

# Fact Sheet

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

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- Unfortunately, weight problems are common among adolescents in Australia. At least 1 in 4 young people in high school in Australia are overweight or obese.
- If you suspect that your adolescent 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 their growth and level of development and provide further advice.
- The main factors that can be controlled to influence weight status are food intake and level of physical activity.
- Adolescence can be a very challenging time and a teenager's family plays an important role in providing an appropriate environment in the home to encourage healthy choices and an active family environment.
- Parents can support their adolescent to make suitable choices by providing appropriate foods and drinks in the home, discuss suitable choices socially and outside of the home, and being a good role model for healthy lifestyle behaviours.
- Simple dietary changes that can be made include:
  - Encourage water and completely limit the consumption of all fruit juice, cordial and soft drink
  - Swapping all full cream dairy foods (milk, yoghurt, cheese) to low fat varieties.
  - Check food labels and only choose foods that have <10grams of fat per 100grams.
- Ensure nutritionally balanced low fat, low sugar snacks are available in the cupboard/ fridge e.g. fruit, low fat yoghurts, sandwiches, baked beans, low fat crackers
- Avoid easy access to "sometimes foods" which may be higher in fat and sugar such as fast food, potato chips, biscuits, cakes and chocolates
- Aim to fill half the plate at main meals with salad or vegetables
- Establish regular meal times including breakfast
- Simple changes to physical activity that can be made include:
  - Restricting television viewing and computer usage to 2 hrs or less each day.
  - Encourage some regular physical activity such as 30 minutes of walking every day.

### Remember

- Weight problems can often be successfully managed in adolescents by making some dietary changes and by becoming more physically active.
- Simple dietary changes that can be made include choosing low fat dairy foods and eliminating soft drinks.
- Simple changes to activity habits including adding 30 minutes of activity to your day and aiming to watch less than 2 hours of television.
- If you would like more help with weight management, discuss local options with your GP or paediatrician.

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.

This document was reviewed on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

the  
children's  
hospital at Westmead

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