



3-7 APRIL 2017

15th WORLD CONGRESS
ON PUBLIC HEALTH
2017 MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA
VOICES • VISION • ACTION

15th World Congress on Public Health Secretariat
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Surviving the dark side of adolescence

At home, on the streets, across the world

Adolescence can be the best years of your life—exploring your freedom to think, party, travel. But it can also be the worst—accidental injuries, street crime, depression, stress, and putting on unwanted weight.

Melburnian **George Patton** explored these issues for the 2016 *Lancet* Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing.

Wednesday evening George will join a panel of teen health experts for the Melbourne Conversations event [The light and dark sides of adolescence](#) for the World Public Health Congress in Melbourne on 5 April.

George is available for interview on how we can help our own children and our city's children, survive and thrive through adolescence.

Other stories from the World Congress on Public Health include

Risky drinking; what's making our teens fat; standing desks for schools; sun safety; and more

- More at www.scienceinpublic.com.au/publichealthcongress
- Researchers available for interview, contact Niall Byrne on 0417 131 977 or niall@scienceinpublic.com.au

Are we too hard on teens, or do strict rules around alcohol reduce risky drinking?

Do you let your underage teens have a drink or two with their friends, or do you follow a “no alcohol until you're 18” policy? Well, your rules might be having an effect on your teens future drinking behaviour.

Sonia Sharmin from the **University of Newcastle** looked at what effect the rules that parents make about their children's use of alcohol has on their drinking later in adolescence. And the verdict's in: strict parental rules on alcohol lowers the incidence of adolescent risky drinking. But more research is needed, particularly around adolescent drinking at parties and such where parental supervision is limited.

What's making our teens fat, and how can we stop it?

From 1980 to 2013, the number of obese children and adolescents (between the ages of two and 19) has increased by 47 per cent. Eating more fatty and sugary foods certainly plays a role in this, but a lack of awareness and understanding around food literacy in adolescents is also a problem.

Rimante Ronto from **Griffith University** and **Australian Catholic University** found that educating adolescents in food literacy could decrease unhealthy dietary behaviours. But many don't have the confidence in their food skills to put healthy food knowledge into practice, and opportunities to develop these skills are limited in the home and at school. So, Rimante wants to implement food literacy classes in Australian high school curriculum.

“The high school setting provides an ideal opportunity for adolescents to improve their food literacy in particular food skills through home economics,” says Rimante.



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Physical inactivity also plays a big role in teen obesity—nowadays, adolescents spend more time in front of their PlayStation than kicking around a football with mates. The 2011-12 Australian Health Survey indicated that only one in ten young people undertook the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity every day, vastly increasing the risks of obesity. And sitting in the classroom all day at school doesn't help.

Ana Maria Contardo-Ayala from **Deakin University** is researching whether introducing height-adjustable desks to reduce the amount of time that young people spend sitting down can increase energy expenditure, thus reducing obesity.

Sun safety with social media

Queensland has the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, with Queensland teens known to have the poorest sun safety behaviours. Recognising the good portion of time that teens spend on social media, **Alison Bock** from **Queensland Health** decided to use this medium to promote sun safety in teens. She's created Sun Mum—a social media campaign that uses humour to share bit-size pieces of information about sun safety in a way that's relevant and engaging. See Sun Mum in action on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SunSquadQLD and on YouTube at www.youtube.com/c/sunsquadgld.

Other topics at the Congress:

- Using social media and mobile games to get young adults to eat more vegetables— Monica Nour, The University of Sydney
- How social and economic status of teens influences risky health behaviours (the more popular you are in year 8, the more likely you are to smoke, drink alcohol, and exhibit anti-social behaviours— Stephanie Plenty, Institute For Future Studies, Sweden
- Why today's teens in high-income countries are less likely to smoke, drink, take drugs or have sex than those of the 1990s—Jude Ball, University of Otago

The World Congress on Public Health is on from 3 to 7 April at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

