



## *'Here's how we see it...'*

Children's and Parents' Perspectives of the Sport-related Food Environment

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# Why consider food in sport?

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- ▶ 1/3 New Zealand children overweight or obese
  - ▶ Increasing prevalence of type 2 diabetes
- ▶ Tooth decay
- ▶ Chronic health conditions in adulthood
- ▶ Children's diet high in fat, salt and sugar
- ▶ Food and nutrition guidelines for children:
  - ▶ Fruit and vegetables
  - ▶ Bread and cereals
  - ▶ Milk and milk products
  - ▶ Lean meat and fish
  - ▶ Water
  - ▶ Pre-prepared foods low in fat, salt and sugar



# Objective

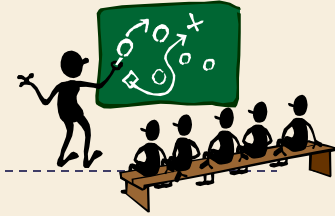
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- ▶ Explore children's and parents' perspectives on the availability and promotion of food and beverages in sport:
  - ▶ What do they see?
  - ▶ What do they think about it?
  - ▶ What do they suggest as solutions?



# Team and strategy

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- ▶ Children 10-12 years, and parents
- ▶ Football, rugby and netball
- ▶ Wellington and Porirua

## ▶ Photovoice

- ▶ Photographs
  - ▶ children n=564
  - ▶ parents n=256
- ▶ Focus groups
  - ▶ 13 child
  - ▶ 8 parent



# Results - where children played sport

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*Wgtn, soccer, father*



# What they saw and what they thought

- ▶ Energy-dense, nutrient poor – *“junk food”* (Wgtn, football, boy)

- ▶ Poor choice

*“it was freezing cold and it was wet...you couldn’t buy hot soup or sandwiches, there was hot dogs, pies, chips and hamburgers”* (Porirua, netball, mother)



Porirua, netball, mother



Porirua, netball, girl

- ▶ Unsuitable *“well that is wholly inappropriate here...I mean how many percent of players here are kids?”* (Porirua, netball, mother)

- ▶ Poor and contradictory nutrition messages

*“creating bad habits early on”* (Wgtn, soccer, father)

*“they always sell all this food we shouldn't be eating”* (Porirua, netball, girl)

*“we’re like trying to be fit”* (Porirua, netball, girl)

- ▶ Alternatives

*“inspire people to eat healthy foods”* (Porirua, soccer, boy)



# Saturday morning norms

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Oranges – juicy, colourful and *“quite sweet”* (Porirua, rugby, boy)

*“they just taste good after you’ve been running around for like a half hour”* (Porirua, rugby, boy)

*“good old tradition, still happens and has happened for donkey’s years and it’s a good one”* (Wgtn, rugby, mother)



Wgtn, rugby, mother

## Rewards and treats



Wgtn, netball, girl

*“the only player of the day vouchers I know of now are all food related ... it seems about just the only way kids get rewarded for sport”*

(Porirua, netball, mother)

*“I’d rather play good netball to like win the game, than just to win the player of the day award”*

(Wgtn, netball, girl)

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# Drinks children associate with sport

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- ▶ 31 drinks identified
- ▶ 30 analysed according to Ministry of Health children's food and nutrition guidelines

*Sugary drinks - limit (to less than one glass (250ml) per week in total): cordials, fruit drinks, fizzy drinks (including diet drinks), sports (electrolyte) drinks and sports waters*

(Ministry of Health. 2012. Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Healthy Children and Young People (Aged 2-18 years) A background paper. Wellington: Ministry of Health)



‘everyday’ ‘limited consumption’ ‘not recommended’

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# Drinks children associate with sport

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- ▶ 70% 'limited', 13% 'not recommended', 17% 'everyday'
- ▶ 'Limited' and 'not recommended':
  - ▶ 56% had serving sizes greater than MoH guideline (250ml)
    - ▶ Most were 2-4 times greater than MoH guideline
  - ▶ 28% provided more than 10% estimated energy requirement
    - ▶ Up to 19 teaspoons sugar per serve
  - ▶ All had sodium
    - ▶ Up to 69% of maximum daily adequate intake
- ▶ 69% were sufficiently acidic to dissolve tooth enamel
- ▶ 3 drinks caffeinated



*Wgtn, rugby, mother*



# Results - stadia

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# What they saw and what they thought

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- ▶ All junk food
- ▶ Appropriateness depends on view

*“they contradict each other...food for the sports people - it’s all healthy ... but ... for the spectators it’s anything goes you know, you’ve got big hot dogs with tomato sauce all over it, you’ve got chips”* (Porirua, rugby, father)

*“stadium food”* (Wgtn, football, boy)



Wgtn, rugby, mother

*“it’s entertainment food, totally inappropriate for sport, but entertaining food”* (Wgtn, rugby, father)

*“you turn up to the rugby, you want a cold beer and a hot dog or a pie ... my granddad did at the rugby at Athletic Park and that’s what they are still doing now”* (Wgtn, rugby, mother)

*“it’s Kiwi”* (Wgtn, rugby, boy)



# Alternatives

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sandwiches, filled rolls, wraps, soup, sushi and children's snack packs with fruit

*“variety and better food and more interesting food”* (Wgtn, rugby, mother)

*“why not have really nice pies?”* (Wgtn, football, father)

## ▶ obstacles

*“You can't sit down in the stadium with steak...not with a fork and a Mexican wave”*  
Porirua, rugby, mother)

*“because there's heaps of men and boys [at the stadium], they probably wouldn't buy it....men...won't worry about being overweight and stuff”*  
(Porirua, netball, girl)

*“I'm not going there to have a club sandwich to be honest”* (Wgtn, rugby, father)

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# Results - marketing

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# What they saw

- ▶ Predominantly junk food

*“Sometimes it can be good, but sometimes it can be bad ...”* (Porirua, netball, girl)

*“... usually it’s bad”* (Wgtn, soccer, boy)

- ▶ Multiple promotional activities

- ▶ Purchase incentives, competitions and free giveaways



Wgtn, rugby, father



Wgtn, football, girl



Wgtn, football, girl



Porirua, netball, girl

# What they saw

## ▶ High-profile sports people

*“people’s idols”*

(Porirua, netball, girl)

*“inspiring”*

(Porirua, netball, girl)

*“sports heroes”*

(Porirua, rugby, mother)

*“role models in sport”*

(Porirua, netball, mother)



*“he’s got it in his head...that ‘hey, load up on Weet-Bix if you’re going to play sport”* (Wgtn, rugby, mother)



(Wgtn, football, girl)

*“makes other people want to drink Powerade, ‘cos it’s like role model energy”* (Porirua, netball, girl)

## ▶ Sponsorship

*“McDonalds...were the sponsors and the kids all got McDonalds drink bottles and McDonalds vouchers”*

(Porirua, netball, mother)



# What they thought

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## ▶ Poor fit and contradictory

*“it doesn’t make sense...”* (Wgtn, football, boy)

*“...silly...”* (Wgtn, football, boy)

*“I think it’s kind of dumb, because McDonalds has really fatty foods and promoting sport is like a complete opposite”* (Wgtn, netball, girl)

*“they say we shouldn’t eat fatty food and if McDonalds is sponsoring the sports team then everyone thinks that it’s cool to eat it”* (Porirua, football, girl)

*“it’s [the advertising] contradicting what you are trying to teach them”* (Porirua, football, mother)

## ▶ Useful

*“in a way I’m relieved that they promote that [Weetbix]...with national heroes because it...does encourage small children...so it can be quite positive”* (Wellington, football, mother)

## ▶ But...

*“sporting identities need to be careful with regards to who their fans are”* (Wellington, netball, mother)

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# Funding

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## ▶ Perception that sport needs food companies for funding

*“we don’t have to pay high subs [now]. But..if we weren’t getting sponsorship then a lot of children wouldn’t be able to play sport”*

*(Porirua, football, mother)*

*“big business food”* (Wgtn, netball, mother)

*“ you need a big organisation with lots of money and they are few and far between, especially oriented towards healthy food or healthy products, you know?”* (Wgtn, football, father)



# Summary

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- ▶ Largely junk food
  - ▶ Normal part of sport
- ▶ Inappropriate and conflicts with nutrition messages
- ▶ Does not promote healthy eating
- ▶ Promotional activities widespread, multiple and effective
- ▶ Parents and children open to change
- ▶ Perception sport is reliant on multinational food companies for funding - funding fallacy
- ▶ Sport has a key role to play in promoting healthy eating and improving children's and adults' health



# Solutions?

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- ▶ Policies on food and beverage availability in sport settings
- ▶ Regulation of food and beverage marketing
- ▶ Consider other sources of sport funding



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- ▶ Acknowledgements
    - ▶ Child and parent participants
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