



Weight Management in Children

What is it?

Weight management in children is about making long-term changes that support a healthy lifestyle. The goal is to slow weight gain and allow your child to grow into his or her weight.

A poor diet, lack of exercise, emotional issues, and even a lack of sleep can lead to weight issues in children. In rare cases, a hormonal issue can cause weight gain.

In Australia, nearly one in four children are overweight and three in 20 are obese. An obese child is more likely to stay this way as an adult. Being overweight or obese also increases the risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease. That's why it's so important to help your child reach a healthy weight, starting now.

What will my GP do now?

Your GP will help you learn how to make healthy eating and exercise a priority. Weight management is a process your whole family must embrace. Your GP will also:

- Give you any test results
- Manage any weight-related health issues
- Manage any medicines which may be having an effect on your child's weight
- Assess any emotional issues your child is facing
- Talk to you about a specialist referral to a dietitian

What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will schedule appointments every 3-6 months to check your child's weight and height. You will also talk about how you and your family are coping with your healthy lifestyle changes.

Continue to see your GP regularly. This will help you and your family stay motivated and on the path to better health.

What can I do?

Changing your habits is a gradual, long-term process that takes patience and effort. But even small changes make a huge difference over time. The home setting has a huge impact on your child's health. Here's how you and your family can help your child.

Healthy eating tips

- Lots of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Limit the amount of takeaway foods
- Limit drinks with lots of sugar (soft drinks, energy drinks, flavoured milk)
- Check portion sizes and don't overfill plates
- Limit snacks and grazing

Healthy lifestyle tips

- Keep a food diary to share and discuss with your GP
- Encourage your child to exercise or move around every day
- Limit any long periods of sitting
- Reduce screen time – including TV, computer games, phones and tablets
- Remove TVs and screens from the bedroom

What is a healthy BMI?

BMI, or body mass index, is a number that can be used to check if your child is a healthy weight.

To calculate, divide their weight in kilograms by their height in metres. Then, divide the answer by their height.

You will need to check their BMI against a gender-specific 'Body mass index-for-age percentiles' chart.

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What supports are available?

Public clinics and services

Go4Fun

Go4Fun is a free healthy lifestyle program for children. The program includes nutrition, fitness, self-esteem, and healthy weight. Visit go4fun.com.au to find local sessions, phone **1800 780 900**, or SMS **0409 745 645** for a call back.

South Western Sydney Local Health District

South Western Sydney Local Health District has an early childhood community nutrition service which is free for children and families. You or your GP can refer to your local nutrition service team:

- Bankstown, Fairfield and Liverpool: Bankstown Community Health Centre. Phone **9780 2837**
- Macarthur and Wingecarribee Rosemeadow Community Health Centre. Phone **4633 4179**
- Campbelltown Hospital: Phone **4634 3888**

Growing Healthy Kids

Growing Health Kids is a free individual and group program over 4 to 6 months for children 2 to 17 years old who has a BMI greater than the 95th percentile. Talk to your GP about a referral to this service or view the [flyer](#).

Private and community options

- YMCA provides activity and exercise, outdoor education, and camping for children. Visit ymcansw.org.au
- An Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) can provide nutrition advice for your child. Visit dietitiansaustralia.org.au



What questions could I ask my doctor?



- How can we start changing our unhealthy habits?*
- Where can I learn about a good diet and portions?*
- What if my child is being bullied or feels anxious?*
- Who can I talk to if my child doesn't want to change?*
- Where can I find cheap healthy food?*
- What results am I aiming for?*
- How do I know if my child is starting to reach a healthy weight range?*

Where can I learn more?

- **NSW Health** - Healthy Eating Active Living: healthyliving.nsw.gov.au
- **Sydney Children's Hospital Network** - factsheets: schn.health.nsw.gov.au

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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