

Top tips for managing your child's weight

How much weight should my child lose?

Generally, for children who are still growing, the aim is not weight loss but weight maintenance. Preventing further weight gain while your child grows taller will mean that over time your child will achieve a healthier weight for their height.

The key to positive change is you

Role modelling healthy behaviours is the best way to help your child. To learn more about healthy eating and physical activity, talk to your general practice team about enrolling on an Appetite for Life course or following the 10 steps to a healthier weight guide. By learning more, you can support your whole family to change.

Food

Make snacks and drinks healthy

Offer fruit, vegetable sticks (for example, cucumber, capsicum, carrot) or yoghurt as a snack between meals.

Keep chocolate, biscuits, chips, cakes, ice cream and lollies as occasional foods, just once or twice a week.

Avoid sugary drinks, including fruit juice. Diet soft drinks can encourage a preference for sweet things, so ideally give water as the main drink.

From the age of 2, children can be given low-fat milk (green, yellow or light blue top) in place of whole milk (dark blue top).

Age-appropriate portion sizes

Make half the meal vegetables.

Child's palm-sized protein foods, such as meat, egg, chicken, seafood, beans, lentils.

Child's fist-sized carbohydrate foods, such as potato, pasta, rice, bread.

Limit takeaways to once a week

Go for healthier options, such as kebabs or wraps, non-fried rice and noodle dishes with lots of vegetables, or pizza with more vegetables than meat.

Don't forget breakfast

Eating breakfast can help reduce snacking and filling up on unhealthy foods later on in the day. See "Weight management in children" on www.healthinfo.org.nz for healthy breakfast ideas.



Activity

Be active with your child – make it a family habit

Go to www.activecanterbury.org.nz for more ideas and information on walking and biking tracks, and parks in Canterbury. Remember – walking is free!

Encourage at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily

Examples include running games like tag, biking and playing at the park. The activity should make your child huff and puff.

Limit screen time to two hours each day

This includes television, computers, video games and mobile phones.

Behaviour

Avoid grazing – stick to a set pattern

Three meals plus two snacks a day should be enough to meet a healthy child's nutritional needs.

Do not use food-related rewards

Reward your child with non-food treats, such as spending time with them playing their favourite game.

Do not eat in front of the television or with other distractions

Eat at the table as a family. This adds structure to meal times and encourages mindful eating.

Enforce a regular bed time

Not getting enough sleep can contribute to poor eating patterns and food choices, all of which can contribute to weight gain.

Don't treat your child differently. Healthy eating advice is suitable for the whole family, so don't hide the chips, chocolate and fizzy drinks from your child – don't buy them!

See "Weight management in children" on www.healthinfo.org.nz for healthy breakfast, dinner and activity ideas as well as tips on where to find more information and guidance.

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