



OBESITY

Obesity refers to increased weight above the recommended guidelines according to height. Scary but true, 23% of Australian children are either overweight or obese.

It is crucial that children participate in a minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Screen time such as watching TV, playing on the tablet devices and computer time should be reduced to no more than two hours per day.

Before exercising always check with an accredited exercise physiologist.

Why it's important to exercise

Overweight or obese children and adolescents are more likely to be overweight adults. Increased weight poor diet and lack of activity are associated with the following conditions:

- Insulin resistance
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Cardiovascular disease
- Osteoarthritis
- Mental Health issues - Reduced mood, depression, body dissatisfaction

Things to remember:

- The emphasis on managing weight in childhood and adolescence is not weight loss but weight maintenance. As the child grows their BMI (body mass index) will stabilise and reduce as they increase in height. A healthy diet with a variety of food groups and regular daily physical activity that meets the guidelines will assist in achieving a health weight as your child grows.
- Many overweight children are hesitant in group sports for fear of not keeping up with their fitter, leaner friends/teammates. Encourage exercise that is fun and can be done in a family environment such as bike riding, swimming or walking. There are many programs in the community that are not competitive sport based and some of these programs are free (Go4Fun – NSW Health). See your local gym, YMCA or local health district for Active Kids programs.

Types of exercise recommended:

- All children and adolescence should be participating in a minimum of 60 minutes of exercise and physical activity per day.
- Encourage activities that are incorporated into daily activities such as walking to school, kicking the ball in the backyard or helping with house cleaning.
- Weight bearing exercises and flexibility are recommended to keep the body strong and flexible.

References:

1. Physical activity guidelines for children and adolescents. Australian Government
2. Parrish A, Okely A, Batterham M et al. PACE: A group randomised controlled trial to increase children's break-time playground physical activity. Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport 2016; 19: 413-418
3. Healthyactive.gov.au. (2016). Healthy Active - Recommendations and Guidelines. [online] Available at: www.healthyactive.gov.au/internet/healthyactive/publishing.nsf/Content/recommendations-guidelines
4. Pivovarov, J., Taplin, C. and Riddell, M. (2015). Current perspectives on physical activity and exercise for youth with diabetes. Pediatric Diabetes, 16(4), pp.242-255.