

FACTSHEET



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Losing weight- why the whole family needs to be involved

If your child has been advised to lose weight, there are some very good reasons why the whole family should make changes.

- Starting a healthy lifestyle plan can be hard work, although the long term benefits are worth the initial hard work. Everyone needs support to lose weight – especially kids. They can't do it without you.
- If everyone in the family makes healthy food choices and is more active, then it is easier to be consistent. The kids will remind you what you should be doing!
- Kids do not like changes if they feel they are being picked on. Having different food plans for different children (unless it's absolutely necessary) can lead to more arguments and fights.
- The food you offer and the brands you buy make a huge difference to you and your child's health. Consult with your dietitian when making new, healthy food choices.
- Children and teenagers learn from your example. When you make changes, they will be watching and are more likely to copy you. That's why it is so important for parents and carers to model healthy behaviours.
- Kids may not be motivated to lose weight and don't have the same self-control as adults. Never rely on will power alone - instead change the environment for everyone.
- You need to make sure that children are living in a family environment which is as healthy as possible. Even adults find it hard to resist "treat" foods if they are easy to get hold of. So to make things easier, keep tempting food such as cakes, biscuits, soft drinks and chocolate away from the house and stock up with

- healthy foods and snacks instead (see the 'healthy snacks options' fact sheet for more information).
- If someone in the family doesn't want to give up their unhealthy treats then get advice on healthy snacks which are also delicious.
- One area where the whole family often needs help is "screentime" (watching television, DVDs, playing electronic games or using the internet etc.). Role model healthy behavior by having family rules about how much "screentime" each person has every day, ensuring it is limited to less than 2 hours a day.
- Being active helps lose weight and keep to a healthy weight. A child aged 5 to 12 years should be active for at least 60 minutes a day. Children can be active in many different ways. In general, the more physical activity (up to 3 hours) children do the more they will benefit.
- To encourage activity, do things together as a family such as family walks, bike rides or picnics on the weekend

Remember

- Everyone can benefit from a healthier lifestyle.
- The more parents and other family members are involved, the more likely a child can lose weight.
- Don't just target the person who needs to lose weight. A healthy lifestyle is something the whole family can do together.