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For immediate release

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POOR FOOD AND DIETING MAKE WOMEN SICK

As part of Nutrition Week 2012, Women's Health Victoria highlights the link between women's relationship with food and their physical and mental health in their new *Women and Food Issues Paper*.

The recent Victorian government Health Monitor Report reveals that eighty-six percent of Victorian women do not eat the recommended quantity of fruit and vegetables as recommended by the *Australian guidelines for health eating* and 56 percent of Victorian women are overweight or obese.

'Being overweight does not mean a woman is necessarily experiencing a health problem, in the sense she may not have an illness. However, eating poor quality food, and not enough of some nutrients leaves women at risk of nutrient deficiency and the onset of chronic disease as she ages', said Women's Health Victoria Policy and Health Promotion Manager, Rose Durey.

'In addition, women struggle with unhealthy eating behaviours, many from a young age, in an attempt to fit a culturally acceptable slim ideal which is completely out of reach for most', Ms Durey said, 'Women are at greater risk than men of developing disordered eating patterns'.

'Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa are serious mental illnesses, affecting more women than men. What many people don't know is that by strict dieting or skipping meals, women may be setting themselves up for a lifetime of weight gain and poor nutrition', she said.

'We need to look at the underlying forces at play that keep women on the merry-go-round of body dissatisfaction, disordered eating and poor mental and physical health. These forces are complex. We need to challenge gender stereotypes, ensure women have equal access to economic and political resources, and ensure access to a nutritious food supply.'

Women's Health Victoria has explored the relationship between women and food in the newly published *Women and Food Issues Paper*: <http://whv.org.au/publications-resources/publications-resources-by-topic/post/women-and-food-ip/>

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