated or tested items where possible
- Ethical approval granted
- Created and tested an online version of questionnaire
- Pilot tested the survey process and instrument
- Analysed pilot data, further refinement and testing of online survey instrument
- Changed data collection method and ethics amendment
- Promotion of survey through ECE organisations’ membership newsletters, emails, facebook and websites
- Survey invitations emailed or posted in early May 2014 to all 927 licensed ECE services in the Auckland, Counties Manukau and Waikato DHB regions
- Responses received. By 30 May, the online survey had been completed by 189 ECE services, giving a preliminary initial response rate of 20 percent
- Follow-up for non-response by phone
- Koha posted to respondents The Very Hungry Caterpillar book in Maori or Samoan

Conclusion
This kind of research exploring the association between children’s health and their ECE environment has never been done before in New Zealand and will contribute to international public health discourse on obesogenic environments.

How will the data be analysed?
The Kai Time in ECE survey will be analysed alongside data from the Growing Up in New Zealand longitudinal cohort study to examine how ECE environments influence the diet and growth patterns of pre-school children.

Drawing on the findings from Kai Time in ECE and integrating the Growing Up in NZ data, we can test whether an ‘obesogenic’ or ‘health promoting’ ECE environment has an impact on a child’s dietary patterns and body size, while accounting for their home and community food environment.

Figure 2: Key variables to determine the influence of the childcare environment on preschool dietary patterns and body size

References
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