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Let's tackle obesity on World Health Day

World Health Day is a time to reflect on our nation's health and draw attention to the rising obesity rates putting pressure on our health system says Public Health Association of Australia CEO Michael Moore.

Today is World Health Day hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) held on the 7 April each year. This year's theme is: *Beat diabetes: Scale up prevention, strengthen care, and enhance surveillance.*

"Diabetes is just one of the chronic diseases caused by obesity and poor diet. Obesity rates are also directly linked to cancer and cardiovascular diseases. The Australian Government need to address the impacts of junk food high in sugar, sodium and fat by implementing levy's on items such as soft drink," stated Mr Moore.

About [350 million people worldwide have diabetes, a number which is forecast to double in the next 20 years\(WHO\)](#). The global epidemic of diabetes is linked with rising obesity rates, poor diet and decline in physical activity. It is also predicted to be the seventh leading cause of death by 2030.

It is estimated [one in five Australians](#) and one in three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live with two or more chronic health conditions. Most commonly these are heart disease and diabetes.

"The Lancet study released last week showed for the first time in recorded history there are more overweight people than underweight people in the world. [Australia's obesity level for men and women is at 28%](#) - we can do better," said Mr Moore.

"Initiatives such as the Health Star Rating is a great example of how to educate people to make healthier choices. But more hard decisions are needed. Now is the time for a [sugar tax on soft drinks](#) especially after the UK implemented the tax last month. The reduction of marketing of junk food and alcohol to children and adults are other ways we can reduce poor consumption habits and improve the health of the Australian population," continued Mr Moore.

"The release of the [Healthier Medicare package](#) was an excellent treatment initiative. However, tackling chronic disease also requires a major effort in prevention. Australia needs comprehensive initiatives engaging protection, promotion and prevention to reduce pressure on both the primary health system and public hospitals in the future," said Mr Moore.

"As the election approaches, it is such an important time for the federal Government to consider the costs obesity puts on our health system. This World Health Day, we need to remember to make healthier diet choices to ensure a healthier lifestyle to be a healthier country," concluded Mr Moore.

This week is Public Health Week (4 – 8 April 2016) and the PHAA have been focusing on public health topics using the hashtag [#publichealthweek](#). Today's focus, in line with World Health Day, is on food and nutrition.

The PHAA is joining with the Chronic Diseases Network in the Northern Territory to consider these issues at its Annual Conference 2016 from 18 – 21 September 2016. The theme is Protection, Prevention, Promotion – Healthy Futures: Chronic Conditions and Public Health. For more information [click here](#)

For further information/comment:

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