

FACTSHEET



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Weight management tips for parents and carers: Helping your teenager to safely lose weight

The best way to help your teenager lose weight is to make healthy food choices easy for them at home. You can:

- Keep tempting, energy dense foods away from the house. These include soft drink, chocolate, biscuits and cakes. If they are in the cupboard, your teenager will eat them.
- Encourage water as the drink of choice. Soft drinks, fruit juice and cordials contain a lot of sugar and are not healthy choices. Again, don't have them in the house!
- Where possible, keep grain-based breads and breakfast cereals at home. Wholegrain products are more filling than more processed white varieties. Some examples of wholegrain breads and cereals include multigrain breads, oats, untoasted muesli, Weetbix™, Mini Wheats™ and Just Right™.
- Keep only low fat dairy foods in the house such as low fat milks, yoghurts and cheese.
- Read food labels and try to buy foods with "Less than 10 grams of fat per 100 grams."
- Try not to "nag" them about what they are eating! Nagging tends to put their defenses up. This can lead them to do the opposite of what you want them to do.
- Your role is to help and support them in making healthy eating choices. Aim to include the same healthy changes for yourself and everyone in the family!

Meal times and serving sizes

Having a routine with meals is more challenging in the teenage years, but still very important.

There is increased tendency to "graze", eat away from home and miss family meals. You can:

- Encourage formal meal times - that's sitting down and eating a healthy meal together at the table, without the TV on or any screens at the table.
- Increase the amount of vegetables or salad you serve up for dinner. If your teenager says they do not like vegetables or salad, do not substitute with other foods.
- Serve a portion of meat about the size of the palm of your hand.
- When dishing out dinner, aim for ½ plate of vegetables or salad, ¼ protein (i.e. red meat, fish, chicken) and ¼ carbohydrate (i.e. potato, rice or pasta).
- Plan your meals and encourage your teenager to be involved in cooking or preparing them for the family. Maybe they could cook a meal once a week.
- Keep a range of healthy snack foods in the house. Good options include nut-based muesli bars, crackers and light cheese, low fat ice-creams and flat bread wraps.
- Encourage your teenager to take lunch to school, rather than buying from the canteen. Include fruit, lean meats, low fat dairy foods and whole grain bread.

Being active and “screens”

- Encourage physical activity whenever possible. For example walking the dog, walking to school, walking to the bus stop further away or joining a sports club.
- Make activity a part of everyday life for the whole family.
- Sitting in front of “screens” such as personal computers, games like X-Box and Play Station, small screens like DS and i-phones and of course, DVDs and TV reduces physical activity and causes weight gain.
- Teenagers can spend many hours every day in front of a screen and it is not good for their health or their weight.
- Reducing leisure “screen time” can help your teenager lose weight.
- Put rules in place at home about where and when a screen can be used. You may find it helpful to establish rules together.
- Aim for less than 2 hours of leisure “screen time” per day.
- Avoid screens in bedrooms for all family members A television in a teenager’s bedroom adds about an hour of viewing to their day
- Plan together which shows your teenager wants to watch and turn TV off when the show finishes. Avoid leaving the TV on in the background.

Remember

- When making lifestyle changes, teenagers need your help and support - try not to nag them!
- You have an important role in providing the right types of food at home. Choose wholegrain breads and low fat dairy products, remove all soft drinks, avoid keeping “junk” food in the house and always encourage water as the drink of choice.
- Encourage physical activity whenever possible.
- Reducing screen time definitely helps with weight loss.
- JOIN IN - the whole family can benefit from eating well and moving more!