

# HEALTHY EATING FOR CHILDREN

Healthy eating is important for your child's health, growth and development. Children who eat healthily are less likely to develop chronic conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and some cancers. They will also feel better, look better and enjoy life more.

## WHAT IS HEALTHY EATING?

To stay healthy and maintain a healthy weight, children need to be physically active and eat the right amount of nutrients to balance the energy they use.

The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend children should enjoy a wide variety of foods from these 5 food groups:

- fruit
- vegetables, legumes and beans
- cereals (including breads, rice, pasta and noodles), preferably wholegrain
- lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives
- milks, yoghurts, cheeses and/or alternatives
  - children under 2 should have full-fat milk, but older children and adolescents should be encouraged to have reduced-fat varieties

## HOW MUCH FOOD DOES MY CHILD NEED EACH DAY?

### 4 - 8 YEARS:

1½ serves of fruit; 4½ serves of vegetables; 4 serves of grains; 1½ serves of meat/poultry; 1½ - 2 serves of dairy

### 9 - 11 YEARS:

2 serves of fruit; 5 serves of vegetables; 4 - 5 serves of grains; 2½ serves meat/poultry; 2½ - 3 serves of dairy

## HOW TO ENCOURAGE HEALTHY EATING HABITS

Teaching your child how to eat healthily when they are young means they will be more likely to make their own healthy choices as they grow up.

## TIPS

- Make mealtime family time, without any screens
- Make healthy foods fun by cutting fruit or sandwiches into interesting shapes
- Eat a healthy breakfast every day
- Try out new foods and show your children where food comes from
- Let them help you buy food from the shops
- Don't keep junk food in the house
- Keep a fruit bowl handy for a snack

# DEVELOPING LIFE SKILLS THROUGH SPORT

Sport isn't just good for children's bodies, it's also good for their minds. Studies have shown that sport has psychological benefits for children and adolescents and teaches them important life skills.

## THE BENEFITS OF SPORT TO CHILDREN INCLUDE:

- Better control over symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Helping them to express themselves
- Improving their social development
- Building self-confidence
- Helping them to interact with others
- Making them more likely to make healthy lifestyle decisions
- Improving their academic performance at school
- Building friendships
- Teaching them to be a good sport
- Experiencing the high of winning and the low of losing in a safe, structured environment
- Teaching them to be part of a team
- Teaching them to try hard, even if they don't win
- Teaching them to bounce back from disappointment
- Teaching them to cope with unpleasant experiences such as an injury

## PARENTS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SPORT

To keep your child interested and enjoying sport, make it a positive experience for them. Focus on having fun, having a go and being active, rather than winning or losing.

You can help your child develop a positive sporting attitude by praising the team's or other children's efforts, even if they don't win. Point out to your child how important it is to try and do their best. Make sure your comments from the sidelines are positive, and don't criticise children who make mistakes. Never abuse a team, umpire or other player.

# CHILDREN'S TEETH AND DENTAL HEALTH

Tooth decay in children is on the rise in Australia. More than half of all 6-year-olds have some decay in their baby or adult teeth. So, it's more important than ever to teach your child good oral health habits that will stay with them for life.

## CARING FOR CHILDREN'S TEETH IS IMPORTANT

It's important to look after your child's teeth from the moment they start teething. Keeping your child's teeth and gums clean will protect against infection, cavities and pain. Decayed baby teeth can damage the permanent teeth underneath.

If a child loses a tooth due to decay, it can cause crowding problems when their adult teeth come through later.

## HOW TO KEEP YOUR CHILD'S TEETH CLEAN

Help your child to brush and floss their teeth from the time they get their first tooth until they are 7 or 8. After that, supervising them is still important.

Children should brush twice a day using a soft-bristled toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of children's fluoride toothpaste from the age of 18 months. Make sure they brush for at least 2 minutes and remind them not to swallow the toothpaste.

Children should floss as soon as they have 2 teeth that are in contact with each other. You should supervise flossing until they are about 10.

To develop strong teeth, make sure your child eats a healthy, balanced diet and avoids foods with a lot of added sugar, such as lollies, biscuits and soft drinks. Choose fluoridated tap water when possible.

## VISITING THE DENTIST

Regular dental check-ups are important from the age of one, or within 6 months of the first tooth appearing.

Always make a visit to the dentist a positive experience. Never use the dentist as a threat for not brushing teeth or other behaviour.

# HEALTH BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

Children love to play and be active. Children aged 5 and over should be physically active for at least 60 minutes every day. It doesn't have to be a structured sport; anything that gets them up and moving will do.

## WHY IS BEING ACTIVE SO IMPORTANT?

Exercise can be anything that makes a child breathe faster and their heart beat quicker. Sitting less and exercising for an hour each day has many health benefits for children.

- They will develop healthy bones, muscles and joints
- They will develop a healthy heart and lungs
- Their coordination, strength and muscle control will improve
- They will maintain a healthy body weight
- Their body will become more flexible
- Their balance and posture will improve
- Their brain will develop vital connections, leading to improved concentration and thinking skills
- They are less likely to develop chronic diseases such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes

## HOW MUCH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DO CHILDREN NEED?

### 1 TO 5 YEARS:

At least 3 hours, spread over the day, of being physically active

### 5 TO 12 YEARS:

At least 60 minutes of physical activity, of moderate to vigorous intensity, every day

This activity should include a variety of aerobic activities as well as activities that strengthen muscle and bone.

Children should also limit the amount of time they spend sitting. Under-5's should spend no more than 2 hours a day in front of a screen.

A small number of children overexercise to lose weight they do not need to lose, especially during adolescence. Speak to your doctor if you are concerned this is the case for your child.

## TIPS

- Choose games that encourage movement and help develop their coordination
- Involve the whole family when possible
- Try to take children outdoors as much as possible
- Get your child involved in different sports
- Walk or ride a bike rather than taking the car
- Build physical activity into your child's daily life

# PERSONAL HYGIENE FOR CHILDREN

Keeping clean isn't only important to ensuring your child stays healthy. Good personal hygiene also helps boost your child's self-esteem and confidence.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING YOUR CHILD GOOD HYGIENE HABITS

Everyone needs to keep clean to kill germs and avoid getting sick. Good personal hygiene also boosts confidence by dealing with problems such as bad breath or body odour.

The basics of good personal hygiene for children are:

- washing hands
- covering their mouth when they cough
- having regular baths or showers
- brushing and flossing teeth

You may have to help your child practise good personal hygiene habits. These will become even more important as they grow older and approach puberty.

## WASHING HANDS

Most germs are spread through hand contact. Regularly washing hands will prevent your child — and others — from getting sick.

Encourage your child to wash their hands with soap and water:

- when their hands look dirty
- before eating or touching food
- after touching raw meats such as chicken or beef
- after touching any body fluids such as blood, urine or vomit

- after touching animals
- after blowing their nose, sneezing or coughing
- after going to the toilet

## SHOWERING AND BATHING

Children need regular baths or showers. You could encourage a bath or shower at the end of the day as part of a bedtime routine.

Make sure your child washes all of their body, including under their arms and their genital and anal areas, and that their body is thoroughly dry before they get dressed.

## CLOTHES AND SHOES

Children need clean clothes every day, even if their old clothes don't smell. Clean underwear every day is especially important.

They (or you if they are too young) can hang up their school uniform to air when they get home each day.

# SAFE EXERCISE FOR KIDS

Keep the following in mind to make sure your child has fun but stays safe while exercising.

## HOW MUCH EXERCISE IS THE RIGHT AMOUNT?

The amount of exercise that is right for your child will depend on their age and interests.

Children aged 5 to 12 years need to do at least 60 minutes of physical activity (moderate to vigorous intensity) every day.

## HOW TO PREVENT INJURIES

- Mix up the type of exercise (aerobic, muscle strengthening and weight bearing) and try different sports
- Watch for signs of burnout, especially when training for organised sport
- Don't let your child do organised sport for more than 1 hour per year of their age each week (for example, an 8-year-old should only train for 8 hours a week)
- Make sure they have one day of rest from organised sport per week (they can still play and be active in other ways)
- Ensure your child only does activities they are skilled and strong enough for
- Make sure they have proper safety gear, such as mouth guards, shin guards or a helmet
- Get the right treatment if your child has an injury

## WARMING UP BEFORE EXERCISE

Warming up before exercise prevents injury by making the muscles softer and more supple. Before exercise, encourage your child to:

- Warm up the body with a slow jog, swim or cycle, or a quick walk
- Stretch all the muscles they're going to use (hold each stretch for 10-20 seconds, but never until it hurts)

## COOLING DOWN AFTER EXERCISE

Cooling down after high intensity exercise is important to relax and soften the muscles and to eliminate toxins from the body. After exercise, encourage your child to:

- Gradually reduce the intensity (slow from a run to a slow walk – don't just stop)
- Stretch like they did in the warm up, but holding the stretches for longer
- Put on warm clothes so they cool down slowly

## AVOID SUNBURN AND DEHYDRATION

In hot weather, your child should wear sunscreen and a hat. Make sure they drink water before, during and after playing.

# PROTECTING CHILDREN WHO PLAY SPORT

Children encounter many adults while playing sports, including other parents, coaches, and those they already know.

Unfortunately, however, certain adults have sometimes used sporting clubs and events to get to children for the wrong purposes.

It is important to minimise the risk of a child being exposed to abuse – particularly sexual abuse – and inappropriate conversations. By law, sporting organisations in Australia are responsible for protecting children from abuse, discrimination and harassment.

## WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Parents and families are crucial in identifying early warning signs that something is wrong. In particular:

- Adults should not be unnecessarily physical with a child.
- Adults should not do personal things that children can do themselves, such as changing their clothes.
- Adults should not talk about ‘inappropriate’ topics in front of children.
- Staff and volunteers must not develop ‘special’ relationships with children that could be interpreted as favouritism.
- Adults involved in sporting organisations should not contact a child or their family outside the organisation or online.

## TEACHING CHILDREN HOW TO STAY SAFE

Talk to your children about safety from an early age. Help them understand the signals their body sends when something is wrong (sweaty palms, shaky legs or butterflies in the tummy).

Listen and respond to your child, especially if they are telling you they are worried about their safety or that of another child.

Let them know there is appropriate touching (for example, by a doctor during a medical appointment) and inappropriate touching. However, in a sporting context, no one is allowed to touch their private parts.

Make sure they understand boundaries, how to say ‘no’ if something isn’t right or if they feel at all uncomfortable, and that it’s important to tell an adult or other parent immediately if they think something is wrong.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How will my children get to and from sports?
- Will they be accompanied by a trusted adult?
- Who is supervising my children?
- How many other children will be in their care?
- Are they required to have Working with Children checks?
- Where will my children change/shower?
- Will my child be left alone with any adults I don’t know?
- Who do they – and I – go to if concerned?

# ASTHMA AND EXERCISE

Exercise can trigger symptoms in children who have asthma. This is known as ‘exercise-induced asthma’. Usually, it is easily managed but exercise should be included in your child’s asthma plan.

## SPORT IS HEALTHY FOR CHILDREN WITH ASTHMA

Asthma is not a reason for children to avoid sport. It is important that children with asthma continue to exercise to help them stay fit and healthy.

Asthma symptoms can be triggered by breathing in cold, dry air. But if your child’s asthma is properly controlled, they should be able to do as much exercise as they like.

## MANAGING ASTHMA WHILE PLAYING SPORT

Exercise-induced asthma can be prevented by taking the following steps:

- Tell your child to take their reliever medication 15 minutes before warming up, if this is part of their asthma plan, or if they or you are concerned they may need it.
- Make sure they warm up properly.
- Watch for asthma symptoms during exercise and give your child reliever medication if symptoms appear. They should only return to exercise when the symptoms have disappeared. If the symptoms appear again, give them more reliever and don’t let them return to exercise.
- Remember, asthma symptoms can occur up to 30 minutes after exercise stops. Have the reliever medication on hand.

- Children can forget to take their medication. Make sure you remind them and tell any adults who are supervising them that your child may need reliever medication while they are playing sport.

If your child needs to receive reliever medication:

- Sit your child comfortably and reassure them.
- Give them 4 puffs of reliever medication, preferably through a spacer.
- If there is still no improvement after 4 minutes, they may be having a severe asthma attack. Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance immediately.
- Keep giving 4 puffs of reliever every 4 minutes until the ambulance arrives. Children should not have more reliever than this.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ASTHMA PLAN

Every child with asthma should have a written asthma plan. It should contain information on how to recognise asthma symptoms and what to do if they appear.

Your doctor will develop the asthma plan with you. Tell them if your child will be playing sport so they can include relevant information in the plan.

Tell your child’s coach or trainer about the asthma and give them a copy of the asthma plan so they know what to do if your child develops symptoms.

# SLEEP TIPS FOR CHILDREN

Sleep is vital for children's growth, learning and development. Having a good sleep every night will make your child happier, help them to concentrate and remember things, and improve their behaviour.

## HOW MUCH SLEEP DO CHILDREN NEED?

The amount of sleep we need changes with age. Everyone is different, but as a guide, children need the following amount of sleep every night:

### AGE 3 TO 5:

10 to 13 hours

### AGE 6 TO 13:

9 to 11 hours

### AGE 14 TO 17:

8 to 10 hours

Getting enough sleep is important for your child's physical health, brain function, emotional wellbeing, safety, and ability to function day to day. Not having enough sleep or not sleeping well can affect how children learn and lead to mood swings and behavioural problems.

## TIPS

Sleep in school-age children can be affected by their busy lives, homework and all the activities they must take part in. Screen time and caffeine products can also prevent them from falling asleep easily. Help your child to sleep well by:

- teaching them about healthy sleep habits
- ensuring their room is dark, cool and quiet
- continuing with a regular sleep schedule and bedtime routine
- keeping screens out of the bedroom (watching TV too close to bedtime has been shown to interfere with children's ability to sleep)
- helping your child to relax before bed
- avoiding caffeine (in tea, coffee, sports drinks and chocolate)
- making sure your child gets plenty of natural light during the day

# HYDRATION FACTS FOR CHILDREN

The body needs enough fluid to be able to function at its best. Children are at risk of dehydration, especially in hot weather and when they are exercising. By the time they feel thirsty, they are probably already dehydrated, so it's up to parents and carers to make sure they are drinking enough.

## CHILDREN NEED TO STAY HYDRATED

Two thirds of our bodies are made up of water. Being dehydrated can cause poor sports performance, tiredness, headaches and crankiness, and it can lead to serious medical problems.

Signs your child could be dehydrated include:

- dizziness or light-headedness
- nausea
- a headache
- dark yellow or brown urine
- dry lips, tongue, mouth or throat

## HOW MUCH WATER SHOULD CHILDREN DRINK?

Water is the best hydration choice for children. Steer clear of sports drinks, fruit juices, soft drinks and flavoured mineral waters as they all contain sugar, which can lead to tooth decay.

The recommended daily intake of water for children is:

### AGE 3 TO 5:

5 glasses (1 litre)

### 9 TO 12 YEARS OLD:

7 glasses (1.5 litres)

### 13 YEARS OLD AND OVER:

8 to 10 glasses (2 litres)

Children need even more water when they are exercising. Your child should drink before, during and after physical activity, even if they aren't thirsty.

## TIPS

- Make sure they always pack a water bottle
- Choose water rather than sugary drinks
- Remind them to drink before the game
- Encourage them to have a few mouthfuls of water during any breaks in the game
- Make sure they have a big drink afterwards to make up for any sweat they have lost.