

5 ways to a healthy lifestyle



Did you know?

- ★ National surveys found that the combined level of overweight and obese children in Australia has more than doubled in recent years.
- ★ A major study revealed that the number of overweight and obese children in NSW rose from 1 in 10 in 1985 to 1 in 4 children in 2004.
- ★ Obese children have a 25% - 50% chance of going on to be obese adults.

Our busy lifestyles can be hard on our family's health. Rushing to and from school and work can make it difficult to find time to be physically active and eat well.

We can also slip into the habit of choosing unhealthy snacks and takeaway foods or spending our free time in front of the TV or computer.

However, these choices can be dangerous for our health and our children's health – both now and in the long-term.

That's why it's so important to stop, take stock and make a conscious decision to follow a healthy lifestyle.

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How to lead a healthy lifestyle

Get active each day

Regular physical activity is important for the healthy growth, development and well-being of kids and teens.

Kids and teens should get at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day, including vigorous activities that make them 'huff and puff'.

Parents should be good role models and have a positive attitude to being active.

Choose water as a drink

Water is the best way to quench your thirst – and it doesn't come with the added sugar found in soft drinks, fruit juice drinks and other sweetened drinks.

Reduced fat milk for children over 2 years of age is a nutritious drink and a great source of calcium.

Give kids and teens whole fruit to eat, rather than offering fruit juices which contain less fibre.

Eat more fruit and vegies

Eating fruit and vegies every day helps kids and teens grow and develop, boosts their vitality and can reduce the risk of many chronic diseases.

Aim to eat 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegies every day.

Have fresh fruit available as a convenient snack and try to include fruit and vegies in every meal.

Turn off the TV or computer and get active

Sedentary or 'still' time spent watching TV, surfing online, playing computer or electronic hand-held games is linked to kids and teens becoming overweight or obese.

Kids and teens should spend no more than 2 hours a day on 'small screen' entertainment.

Plan a range of active indoor and outdoor games or activities for your children, as alternatives to watching TV or playing on the computer.

Eat fewer snacks and select healthier alternatives

Healthy snacks help kids and teens meet their daily nutritional needs.

Snacks based on fruit and vegies, reduced fat dairy products and whole grains are the healthiest choices.

Limit snacks that are high in sugar or saturated fats – such as chips, cakes and chocolate – which can cause children to put on excess weight.

Tips for parents

The choices you make are crucial in helping your children to develop healthy eating habits and be physically active. This might mean changing what you buy at the supermarket and what snacks you serve, as well as finding ways to get your children up and active.

- Encourage your children to make healthy choices about food and being physically active. This can include verbal prompts, preparing healthy snacks and meals and buying them 'active' gifts, such as bats, balls or a skipping rope.
- Avoid using unhealthy foods as 'treats' for children's good behaviour as this is likely to have a training effect and increase the appeal of such foods.
- Making healthier choices doesn't mean you can't reward or treat children. Come up with some fun, 'active' rewards that aren't food-related, such as going for a bike ride with mum or dad, a morning at the swimming pool or a visit to the zoo.
- Children do what they see, so it is crucial to demonstrate healthy behaviours. This can be as simple as eating together as a family, involving children in choosing and preparing healthy meals and spending time together being physically active.

For more information and ideas on healthy eating and physical activity, go to www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au