

# Healthy habits and a healthy weight: Tips for your child and family

More children than ever are above a healthy weight, but there's plenty you can do to help your child and family eat well, be more active and stay healthy.

## What is a 'healthy weight'?

Children need to grow, but they are healthiest if they stay within a certain weight range as they grow. This is called a healthy weight for their age.

## Why is a healthy weight important?

Children who grow at a healthy weight tend to be fitter, healthier, and are often happier. They are also likely to have more self-esteem and confidence and less likely to have problems at school.

## How can I tell if my child is a healthy weight?

Around one in four children in Australia are above a healthy weight, so it's not always easy to tell if your child is a healthy weight for their age.

Ask your doctor or nurse to measure your child's height and weight, and plot it on a growth chart to check whether your child is a healthy weight for their height and age.

## Is it likely my child will just grow out of their extra weight?

No. Most children do not grow out of their extra weight as they get older, unless you make changes to their eating and activity habits.

The habits your child learns now are the habits they will have as an adult. If your child is already above a healthy weight, you may need to make some changes to your whole family's lifestyle.

**But there's good news:** You can do a lot to help your whole family develop healthier eating habits, and keep them active.



## BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL

Children learn by example. One of the best ways to help your child be active and eat well is for you and your family to do it too.

Show your family that being active is fun by going for a walk or a play in the park, instead of playing on screens or watching TV.

Your child can't do it without you. If the whole family makes healthy food choices and gets active, it's easier for your child to stay healthy over the long term.

## Why is my child above a healthy weight?

All children are different, and some are more likely to gain weight than others. If your child puts on weight easily, then it's even more important for them to eat well and be more active.

Have a good look at how much your child is eating, as young children don't need nearly as much food as older children and adults.

## What does it mean for my child if they are above a healthy weight?

Children who are above a healthy weight may develop health problems in childhood such as asthma, sleep problems, joint problems, high blood pressure and liver disease.

Children who are above a healthy weight are also much more likely to become overweight adults, with increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

## What can I do if my child is above a healthy weight?

There's a lot you can do to help your child lead a healthy life. Here are 8 simple tips to help you.

### 8 Healthy Habits

Information is relevant for children aged 2 years and older.



Changing habits is hard, so you don't have to do it all at once. Pick one of these and practice it as a whole family, then add another one. Practicing healthy habits is good for everyone in the family.

### ! SOME IMPORTANT POINTS

- Let your child know that you love them, whatever their weight, and that you want them to be healthy and happy. Don't let anyone in the family tease or hassle them about their weight.
- Listen to any concerns your child may have about their weight. Children need to feel supported and know that the most important thing is to eat well and stay active.
- Focus on healthy habits for the whole family. If everyone in the family joins in to practice healthier habits, then everyone will be healthier.



### ? WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

Please talk to your family doctor if you are concerned about your child or family's health.

These sites contain lots of information to help you:

[healthykids.nsw.gov.au](http://healthykids.nsw.gov.au)

[makehealthynormal.nsw.gov.au](http://makehealthynormal.nsw.gov.au)

To support your family, there are also FREE programs available for children and parents.



### Free programs for children

Go4Fun is a FREE 10 week healthy lifestyle program for children aged 7-13 years who are above a healthy weight.

To find out more or register, call 1800 780 900.



### Free programs for parents and carers

The Get Healthy Service is a FREE personal telephone health coaching service for anyone over 16 years.

Call 1300 806 258 to get started.