



A meeting convened by the
International Obesity TaskForce
and the Coronary Prevention Group

The heart of the matter
Planning policies that work for the prevention of obesity

Media Briefing 1 pm, November 11 2003

**The Kent Room, New Connaught Rooms,
Covent Garden Exhibition Centre
61-65 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5DA**

Britain could see obesity levels soar up to 40% or higher within a single generation unless urgent action is taken, the International Obesity TaskForce, a global health think tank, warns today. (Nov 11 2003)

Childhood obesity, already three times higher than it was just over 10 years ago, is also set to rise, according to preliminary estimates carried out by the group.

Speaking at a meeting of NGOs called to demand bold new strategies to combat the epidemic, Prof Philip James, President of the Coronary Prevention Group and Chairman of the IOTF, said the evidence of serious health risks in the escalating numbers of British children is overwhelming.

“The evidence is so compelling that we must now act rapidly and decisively to deal with this epidemic. The first step must be to start protecting the health and well being of our young children, who are being damaged because we are not yet willing to provide them with a safe environment where they can experience and learn the value of good food and play. Instead their wellbeing is systematically undermined by the intense marketing and sales of foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt. But we also need to develop effective strategies that can be made to work throughout society to help everyone address the problem of overweight and obesity,” he added.

He said the close association of confectionary and soft drink firms with the promotion of physical activity and sport was sending out the wrong signals to a young generation who are being targeted to overconsume products that contribute to their increasing weight, while believing they are emulating the behaviour of their sports idols.

“We need even stronger action to deal with marketing to children and not fudged options such as those just suggested by the Food Standards Agency. Politicians need to understand that regulation is required and that it is a popular move. It is what the majority of parents in every country we work with places as one of their top priorities,” he added. “The issue then is whether governments, local authorities and schools are working for the people or for commercial interests.”

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Journalists may attend the morning conference by request but numbers are extremely limited. All media invited to attend the media briefing at 1300 hours. At least 45 NGOs, research groups and interested parties are due to be represented at the meeting. (see list below).

Contact: Neville Rigby, Director, Policy and Public Affairs, International Obesity TaskForce
231 North Gower Street, London NW1 2NS Tel: 02076911900 Fax 0207 3876033 mobile 07939250347
website: www.iotf.org email: obesity@iotf.org



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Organisations represented include:

1. Action on Smoking and Health
2. All Party Parliamentary Group on Obesity
3. ALSPAC - Avon Longitudinal Study Parents and Children
4. Association for the Study of Obesity
5. British Heart Foundation
6. British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity and Health
7. Centre for Social Marketing, University of Strathclyde
8. Child Growth Foundation
9. Consumers' Association
10. Cornell University
11. Coronary Prevention Group (CPG)
12. Department of Health
13. Diabetes UK
14. European Heart Network
15. Food Commission
16. Food Health Research
17. Health Development Agency
18. Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland
19. International Association for the Study of Obesity
20. International Forum on Globalisation
21. International Obesity TaskForce (IOTF)
22. London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
23. Medical Research Council
24. Middlesex University
25. Move4Health
26. National Children's Bureau
27. National Family & Parenting Institute
28. National Federation of Women's Institutes
29. National Heart Forum
30. National Obesity Forum
31. National Health Service
32. Parliamentary Food and Health Forum
33. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
34. Royal London Hospitals
35. Soil Association
36. Sustain
37. Sustrans
38. TOAST - The Obesity Awareness & Solutions Trust
39. Town and Country Planning Association
40. UK Public Health Association
41. University of Teesside
42. Weight Concern
43. Welsh Assembly Government
44. World Cancer Research Fund
45. World Heart Federation

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