

# FACTSHEET



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## For my adolescent with a weight problem: Where to from here?

- You are not alone. Unfortunately, weight problems are common among adolescents in Australia. At least 1 in 4 young people in Australian high schools are overweight or obese.
- If you think that your adolescent may have a weight problem, it is important that he or she is correctly assessed. Their obesity may be causing health problems. Your local GP or paediatrician will be able to measure their growth and level of development and provide further advice.
- The main factors that can be controlled and influence weight for adolescents are the amount of food they eat and physical active they do and amount of “screen time”.
- Adolescence can be a very challenging time and a teenager’s family plays an important role in providing an appropriate environment in the home to encourage healthy food choices and exercise.
- Parents can support their adolescent to make healthy choices by providing suitable foods and drinks in the home, discussing helpful options for outside the home, and being a healthy role model.
- Simple dietary changes that can be made include:
  - Encourage water and reduce the amount of all fruit juice, cordial and soft drink at home
  - Swapping all full cream dairy foods (milk, yoghurt, cheese) to low fat types.
  - Read food labels on snacks and look for options labeled 400 kilojoules or less per serve.
  - Make sure nutritionally balanced low fat, low sugar snacks are available in the cupboard/ fridge e.g. fruit, low fat yoghurts, sandwiches, baked beans, low fat crackers
- Avoid easy access to “sometimes foods” which may be higher in fat and sugar such as fast food, potato chips, biscuits, cakes and chocolates
- Aim to fill half the plate at main meals with salad or vegetables
- Have regular meal times including breakfast – even if this means you have to wake your adolescent up earlier.
- Simple changes to physical activity that can be made include:
  - Limiting television viewing and computer usage to 2 hrs or less each day
  - Encourage some regular physical activity such as 30 minutes of walking every day.

### Remember:

- Weight problems can often be successfully managed in adolescents by making some changes to what they eat and being more physically active.
- Simple changes that can be made include choosing low fat dairy foods, cutting out soft drinks and juice.
- Simple changes to activity habits including adding 30 minutes of activity to your day and aiming for less than two hours “screen time” (television, DVDs, games console, computers, smart phones)
- If you would like more help with weight management, discuss local options with your GP or paediatrician.