

NEWS RELEASE

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Are you packing a healthy lunchbox?

To mark National Obesity Week (17 – 23 January) Action Cancer and the Public Health Agency (PHA) have joined forces to offer parents across Northern Ireland quick and healthy ideas for their children's lunchboxes.

“Over 127,000 children here bring their own food to school¹ and with recent research suggesting that they are often too high in salt, fat and sugar², we felt it was important to reinforce that children's lunchboxes should and can be both quick and healthy”, said Emily Magrath, Health Promotions Manager for Action Cancer.

“An outdoor advertising campaign has been launched to direct the public to information including Action Cancer's 'Taste and See' parents' health promotion sessions (provided to schools across Northern Ireland) and PHA's 'Are you eating a healthy lunch?' leaflet, offering parents new ideas and practical tips on packing an appetising and nutritionally balanced lunchbox.”

Jennifer Mc Bratney, PHA's Food in Schools Coordinator added:

“We know what children eat and drink during their early years and throughout school can affect their health for many years to come, and with one in five children in Northern Ireland starting school classed as overweight or obese³, it is becoming increasingly important to instil good eating habits in early childhood.

Children can spend up to half of their waking lives in school so a balanced packed lunch will make a valuable contribution to their diet. It's important that parents include a balanced variety of foods so that their children can get all the nutrients they need.”

Action Cancer, in conjunction with Centra, provides 'Taste and See' sessions for parents with children at nurseries and primary schools as part of the Health Action programme for schools, which has been sponsored by the retailer since 2003. The sessions offer advice on what makes a healthy lunchbox and a balanced family diet.

For more information on the 'Taste and See' sessions visit www.actioncancer.org or log on to www.enjoyhealthyeating.info to download 'Are you packing a healthy lunch?' leaflet.

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For further information please contact Louise McGovern at Action Cancer on 9080 3361 / 07825266951 or lmcgovern@actioncancer.org or visit www.actioncancer.org.

Notes to editor

¹ Department of Education. October 2008 school meal census. Unpublished

² Food Standards Agency (FSA) second survey of school lunchboxes 2004

³ Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service (NINIS) in association with NISRA, Childhood obesity data catalogue (P1, 2008)