



ACT
Government

ACT Health

Year 7 Health Check program

Public information paper

February 2019

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide the ACT public with a summary of how the Year 7 Health Check (Y7HC) program is proposed to be delivered.

Thank you for helping us improve the health and wellbeing of young people in the ACT.

The current situation

We know:

- 1 in 5 (21%) ACT children in Year 6 are overweight or obese¹
- 26% of all ACT children aged 5-17 years are either overweight or obese¹
- 6% of 12-13 year-olds in the ACT reported having experienced an emotional wellbeing problem. This figure increases to 19% in the 14-17 year old age group².

Improving the proportion of young people with healthy body weight and positive emotional wellbeing is a major priority of the 2017 ACT Government 10 Year Health Plan³, which recognises the importance of keeping Canberrans healthy.

The Y7HC

The Y7HC will be a new school-based program that will monitor risk factors for chronic diseases, such as overweight and obesity, and assess the emotional wellbeing of children in the ACT.

We anticipate the Y7HC program to be implemented in all Canberra high schools in 2019.

Why we need the Y7HC

Research to date indicates obese children and adolescents are five times more likely to be obese in adulthood than those who are not⁴. Furthermore, the proportion of young people reported to have depression increases dramatically between early and late adolescence⁵.

Detecting health and wellbeing issues early means being able to support young people to access appropriate help when needed.

The majority of a young person's time is spent in the school environment, and schools provide an ideal opportunity to assess the health and wellbeing of young people.

Secondary schools, in particular, represent a time in children's lives where significant life transitions are made such as adjusting to a new school, study schedules and social structures while navigating developmental and socio emotional changes associated with becoming adolescents. Any of these changes could make young people more vulnerable to emotional and wellbeing stress.

The Y7HC will add to the health screening that takes place earlier in a child's life through the Kindergarten Health Check, which monitors health risk factors at school entry, including vision and hearing.

How the program will work

The Y7HC will be made up of two parts:

- 1. Weight and height measurements to assess healthy weight status.** Measurements will be obtained by trained staff in a private area where the results are secure and cannot be seen or heard by anyone who is not directly involved in taking the measurements. The data collection is intended to occur alongside the Year 7 immunisation schedule to ensure minimal disruption to class and school schedules. The results of the physical assessments will not be disclosed/discussed with the child or provided as hand-outs on the day, but will be posted to the parent at the address given on the consent form.
- 2. An electronic survey.** The survey will evaluate emotional wellbeing and associated risk factors such as screen time, activity levels, nutrition and hydration. It is intended to administer the survey with the school climate survey to ensure minimal disruption to class and school schedules. Participants will be provided with a log-in associated with their student ID number and school staff will assist students to log-in to the survey.

Parents and legal guardians must consent (opt-in) for their child/children to participate in the Y7HC.

A student identification number will be used to administrate the program, link the two parts of data collection together, and ensure coverage across all students. This number will not be retained by ACT Health staff. Individual results from the Y7HC will be retained in the student's Canberra Health Services health record, however, all identifying information will be removed prior to analysis and reporting of population level data.

All information obtained from the Y7HC is treated confidentially and will be stored in a secure ACT Health database.

How we will use the results

The results from the Y7HC will be used to inform future health projects and health service planning in the ACT.

It is also anticipated that parents of all children who consent to the health check will receive feedback on their child's results. If a young person is identified as having a higher chance of emotional stress, results may be communicated to parents/legal guardians so that help can be sought to assist the young person in managing the issue.

The YourSay consultation process will further refine how results may be communicated to parents and health professionals involved in the Y7HC program.

How to provide consent

Parents and legal guardians of the young person need to give consent (opt-in) for their child to take part in the Y7HC.

Consent can be given to one or both parts of the Y7HC. Consent forms will be provided prior to the commencement of the Y7HC.

If you don't want your child to take part

If you don't give your consent your child will not take part in the Y7HC.

Consent can be given to one or both parts of the Y7HC. For example, you can consent to the physical measurement but not the assessment of emotional wellbeing.

More information

For more information please contact the Epidemiology Team in the ACT Health Directorate via the details below.

Email: Y7HC@act.gov.au

Phone: 02 5124 9440

Visit: health.act.gov.au

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- 1 ACT Health (2018). Healthy Canberra – Australian Capital Territory Chief Health Officer's Report 2018. Available at: <https://www.health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-09/ACT-Chief-Health-Officer-Report-2018.pdf>
 - 2 ACT Health (2014). Summary report for the Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey.
 - 3 ACT Government (2017). Ten Year Health Plan – Caring for Canberrans when and where they need it.
 - 4 Simmonds M, Llewellyn A, Owen CG, Woolacott N (2016). Predicting adult obesity from childhood obesity: a systematic review and meta-analysis, *Obesity Reviews*. Volume 17, Issue 2, Pages 95-107.
 - 5 See for discussion: Thapar A, Collishaw S, Pine DS, Thapar AK (2012). Depression in adolescence. *The Lancet*. Volume 379, Issue 9820, 17–23 March 2012, Pages 1056-1067. Available at: <http://www.sciencedirect.com>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

ACT Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. ACT Health respects their continuing culture and connections to the land and the unique contributions they make to the life of this area. ACT Health also acknowledges and welcomes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are part of the community we serve.

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