

Calories star at cinemas

Snacks high in sugar, fat

**Sophie Elsworth
and Janelle Miles**

TREATING kids to popcorn, ice cream and soft drink at the movies is the same as feeding them a loaf of bread, experts said yesterday.

While stocking up on treats such as chips, coke or choc tops is all part of the cinema experience for most families, they are loaded with unseen sugar, fat and salt.

Dietitians and nutritionists said film buffs may not realise just how many calories they consumed as they settled back into their seat.

A large container of popcorn had about 28g of fat and 2260 kilojoules. Potato chips had 11g of fat and a chocolate bar more than 1000kj. A 600ml cola had 63g of sugar.

Nutritionist Catherine Saxelby said the supersized junk food items available at the candy counter were a recipe for disaster.

"The size of these foods is huge, you actually feel like you are getting value for money. But it's value our waistlines don't need," she said.

"If you eat the whole amount that they give you, you are ending up eating sometimes twice as much as you want."

Brisbane-based dietitian Julie Gilbert of Solutions Food Management said: "Children should be able to go and see a movie and not associate that with eating junk food.

"It's only two hours. It's not like your child is going to suffer from hunger during that period of time."

Ms Gilbert said parents could give their children a sandwich, a piece of fruit and a healthy snack before going to the movies.

Alternatively, she said a family could share a small box of popcorn.

"The small size is really designed for a whole family, not an individual," Ms Gilbert said.

"We need to be downsizing, not upsizing, our snack items.

"I think cinemas need to be able to offer small portion sizes that are kid friendly.

"They should also be offering a range of alternatives that are healthier choices."

Ms Saxelby, who is based in Sydney, said the consumption of junk food during the movies equated to "mindless eating".

"Going to the movies is permission to overindulge," she said.

"Movie popcorn is a perfect example of mindless eating, your attention is focused on somewhere else like the movie.

"You don't even pay any attention to that hand of yours that is going backwards and forwards from the box, so it's the perfect formula for mindless eating."

Some foods, including buttered and salted popcorn, were loaded with more than 28g of fat.

News not so good

HE MAY have been wishing that it was indeed a good news week. After a tough week in the job, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd copped a ribbing from television comics on Saturday night as he taped an appearance for tonight's episode of Ten's *Good News Week*.

In the segment, host Paul McDermott needled the PM about his outburst at a flight attendant.



Ribbed: Rudd