



Royal Berkshire  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Healthy weight management in children

A guide to achieving and maintaining  
a healthy weight



## Why is your child's weight important?

A child with an unhealthy weight is more likely to grow up to be an adult with an unhealthy weight.

This can contribute to a range of long term health problems such as:



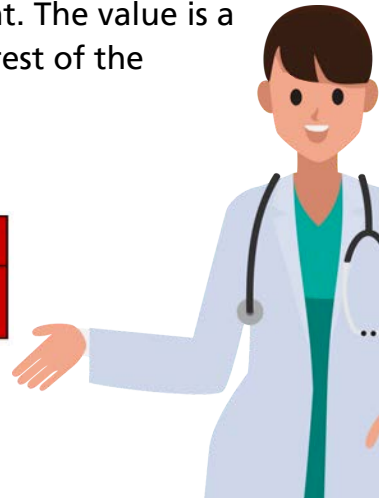
- Diabetes
- Heart problems such as heart attacks, high blood pressure, high cholesterol
- Liver issues – fatty liver disease
- Breathing issues – obstructive sleep apnoea
- Psychological issues - low self esteem, anxiety
- Musculoskeletal problems such as joint pain

## How do healthcare professionals work out if your child is overweight or obese?

We use Body Mass Index (BMI) by measuring height and weight to calculate whether your child has excess weight. The value is a 'centile' which compares their weight to the rest of the population at their age and sex.

✓ Please tick below which BMI centile the child falls in:

|             |                |            |             |                |
|-------------|----------------|------------|-------------|----------------|
| <2nd        | 2nd-91st       | 91st-98th  | 98th-99.6th | >99.6th        |
| Underweight | Healthy weight | Overweight | Obese       | Severe obesity |



## How can you help your child?

There are lots of strategies to help your child achieve a healthy weight. Parents should take responsibility for making changes to their child's diet and encourage them to become more active, particularly if the child is under 12 years old.

### ✓ Encouraging healthy eating

Choosing the right type of food and the amount of food are both important when it comes to eating healthily.

- Aim to have **five portions** of fruit/vegetables per day
- Starchy food should **make up 1/3 of the food** we eat. You can switch to wholegrain to add more fibre
- **Avoid sugary drinks** and sweets
- Include some **sources of protein** in your diet e.g. beans/lean meat. Try to avoid processed meat.

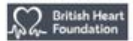
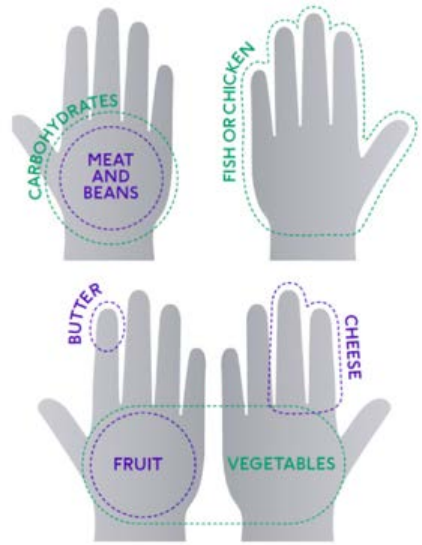
Below is a guide of what your child's plate should look like



## Portion sizes

- Children need smaller portions than adults - serve portions according to their size
- Start off with a smaller portion
- Do not pressure them to finish entire plate
- Offer a variety of foods

See the illustration on the right for a guide to specific food portion sizes based on the child's hand.



## Physical activity

For children aged 5-18 years old, it is recommended they should at least have **one hour of moderate activity each day**. This can be in one go or in shorter sessions of 10 minutes or more.

This can be achieved in many ways but **more likely to be effective if done as a family**.

### Some ideas of incorporating exercise into daily life:

- Family walk/bike ride/dog walk or playing active playground games
- Helping them to take part in regular activities that they enjoy such as joining sports clubs, swimming or dancing (see links below for ideas)





## ✓ Behaviour and eating habits

- Avoiding distractions when eating e.g. watching TV
- Eating three regular meals together as a family
- Being a good role model
- Hunger vs thirst cues – offer water initially to see if it helps
- Never give food as a reward

## ✓ Encouraging an active lifestyle

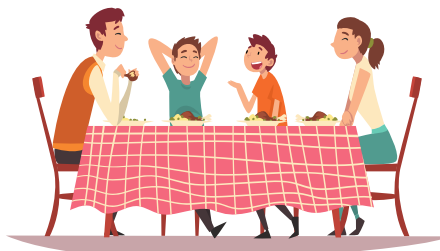
Reducing the time children spend sitting down can also be helpful. Often this would involve **reducing their screen time** to 2 hours or less, for example watching the television, playing video games or on a computer.

## ✓ Sleep hygiene

Sleeping at a reasonable time and ensuring a good night's sleep is important for health and can affect eating habits.

## ✓ Family-based approach

Ideally, the changes mentioned throughout this leaflet should be made as a family for maximum benefit.



## How will your child be followed up?

You should **see your GP in 3-6 months** and regularly after that for support. Your GP may consider referring to a specialist if they think it is appropriate.

## More information and support

Please scan the QR codes with your phone

Food  
portion  
sizes



Healthy  
eating



Understanding  
food labels



Recipe &  
activities  
ideas



Joe Wicks  
youtube  
channel



How to talk to  
your child  
about weight



Eating well  
guide



Body  
positivity



## Checklist (for staff):

- Personal plan discussed + ticked BMI centile
- Leaflet given
- Referred to GP for follow up

