

Fact Sheet

For my child with a weight problem: Where to from here?

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Unfortunately, weight problems are common among children in Australia. At least 1 in 4 school-aged children in Australia are overweight or obese.

If you suspect that your child may have a weight problem, it is important that he or she is correctly assessed. Your local GP or paediatrician will be able to assess your child's growth and work out if he or she is overweight.

The main factors that can be controlled by a family are a child's food intake and level of physical activity.

Simple dietary changes that can be made include:

- Swapping all full cream dairy foods (milk, yoghurt, cheese) to low fat varieties for children over the age of two years.
- Limit the consumption of all fruit juice, cordial and soft drink.
- Eating breakfast each day.
- Sitting down to enjoy meals together as a family with the television switched off.

Simple changes to increase physical activity that can be made include:

- Restricting television viewing and screen time to 2 hrs each day.
- Encouraging children to be active for at least 60 minutes each day.
- Including a daily family walk.
- Walking to and from school.

There is an extreme shortage of services available to manage childhood weight problems in the community. Some services available include:

- **Family Weight Management Program:** A family focused program for the parents of primary school aged children. This program is run at Liverpool Hospital, The Healthy Lifestyle Unit at North Ryde.
- **The Children's Hospital at Westmead FLIP Program (Families and Lifestyle In Partnership) for children less than 12 yrs.** The child's family & caregivers are involved in a multidisciplinary approach to the weight management of a child who is well above the healthy weight range.
- **Local hospital:** Some hospitals have departments which will see children and adolescents for weight management. For more information on your local services contact your GP or local hospital or community health centre.
- **Private dietitian:** Private dietitians can be found locally in the Yellow Pages. Members of private health funds may get some rebates after seeing a private dietitian.

Remember

- **Overweight and obesity are significant issues in Australia.**
- **If you are concerned that your child may have a weight problem, take them to your local GP or paediatrician for assessment.**

This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for your child.

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the children's hospital at Westmead

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