

HEALTHY WEIGHT, HEALTHY LIVES:

Why your
child's weight
matters



Introduction

Parents have the biggest influence over how their child grows and develops, and can help their children achieve and maintain a healthy weight. The key things that matter are enjoying healthy foods and being active.

This booklet includes information on the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) and some practical tips on how to help your whole family be healthy.

Weighing and measuring in schools

Throughout the country children in Reception Year and Year 6 are having their height and weight measured as part of the NCMP, which takes place every year. If you have a child in one of these years, you should receive a letter with more information about the programme in your child's school.

Trained staff from your local NHS Primary Care Trust (PCT) will weigh and measure your child in their clothes. Care is taken to ensure that the measurements are done sensitively and in private, and your child's results will not be shared with teachers or other children. Your child does not have to participate, but we urge you to encourage your child to take part.



Why is it important that my child takes part?

Every child measured is contributing to the national picture about how children are growing. The more children that participate, the clearer that picture will be. The information collected helps your local PCT to plan and provide better health services for the children in your area.

What happens to the results?

Your child's results will be held securely by your PCT, along with other details, such as date of birth and school. Information on all children will be gathered together and sent to the Department of Health – but not details that could identify your child, such as name or date of birth. The Department of Health will analyse this anonymous information to look at trends in children's heights and weights across England to shape how services are delivered to help people improve their own and their children's health.

How do I find out my child's results?

Some PCTs will automatically send your child's results to you. Other PCTs will give you the chance to ask for your child's results.

Whether you get your child's results automatically or whether you will need to ask for them depends on how your local PCT has chosen to run the programme in your area.



Why is a healthy weight important?

We know that many children are getting heavier and more children are now overweight than ever before.

Children who are a healthy weight might be more likely to join in and enjoy being active and are less likely to develop diabetes or other diseases in later life.

The best thing that you can do to help your child achieve and maintain a healthy weight is to encourage the whole family to enjoy healthy eating and being physically active. Children who see their parents, grandparents and carers following a healthy and active lifestyle tend to join in and learn by example. These habits become a normal part of everyday life for the whole family.



Establishing good habits and routines early on will improve a child's quality of life in both the short and long term. Many schools are taking part in the National Healthy Schools Programme and all schools now have to meet new nutritional standards for school lunches and should only offer healthy food choices. If your child would like to join in more activity, in addition to PE during the school day, they may be able to take part in after-school activities.

Healthy eating for all children

It is important for all children to eat healthily and to be physically active, even if they are a healthy weight. **The tips here are relevant to all children, no matter what their weight.**

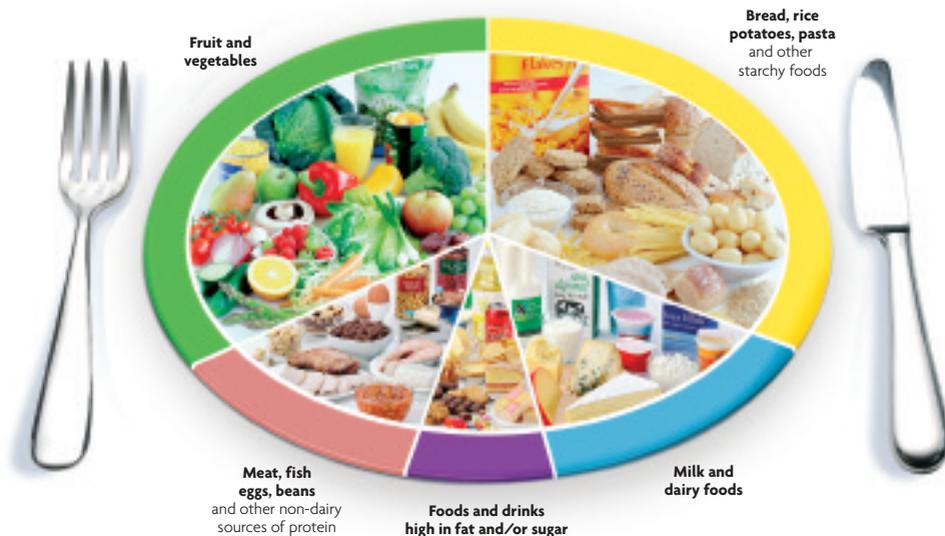
Every day, all children should aim to eat:

- **five or more servings of a variety of fruit and vegetables** (fruit with breakfast and for snacks, and some vegetables, salad or fruit at every mealtime) – visit www.5aday.nhs.uk;
- **meals that are based on starchy foods**, eg potatoes, pasta, rice, bread or breakfast cereal;
- **lower-fat dairy products** – milk, yoghurt, fromage frais or cheese (once children are over five); and
- **protein-rich foods** – poultry, fish, eggs, beans, pulses or lentils.
- **savoury and sweet snacks** (like crisps, biscuits and chocolate) and sugary drinks should **only be eaten occasionally**. Try giving chopped-up fruit as an alternative.

The eatwell plate



Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



Healthy eating habits at home

To help your child adopt healthy eating habits, start them at a young age. Getting them to eat healthier options at home will be consistent with what they get at school and help them towards healthier eating habits.

Try to do as many of these as you can:

- sit together as a family to eat your meal;
- switch the television off when you are eating;
- eat a balanced choice of healthy foods yourself and be positive about them;
- encourage the family to try new foods;
- encourage and praise 'good eating' instead of nagging about bad eating habits; and
- involve children in food preparation.



Active children

All children should aim to be active for at least one hour every day, even if they are a healthy weight. Activity should increase the heart rate and make them slightly out of breath.

It's a good idea to limit screen time (computer or television) to a maximum of two hours a day, and possibly less for young children. You should encourage your child to choose active games and help them learn how to be active in their spare time.

Encourage your children to play outdoors whenever possible. For most children, playing in the playground or park or running around outside can be great fun – whatever the weather. Try to incorporate activity into your everyday family life – walking, cycling and outdoor play should be part of this.

Help your children find activities they enjoy. A variety of activity is important to help children develop strong bones, muscle strength and flexibility. Activity can be natural and spontaneous (in the playground, playing outside), planned (walking, cycling to school)

or sport. Remember to praise your children when they take part or are active and do not criticise them if they are not as able as other children.



Further information is available at:

www.eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages/children

www.nhs.uk

www.parentlineplus.org.uk

www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk

On the move

Here are some ideas to help your children achieve one hour of activity a day, in addition to their PE and school sport.

WITH PARENTS

Walking, cycling or scootering to school

Walking bus to school

Kicking a football in the park

Walking the dog

Obstacle courses

Walks with a picnic in a park or the countryside

Rounders

Fruit picking

Visits to city farms

Nature trails

Trips to the local playground

Bike rides

Playing frisbee

Running

Walking to the shops

AT HOME

Indoor soft play

Dancing to music or with a dance mat

AT LOCAL OUTDOOR COURTS

Basketball

Netball

Tennis

IN THE LOCAL PLAYGROUND OR PARK

Tag

Hopscotch

Hula hoop

Hide and seek

Skipping

Football

Playing frisbee

Running

Skipping

Cricket

Skateboarding

Rollerblading

AT THE LEISURE CENTRE

Swimming

Gymnastics

Trampolining

Badminton

Climbing walls

Dancing

FURTHER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AT

www.playgroundfun.org.uk

www.activeplaces.com



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