

# FACTSHEET

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## Weight management tips for parents and carers

Parents have an important role in guiding the food choices of their children. Setting a good example by making healthy shopping choices, role modelling healthy eating habits and using low fat cooking methods will all help manage your child's weight. Here are a few suggestions.

### MEALS

- Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Having breakfast helps children to concentrate better at school and reduces snacking
- Have regular meal and mid meal times. This helps to teach children that there are set times for eating rather than encouraging a "grazing" eating style
- Enjoy meals together as a family. This is a time for discussing/practicing and learning about healthy food choices
- Involve your children in food choices and when they are old enough, encourage them to help with food preparation

### DRINKS

- Encourage water as the main drink of choice. Soft drinks, fruit juice and cordials all contain unnecessary extra energy as sugar. They are not recommended as drinks for children

### FOOD CHOICES

- Where possible, choose grain-based breads, crackers and breakfast cereals. Wholegrain products are more filling than more processed white varieties. Some

examples of wholegrain varieties include multigrain breads, Weetbix<sup>TM</sup>, Mini Wheats<sup>TM</sup>, Just Right<sup>TM</sup> and Corn Thins<sup>TM</sup>

- Swap all dairy foods, including milk, yoghurt and cheese for low fat varieties.
- Encourage your children to eat a wide variety of vegetables for both meals and snacks. A snap lock bag of vegetable sticks is great for the school lunch box or a trip to the shopping centre
- Children are less likely to ask for seconds if their meal contains half a plate of vegetables or salad at the main meal
- When shopping, read food labels and try to choose foods with "Less than 10 grams of fat per 100g"

### HEALTHY SNACK FOODS

- The most filling and healthy snack foods include fruit, low fat yoghurts, wholegrain crackers with topping, toast, flavoured low fat milks, vegetable sticks.
- Frozen peas and corn and frozen fruits such as orange segments, grapes, strawberries and peeled banana make good summer snacks at home

### TAKE AWAY AND PROCESSED FOODS

- Most take away foods and packet snack foods are high in fat, sugar, salt and so are not healthy choices. They are "sometimes" foods to be eaten occasionally – 1-2 times per week
- Highly processed chips, rice crackers, chocolates, biscuits and packet snack foods often require little chewing and do not satisfy hungry appetites

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## HUNGER

- It is important to know if your child is bored or hungry, when they ask for food. If your child is asking for food after their meal or snack, only offer vegetables or salad. If this is refused they are not hungry but they may need some suggestions of what to do

## EXERCISE AND PLAY

- Be active for at least one hour per day. This can be in short periods of 15-20 minutes
- Encourage your children to help with housework / chores. This allows parents to spend more time doing active things with their children
- Encourage play outdoors and being active together as a family

## SLEEP

- Children less than 12 years need 10 -12 hours sleep. Children over 12 years need 8 -10 hours sleep.
- Limiting screen time just before bed will help them get to sleep quickly
- Children (and parents) should not have a television in their bedroom
- A lack of sleep increases the risk of becoming overweight

### Remember

- Children respond well to routine/structure with their food habits. Stick to meal and mid meal times and avoid a “grazing” style of eating at home
- Other easy dietary changes that can be used to help with weight management include always eating breakfast, choosing low fat dairy foods and encouraging active play