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Sugar Rush – Popular breakfast products not a good start to the day!

Many Australian children are starting the day with breakfast products that contain too much salt and sugar, adding plenty of kilojoules, but little nutritional value to their daily food intake.

A range of popular breakfast products examined by nutritionist Dr Rosemary Stanton and advocacy group Parents' Voice have failed the Food Detectives' test, with the majority exceeding recommended guidelines for added salt and sugar.

Dr Stanton looked at a range of breakfast products in three categories: drinks, biscuits and cereal. Marketed as fast and convenient options, breakfast drinks and breakfast biscuits represent a growing segment of the market, aimed at people who want to eat 'on the go'.

Dr Stanton examined two breakfast drinks: *Sanitarium Up & Go* and *My Yummy Lunchbox Breakfast Shake*. *My Yummy Lunchbox Breakfast Shake's* label promotes itself as "I'm Super Cool" and claims it contains "ancient grains" and vitamins. The quantities of 'ancient' grains are insignificant and no quantities of vitamins and minerals are listed.

Dr Stanton highlighted the poor nutritional value of breakfast drinks: "These drinks are dominated by added sugars and are not the way to establish healthy breakfast habits for children. They may give the impression they are nutritious but really, these products are no better than sweetened flavoured milk."

Popular brands of breakfast biscuits fared no better under the Food Detectives' microscope. *Red Tractor Brekky Bikks*, *Kellogg's Nutri-Grain Bars* and *My Yummy Lunchbox Breakfast Biscuits* were all judged by Dr Stanton to be unsuitable breakfast options: "They are basically biscuits and not a satisfactory choice for a child's breakfast. They are certainly not an appropriate substitute for a bowl of healthy cereal with milk and fruit."

Parents also have to look beyond the marketing claims when choosing breakfast cereal. Food Detectives focused on *Kellogg's Rice Bubbles*, *Kellogg's Nutri-Grain* and *Sanitarium Weet-Bix for Kids*. Dr Stanton said: "Although preferable to the breakfast biscuit option because they are mostly consumed with milk, two of the cereals contained high amounts of sugar and were poor sources of dietary fibre. At least the *Sanitarium Weet-Bix for Kids* scored highly.

Despite a recent reformulation of *Nutri-Grain*, which has reduced the sugar and salt content, parents need to check nutritional content labels, as the product still contains 26.7 grams of sugar per 100 grams: "I doubt parents would allow children to add so much sugar to their breakfast, so it's unfortunate to see over a quarter of *Nutri-Grain* is added sugar! I would not recommend it as part of a healthy breakfast for children," added Dr Stanton.

Alice Pryor, Campaigns Manager for Parents' Voice, is concerned that many popular breakfast products actually have little nutritional value: "Parents who want to give their children the best start for the day can choose from an increasing variety of products that claim to be a convenient and healthy breakfast. Retailers clearly understand the importance of 'health claims' on their products. Before its most recent reformulation, *Nutri-Grain* did not display a Health Star Rating on its box.

Ms Pryor added: "While tools such as Health Star Ratings can be useful, parents need to get into the habit of checking individual labels and aim for breakfast products with less sugar and salt and more dietary fibre. A healthy cereal served with milk, or for those times when you are in a great hurry, a piece of fruit and glass of milk would be a better option than products that are little better than biscuits or sugary drinks."

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Notes to Editor

Parents' Voice is an online network of parents who are interested in improving the food and activity environments of Australian children. Formerly known as The Parents' Jury, Parents' Voice was formed in 2004 and represents thousands of Australian parents. Parents' Voice is supported by Cancer Council Australia, Diabetes Victoria, VicHealth, YMCA Australia and the Bluearth Foundation.

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