

Helping an overweight child

Parents can feel pressured to keep their children's weight in the healthy range. The most important thing is to resist pressuring children. They need gentle encouragement and a supportive environment. Here are some tips to build habits that promote a healthy weight.

- Focus on habits, not diets** – Aim for gradual changes to eating and activity patterns rather than making a big fuss about the family diet or fitness program. Kids can grow into their weight, so take it slowly.
- Be a good role model** – This is the most important tip. Make healthy eating and activity a personal priority and be seen to do this by your children. When you drinking water, eat fruit or choose to walk rather than driving, these habits rub off on the kids.
- Involve the extended family** – Let grandparents, aunts, uncles and even carers know how you are approaching eating and activity. Ask that treats be kept to a minimum.
- Sometimes foods** – Classify foods as 'every day' and 'sometimes' foods, rather than treats, goodies, or bad foods.
- Reduce 'eat-a-tainment'** – Fast food doesn't have to be part of every outing. This is a good habit to break.
- Limit TV viewing** – Ask your child to choose a few favourite shows. Avoid using the television as a child minder.
- Make movement fun** – It's about playfulness, rather than fitness.
- Spend focused time** – Give the kids full attention when you are spending time with them, so they know you are enjoying playtime.
- Counter negative talk** – Choose positive language that emphasises acceptance rather than 'fat talk' or the need to 'diet'.
- Praise behaviours** – Encourage the behaviours you want, rather than criticising the ones you don't want.
- Look for assistance** – If you are concerned about your child's weight, contact a dietitian who can offer useful advice and friendly support.

