

Good choices for kids

Cut through the confusion to make healthy decisions

Choosing the best food for children isn't always easy. What looks like a nutritious product can turn out to be packed with sugar and salt, and some claims on packaging can be misleading.

Melbourne mums Rachel Knott and Kate Evans know what it's like to be confused in a supermarket aisle. But rather than stay frustrated, they set up a website, Kids Connect, with the aim of helping parents choose the right foods.

Rachel had a lightbulb moment while out searching for healthy snacks for her brood. "It's confusing trying to buy products that are a better choice for children. I have three kids and I had many questions: What snacks are better? What can I put in their lunch box that they'll want to eat and that's nutritious?"

Convinced other parents would be going through the same thing, Rachel and Kate developed their site. They have an independent panel of experts to decipher the fine print on product labels and select only the healthiest options.

With six kids between them, Rachel and Kate (pictured when

pregnant with twins Mimi and Tom, and with two-year-old Annie) make sure the site has advice to cover all age groups, from one-week-old babies to hungry teens.

Kids Connect is blissfully easy to navigate, with straightforward ideas for snacks, lunch boxes and meals, shopping lists and

out if it's OK, then give it a stamp," says Rachel. "We remove the guesswork."

Rachel and Kate have big plans for the site, recently launching the Kids Connect stamp of approval (similar to the Heart Foundation tick), which will appear on products later this year, including a2 Kid's Milk, Kraft

'We read the labels, do research

... we remove the guesswork'

advice on physical activity and health alerts.

It even provides a free helpline service for frazzled parents, forwarding curly questions about children's health care to the Kids Connect panel of specialists, including nutritionists, doctors, dentists and fitness experts.

"We've created something simple. We read the labels, do the research, find

Dairy Bites Cheestiks and Carran's Breakfast Bars.

"We feel like we're standing in the shoes of every other parent," says Rachel. "Having children in all age groups, we hope parents feel we understand."

Visit www.kidsconnect.com.au
BY PIP HARRY



TIPS FROM THE KIDS CONNECT TEAM

- ➔ For food safety reasons, yogurt packed in a lunch box should be eaten by morning recess.
- ➔ Grainy, wholegrain bread is great, but if your child won't eat it, there are some great fibre-rich white breads on the market – some even have more fibre than wholegrain varieties. Look for bread with more than three grams of fibre per slice.
- ➔ Encouraging children to rinse their mouths out with water after eating and drinking is an easy way to reduce dental cavities.
- ➔ Snack foods should be less than 60kJ per serve. In most cases, that's a good indicator they've met recommended sugar and fat levels.

DID YOU KNOW?

One in four Aussie children goes to school without breakfast

TIPS FOR trouble-free teething

- ➔ Give your baby something clean and cold to suck on: Plastic teething rings are good – or just a cold cloth from the freezer. You could also try yoghurt or fruit straight from the fridge.
- ➔ Prevent painful skin rashes by wiping your child's face clean of dribble regularly.
- ➔ Rub a teething gel over the gums if your baby is upset.
- ➔ Occasionally your child will need ibuprofen or paracetamol – but check with your GP or pharmacist first.





Kids and food

by Michelle Collins

healthier choices for children

Rachel Knott and Kate Evans are taking the frustration and confusion out of making better and healthier choices for children across Australia.

These two mums are the brains behind Kids Connect – an organisation that assesses and approves 'better choice' products for children, ranging from food to play equipment and baby products.

Their website www.kidsconnect.com.au is a hub of information where parents can seek advice on better choice products, nutrition and safety information, school lunch and snack ideas, as well as a Q&A section where they can contact an expert panel with their own questions.

They have also developed Kids Connect accreditation program.

Currently there are around 12 products accredited and have around 50 products submitted for pending approval.

Aussie Kids talked to Rachel and Kate about their new "baby."

How old are your own children and how many children do you have?

RK: I have three children – Chloe, 14, a boy Jesse, 11, and Jenna, 5.

KE: I have a 23-month-old daughter, Annie, and twins due mid May.

What are the most common misconceptions parents have about

reduced fat milks being a better choice for children over two years old. From this age, kids need the calcium from milk not the fat and most reduced fat milks have more calcium than full cream milk.

I've been through the whole confusing experience of trying to buy products that are a better choice for my children. I have three children and I work and I had so many questions of my own.

What snacks are better for my children? What food can I put in their school lunch that my children will eat and that is nutritious too?

I went through the experience of trying to choose a safe highchair when my children were younger. I searched for a stroller that was safe, strong but didn't weigh a ton.

KE: That low in fat means good for children when many low fat products are very high in sugar, not understanding the Recommended Daily Intakes of certain

boat with the same concerns and same desire to be good parents.

Why did you start the website? Was there one final straw that made you put the idea into action?

RK: We started the entire Kids Connect Program out of our own

frustrations as parents. With children's health a serious concern today, many people within the media and government organisations were communicating how serious the problem was without providing many solutions, especially practical and achievable solutions. We believed that armed with good information and practical advice, Kids Connect could help parents achieve their ultimate goal of raising

heal Rachel Knott and Kate Evans are taking the

frustration and confusion out of making better and healthier choices for children across Australia.

These two women are the brains behind Kids Connect – an organisation that assesses and approves 'better choice'



What has the response been to Kids Connect?

RK: Fantastic with many saying the same thing, "Thank goodness and about time!" Many parents have commented on their confusion with labeling and difficulty understanding what kids should be eating and how much?

Also many parents have mentioned their busy lives and lack of time to either read the labels or do the research, so really appreciate Kids Connect being there for them, doing the hard work.

KE: Overwhelming response has been that parents are looking for help they want to be armed with factual and trustworthy information about making more informed decisions when it comes to their children's health and wellbeing.

The Victorian Orff Schulwerk

Association (VOSA) is holding its 11th annual Early Childhood Conference of Performing Arts on the weekend of 16-17 June 2007 at Geazzano FCJ College in Kew.

ECCPA is considered to be Australia's pre eminent conference in the performing arts for anyone working creatively with young children.

This year's featured presenter is Salli Peltola from Finland and she will be joined by over 30 presenters from Australia, New Zealand and the USA.

Making right choice

Research comes up with the best products for children

Rachel Knott and Kate Evans are taking the frustration and confusion out of making better and healthier choices for children across Australia.

The two women are the brains behind Kids Connect – an organisation that assesses and approves "better choice" products for children, ranging from food to play equipment and baby products.

Relying on their own experiences of trying to find healthier and safer products for their own children – and realising how many parents are time-poor and overwhelmed with information and choices – Rachel and Kate developed the Kids Connect accreditation program.

Rachel Knott says regular research carried out by Kids Connect showed



Authors Rachel and Kate are helping parents make good food choices for their children.

parents want clear and trustworthy information when making choices for their children.

"Our research has consistently shown that parents are confused and overwhelmed by product labelling and conflicting media messag-

es," Ms Knott said.

"These factors are clear evidence of the need for a simple, independent and credible system that assists parents and children in their day-to-day nutrition and lifestyle choices.

"Kids Connect pro-

vides a solution and takes the guesswork away from parents.

"I've been through the whole confusing experience of trying to buy products that are a better choice for my children. I have three children and I work and I had so many questions of my own.

For the first time parents will be able to scan the shopping isles and be guided by the Kids Connect stamp to a better choice product for their children.

An independent panel supporting Kids Connect includes an accredited practising dietitian and food scientist, a GP paediatric surgeon and an alternative therapeutic health practitioner.

Reinforcing Kids Connect philosophy is its website www.kidsconnect.com.au.

better health

When it comes to health and wellbeing, there are lots of little things you can do to stay fighting fit



a choice connection

From the moment a child enters the world, his or her parents are faced with never-ending decisions about what to do, what to buy and what to believe. And while everyone wants the very best for their child, no-one can be an expert in all things related to a child's development from infancy to age 12.

Now there's a website designed to make life easier. The brainchild of two mothers, www.kidsconnect.com.au is for parents wanting to make responsible and informed decisions about raising their kids. The site includes product information and nutritional advice on all areas important to a child's health and wellbeing. A unique element is the Kids Connect Approved Stamp to assist parents to make better choices with confidence.

■ **Blue Approved Stamp** means a product has met Kids Connect's nutritional, health and safety guidelines for regular use. When this stamp appears alongside a food or beverage it means the product may be consumed on a daily basis as part of a nutritionally balanced diet.

■ **Yellow Extra x 2 Stamp** indicates a food or beverage is a better choice of snack food. These foods sit outside of the healthy eating food pyramid – this is shown on the website – and should be consumed in moderation, with no more than two serves per day recommended.



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Connecting parents

KIDS Connect is a new website created by mothers Rachel Knott and Kate Evans (pictured). The website, at www.kidsconnect.com.au, is a hub of information where parents can seek advice on better choice products, nutrition and



safety information, school lunch and snack ideas. It provides a free 24-hour service where parents can contact an expert panel with their questions.

Healthy or not? Ask Kids Connect

Parents everywhere know that choosing healthy products for children is not easy. Rachel Knott and Kate Evans know it only too well – which is why they came up with Kids Connect, a group aimed at taking the irritation out of healthy shopping. Guided by a panel of experts on children's health, many of whom are parents themselves, Kids Connect assesses products for children, awarding a 'Better Choice' tick to those products which meet its standards.

According to research carried out by the organisation, parents want clear and reliable information when making decisions on their children's health. "I've been through the whole confusing experience of trying to buy products that are a better choice for my children," says co-founder Rachel Knott. "Kids Connect provides a solution and takes the guesswork away." The hub of the Kids Connect organisation is its website, www.kidsconnect.com.au

