

Sláinte Leanaí Éireann



Children's Health Ireland

**HEALTHY LIVING ADVICE
FOR FAMILIES**

Children in Ireland have their hearing and eyesight tested to make sure that they can hear and see properly. They also have their height and weight checked to make sure that they are growing well for their age. As children grow the cells in their bodies get bigger in size. All of the cells work together and get better at doing their job as they develop. This development allows a child to crawl, stand, walk and eventually jump and climb trees!

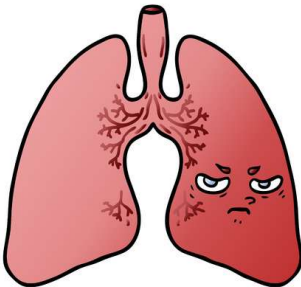
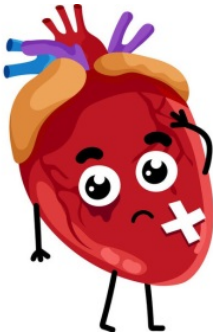
The way and speed that children grow is called their growth pattern. Sometimes children do not grow tall enough, or they gain weight faster than usual. If they gain weight faster than other children their age they can become overweight or obese (very overweight). This can make it harder for a child to play or maybe make them feel sad. Sometimes there can be medical reasons for this and other times it can be due to lifestyle factors such as the child's environment.

**DID YOU
KNOW?**

25% of children and teenagers in Ireland today are living with overweight or obesity, with around 11% of these in the obese category.

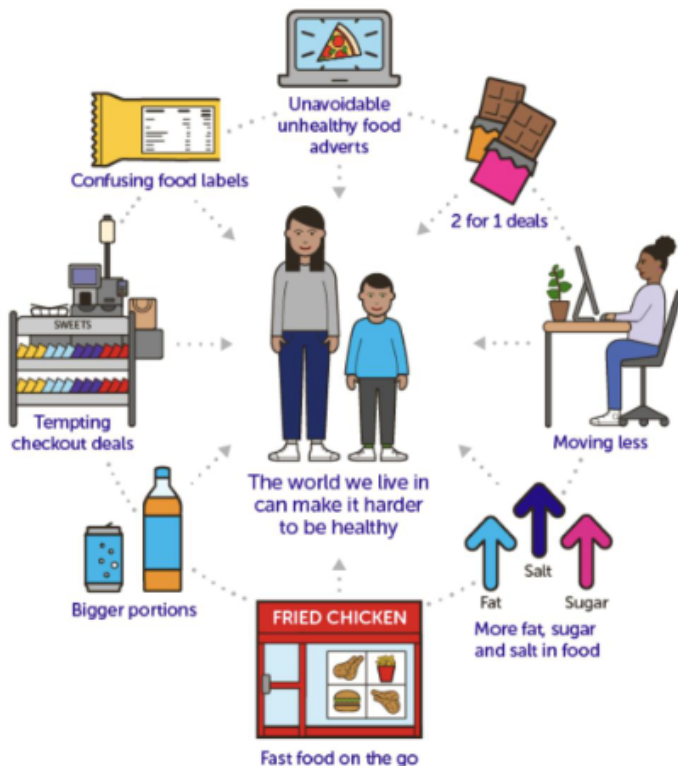
Living with overweight or obesity can cause various health problems for children such as:

- * Breathing problems
- * Sleep problems
- * Tummy pain
- * Liver problems
- * Feeling unhappy
- * Type 2 Diabetes
- * Balance problems
- * Joint pain
- * Asthma



The World Around Us Can Affect Our Health

As well as our genetics, our environment can contribute to how healthy our bodies are. Some children tend to gain extra weight more than other children. There is no “one size fits all” approach and children around Ireland are living in different types of situations, neighbourhoods and towns. For example our ‘food environment’ can cause us to eat a certain way:



(Cancer Research UK - cruk.org/health)

How Can We Help?

We want to help you and your family to be as healthy as possible. We do this by:

1. Asking you and your child questions
2. Measuring your child's growth and checking it on a growth chart
3. Figuring out the reasons they might be putting on extra weight
4. Trying to understand if extra weight is making your child feel unhappy or causing them health problems
5. If extra weight is causing health problems we will support you to make lifestyle changes to help your family become healthier
6. If your child has significant complications as a result of the extra weight we will refer you to a specialist team in the hospital

Our lifestyle is the way that we spend each day, like how much sleep we get, what type of food we eat, what we drink, how much fun we have and how we feel.

We hope this booklet will help you understand what is needed for healthy growth in children. Reading this may give you some ideas on how to get even healthier!



This booklet will give you some ideas on how you can have a healthy lifestyle through;

1. Healthy eating
2. Getting enough active play
3. Sleeping well
4. Speaking to yourself in a nice way
5. Setting goals

Healthy Eating

A balance of food intake and active play is needed for healthy growth. If the amount of food you eat is more than your body needs, then it will store the extra energy as fat.

Eating healthily means eating different types of foods in the right amounts. Even when you are making nutritious choices, it is possible to eat too much. So it is important for you to watch the amount of food you eat, and that you eat the correct portion size for your age and activity level. It is important to work together as a family to improve everyone's eating habits.

Some Healthy Eating Tips

- ✓ Eat breakfast every morning
- ✓ Spread your meals throughout the day. Aim to have breakfast, lunch, main meal plus 2-3 healthy snacks at regular times each day
- ✓ Aim to eat 5 portions of fruit/vegetables per day
- ✓ Keep a diary of the food you eat, especially fatty and sugary foods
- ✓ Eat at a table and avoid other activities such as watching screens when you are eating
- ✓ Drink water or milk
- ✓ Don't eat takeaways more than once a week
- ✓ Follow the food pyramid which is explained later in this booklet

It is important that you give your body all the goodness it needs to work properly, to help you grow and to be healthy.

Protein, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and fibre are all nutrients (parts of food) that the body needs.



What is a Healthy Eating Routine?



It is important to eat many different types of foods. No one food can supply all the nutrients you need. Different foods will provide different nutrients that you need to grow and develop healthy eyes and skin, strong bones and help you avoid colds and flus.

The food pyramid can be used as a guide to help you make healthy food choices. It shows you the different types of food or food groups you should eat. It also tells you the amount or portion of each food that we need for health.

Foods providing similar nutrients are put together on the same shelf of the pyramid.

It is better to eat more foods at the bottom and middle of the food pyramid and less from the top.

It is important to include foods from each of the food groups. When looking at the food pyramid we start from the bottom shelf.

The Food Pyramid

For adults, teenagers and children aged five and over

Not needed for good health.

Foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt

NOT every day

Maximum once or twice a week



Needed for good health. Enjoy a variety every day.

*Daily Servings Guide – wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice

Active	Child (5-12)	Teenager (13-18)	Adult (19-50)	Adult (51+)
Active	3-4	4	4-5	3-4
Inactive	3-5	5-7	5-7	4-5

There is no guideline for inactive children as it is essential that all children are active.

Drink at least 8 cups of fluid a day – water is best

Get Active
To maintain a healthy weight adults need at least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity on 5 days a week (or 150 minutes a week). Children need to be active at a moderate to vigorous level for at least 60 minutes every day.



Group 1

Fruit, Vegetables and Salad

This food provides a range of vitamins and minerals to help you stay healthy, to improve your skin and nails and to help you avoid colds and flus. It is also a good source of fibre, which you need to keep your insides healthy.

5-7 portions of fruit and vegetables are recommended daily. It is a good idea to snack on fruit or vegetables as well as including them in main meals.

ONE PORTION IS:

1 medium fruit: 1 apple, 1 orange, 1 pear or 1 banana
Small fruits: 6 strawberries, 10 grapes, 16 raspberries or 16 blueberries
3 tablespoons cooked vegetables (fresh/frozen/tinned) or 1 cup raw vegetables e.g. carrot or celery sticks
3 tablespoons of cooked/frozen fruit or tinned fruit in natural juice only
1-2 tablespoons of dried fruit (raisins, sultanas, dried apricots)
150 mls (small glass) of sugar free fruit juice
1 bowl of homemade vegetable soup
1 bowl of salad eg. Lettuce, cucumber, tomato, peppers, carrot, sweetcorn, beetroot



Group 2

Wholemeal Cereals Bread, Potatoes, Pasta, Rice

These starchy foods are rich in carbohydrate and should be your main energy foods. This group also provides fibre, vitamins and minerals.

3-5 portions per day are recommended, depending on how active you are. Base your meals and snacks on these foods. Choose whole grain or high fibre versions where possible.

ONE PORTION IS:

2 thin slices wholemeal bread or 1 pitta bread or 1 tortilla wrap	2 medium or 4 small potatoes
1 cup of flaked type breakfast cereal or 1/3 cup dry oats or ½ cup muesli	4-6 crackers or 2-3 crispbread
1 cup (200 ml) of cooked rice/pasta/noodles	1 small scone/pancake



Group 3

Milk, Yoghurt and Cheese

These foods provide calcium and vitamin D. These are important for building strong bones and teeth. This group also provides protein and other vitamins and minerals.

3 portions daily from this group are recommended for children under the age of 9 years old.

5 portions daily from this group are recommended for children aged 9-12 years old and teenagers. Choose low fat options where possible e.g. low fat milk and yoghurt.

ONE PORTION IS:

200 mls (1/3 pint) of milk
1 pot of 125g yoghurt
25g of hard cheese
1 Easi Single slice
120g of rice pudding / custard



Group 4

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Beans and Nuts

These are protein and iron-rich foods. Protein is important for building and repairing body tissues. Iron carries oxygen to all parts of your body. This group also provides other vitamins and minerals.

2 portions from this group are recommended per day.

ONE PORTION IS:

50-75g of cooked lean meat or chicken (the size of the palm of the child's hand)
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100g of cooked fish

2 thin slices of cold lean meat

2 eggs

9 dessertspoons of beans/peas/lentils 60g

30g (2 level tablespoons) of peanut butter (no added sugar)

40g of nuts or seeds

100g of soya, tofu or quorn

Group 5

Foods and Drinks high in fat, sugar and salt

Foods from this group are high in energy due to their sugar and fat and can cause weight gain quickly if taken in large amounts.

This group includes; sugary drinks, sweets, chocolate, crisps, ice cream, fried foods, chips, food in batter, rich sauces, some take-away foods, mayonnaise and butter.

Remember to keep these foods to a minimum (once per week only) – that's why we call them "Sometimes Foods"!

Suitable Healthy Snacks

- ✓ Fresh/dried fruit as per portions above
- ✓ 30g unsalted nuts/seeds
- ✓ 2 level tablespoons of nut butter on chopped apple
- ✓ Raw chopped vegetables with hummus/salsa
- ✓ 2 rice cakes with 30g peanut butter and banana slices
- ✓ 120g of homemade low-fat milk pudding eg custard/ rice pudding
- ✓ Slice of bread, pitta bread, small roll, bagel, small scone or fruit bun
- ✓ Small slice of fruit cake
- ✓ 25g cubed cheese with 10 grapes
- ✓ 15-20g of popcorn without butter/sugar
- ✓ 120-170g of homemade sugar free jelly

My Dinner Plate



Our dinner plates should include;

- ✓ $\frac{1}{2}$ vegetables/salads
- ✓ $\frac{1}{4}$ whole grain energy foods
- ✓ $\frac{1}{4}$ protein rich foods

Food Diary

What you eat and drink on a typical day:

Breakfast _____

Mid morning _____

Lunch _____

Mid afternoon _____

Dinner _____

Bedtime _____

Anything Else _____

Now you have filled this out, check the food pyramid to see which food groups you are eating and how many times per day. Are you getting something from every shelf? Are you eating the right amounts for your age?

Make a list of things that make it hard for you and your family to eat healthily (foods from each shelf and in the right amounts):

Now make a list of changes you and your family can make to help you all eat nutritious food in the right amounts:

Healthy Hydration

In addition to eating healthily, it is important to make sure that you are drinking healthily during the day. There are many factors that affect how much fluid you need including age, gender, weather and the amount of physical activity you do.

A good aim is to **have 2 litres or 6-8 glasses of fluid per day.**

A useful way to check if you are drinking enough is looking at the colour of your wee (urine). If you are drinking enough, your wee will be a pale yellow colour. One sign that you are not drinking enough is if your wee is a dark yellow colour.

Water and milk are the best drinks to have in between and with meals as they are tooth-friendly and provide us with minerals and vitamins.

Fruit juice should be limited as it is acidic and contains free sugars (sugars without the benefit of fibre to go with it). Other sugary drinks e.g. fizzy drinks should be avoided as they can damage teeth if consumed too often.

Drinks such as tea, coffee, some carbonated drinks and sports or energy drinks are best avoided by children and young people as they contain caffeine which is a stimulant and can affect sleep.

A useful tip to make water tastier is by chilling it in the fridge and adding slices of lemon or orange to it.

Media, Weight and Dieting

There is a lot of information on social media, in the news, in magazines and on the Internet about dieting, weight and obesity.

Being Media Savvy

People come in all shapes, sizes, colours, abilities and have different ways of moving and talking. Images in magazines or on the Internet of models or celebrities can give us an unrealistic view of what is 'normal' or 'beautiful'.

It is important to remember that a lot of content on social media, in magazines and on the internet is actually advertising. This means that people with a certain look or shape will be used to sell products to us. The other effect of using people with a certain look (eg. white, young, clear skin, thin, nice teeth) is that it can make us feel like we are not good enough.

Not only do celebrities/models have hairdressers and stylists on hand, but pictures are also airbrushed to remove pores, change skin colour, or slim down a model's face and body. So remember, many of these images are there to advertise products and are not realistic, so please don't allow your child to compare themselves to that.

Physical Activity

Children aged 2-5 years should be active for three hours per day as they are learning how to walk, to jump and to move. They usually do this activity in short 5-10 minute blocks

Children and teenagers aged 5-18 years should be active for at least **60 minutes per day** as they are growing and developing. This exercise should make us breathe harder and become a little sweaty.



Being physically active;

- ✓ Helps to build strong bones
- ✓ Helps us feel good and to lift our mood
- ✓ Helps to build confidence
- ✓ Helps us to concentrate in school
- ✓ Helps us grow properly
- ✓ Keeps our blood pressure healthy
- ✓ Makes our heart stronger
- ✓ Makes our lungs and breathing stronger
- ✓ Helps lower cholesterol
- ✓ Helps us to fight colds and infections
- ✓ Makes our muscles stronger
- ✓ Helps our body to use blood sugar
- ✓ Helps our balance and coordination

Types of Physical Activity

Aerobic activity is exercise that makes our heart beat faster and our breathing harder. This includes; running, cycling, swimming, scooting, skating, dancing, football...

Muscle strengthening activity includes exercise such as; rock climbing/climbing in the playground, boxing, karate, rowing, running, cycling/scooting, dancing...

Bone strengthening activity includes exercise that involves taking weight down through our joints such as; football, basketball, dancing, running, jumping...



All children/teenagers aged 5-18 years old should be getting 60 minutes of activity per day. This should include a variety of the above types of exercise with strengthening exercises done on at least 3 days per week.

Physical Activity Pyramid

We should all try to complete activities in the bottom level of the pyramid every day. This includes; taking the stairs instead of the lift, helping around the house or the garden, playing outdoors or going for a walk.

We should all try to cut down on the activities at the top of the pyramid such as limiting screen time to 2 hours per day, with a movement break every 30 minutes.

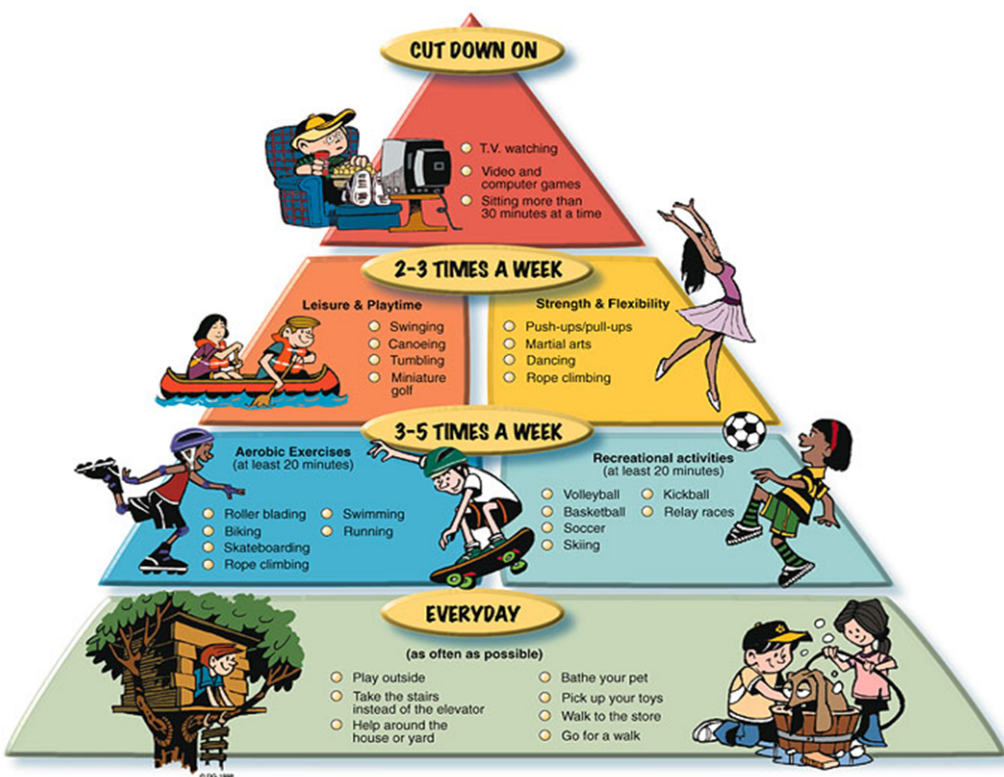
Some things that make it hard to be active could be;

- ✓ Living too far away to walk/cycle to school
- ✓ Feeling that you don't have time
- ✓ The weather!
- ✓ Feeling too tired
- ✓ Feeling self-conscious
- ✓ Being unsure what sport/activity is good for you

Some things that make it easy to be active could be;

- ✓ Having a dog that needs to be walked!
- ✓ Having family / friends who will get involved in sports or activities with you
- ✓ Listening to music that makes you want to dance
- ✓ Buying a rain jacket/umbrella for the rain
- ✓ Spending less time watching screens
- ✓ Setting small goals and gradually increasing activity every day
- ✓ Trying activities such as kayaking, hill-walking, rock-climbing, scouts rather than team sports if you find them tricky

Physical Activity Pyramid



Remember that exercise should be fun and enjoyable!



Physical Activity Tips

- ✓ Plan times for the whole family to get moving together. Take walks, ride bikes, go swimming or play hide-and-seek outside. Everyone will benefit from the exercise and the time together.
- ✓ Parents - be physical activity role models for your children. If they see you being active every day they will want to be active too.
- ✓ Teenagers - be physical activity role models for your little brothers and sisters, if they see you being active every day they will want to be active too.
- ✓ If team sports are tricky for you, try lifestyle activities such as going for long walks on the beach or in parks.
- ✓ Walk to school, cycle or take the bus. This will be good for you and the environment. If it is too far away, can you get off the bus a few stops early and walk from there?
- ✓ Experiment with different activities until you find something that you really like doing.
- ✓ Set yourself and your family an “activity goal” each week and fill in an activity diary.

Screen Time

Screen time is a term used for activities done in front of a screen, such as watching TV, using an iPad, tablet or phone, or playing Xbox and Playstation.

Screen time is a sedentary activity, meaning you are being physically inactive. There is very little energy used during screen time. Remember that many online activities, such as computer games are designed by the companies to keep you playing.



Two thirds of Irish 9 year olds spend 3 hours per weekday on TV alone

- ✓ **If parents watch more than 2 hours per day of TV, children are 5 times more likely to do the same.**
- ✓ Children who have more than 3 hours screen-time tend to have more behavioural problems, e.g. hyperactivity, difficulty getting on with other children and making friends.

Healthy Screens Tips for the Whole Family

- ✓ Limit recreational screen time to a maximum of 2 hours per day with movement breaks every 30 minutes
- ✓ Set an alarm on your tablet/phone to remind you to move every 30 minutes
- ✓ Remove all screens from your bedroom
- ✓ Turn the television and all screens off when you are eating your meals
- ✓ Turn all screens off for 1 hour before bedtime

Sleep

Every living creature needs to sleep. Sleep is especially important for children as it directly impacts mental and physical development and emotional health.

The main benefit of sleep is the release of growth hormone which is needed for normal growth and development.



Sleep also helps concentration and the development of emotional and mental health.

It is important that parents understand the potential long term harm of not getting enough sleep and pass on the skill of good sleep to children as early as possible. This will aid health, growth and function.

Not sleeping enough can have the following effects:

1. Increases the risk of obesity
2. Changes how your body uses sugar
3. Reduces how sensitive your body is to insulin
4. Increases your appetite and makes you more hungry
5. Reduces your concentration and increases stress
6. Lowers immunity to disease

How much sleep is enough sleep?

3-5 year olds:	12-13 hours per night
Primary school children:	10-12 hours per night
Teenagers:	9-10 hours per night

We know a child is getting the right amount of sleep:

- ✓ If they fall asleep within 15-30 minutes of going to bed.
- ✓ If they wake up easily at the time they need to get up and don't need to be called lots of times.
- ✓ If they are awake and alert all day, and don't need to nap during the day (once school-aged).

5 Healthy Sleep Habits for Children and Teens:

1. Keep a regular wake-up time and bedtime
2. Establish a bedtime routine (e.g. screens off one hour before, calm activities e.g. reading, listening to music)
3. Create a balanced schedule (prioritise activities that allow for down-time and sufficient sleep time)
4. Don't use the weekends to catch up on sleep
5. Parents should be sleep role models for their children



The Do's of Sleep

Do Make bedtime a special time. Go through a bedtime routine that your child is used to and at the end of that routine, turn off the lights and go to sleep.

Do Keep to a regular daily routine - the same waking time, meal times and play times will help your child to feel secure and comfortable, and help with a smooth bedtime.

Do Make sure your children have interesting and varied activities during the day, including physical activity and fresh air.

Do Use light to your advantage. Keep lights dim in the evening as bedtime approaches. In the morning, open blinds and curtains and in the winter when it is dark in the mornings, turn on lights. Light helps signal the brain into the right sleep-wake cycle.



The Don'ts of Sleep

Do Not put your child to bed with a bottle/cup of juice. If they need a drink, give them water.

Do Not fill your child's bed with toys. Where possible, keep the bed for sleeping only.

Do Not ever use alcohol to help with sleep.

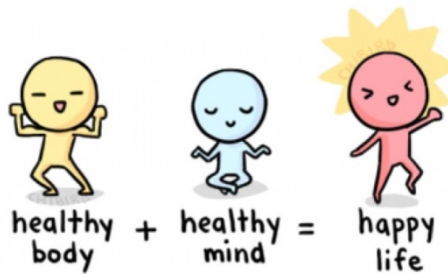
Do Not use sending your child to bed as a threat. Sleep and bedtime should be a secure time and not a used as a punishment.

Do Not have a TV in the child's bedroom. TV, phones, computers, video games and the internet can all affect sleep in a negative way.



Our Mental Health

Living with overweight or obesity can affect our mental health as well as our physical health.



Weight can be one of the many things that children and teenagers are teased about. Teasing and slugging from our peers can be very hurtful and can lead to problems with self-esteem.

Self-esteem means what we think about ourselves, or the judgment or opinion we hold about ourselves. Everyone we meet, and every experience we have, might either add to or take away from our self-esteem.

Someone with healthy, or high self-esteem:

- ✓ Feels they are important and worthwhile
- ✓ Is confident they can try new things
- ✓ Feels proud of themselves
- ✓ Thinks good things about themselves
- ✓ Can 'bounce back' when things go wrong
- ✓ Feels prepared for everyday challenges

If you are feeling down about something, about who you are or how you look, or if you have experienced teasing or bullying at school or at home, talk to an adult you trust about it. Think of three or more adults you could talk to if you were worried about something or were feeling sad.

Coping with Difficult Emotions

We all experience difficult feelings at times. It is a normal part of life but that doesn't mean it's easy! Learning to cope with difficult feelings in a way that works well for us is a really important part of having a healthy lifestyle.

When you feel supported by those around you, and when you show kindness to yourself, you are better able to make lots of the positive changes that you want to make. As humans, when we feel like others are judging us, or if we are judging ourselves in a very harsh way, this can make it harder for us to cope, and also to move toward our different goals.

When you are feeling upset or overwhelmed, you might be really hard on yourself. Instead, it might help to imagine what you might say to a good friend if they were feeling upset or worried. Then try saying that yourself too! This is being your own best friend, and it is a great way to build up your self-esteem. It takes a lot of practice if you aren't used to doing it.

For example, if we are struggling with school work and we are harsh on ourselves we might say something like 'Why don't I understand how to do it? I must be stupid and I bet everyone else gets it!'

If we are showing self-kindness we might say 'This is really difficult and it's frustrating not to understand it yet. I feel upset because I want to do well. Maybe I need to get some support with this. There might even be others in my class who don't understand it either. I can see if my teacher can help me.'

It can also be helpful to keep a self-soothe box to cope with difficult emotions. You can make this out of a shoebox and fill it with items and reminders of things that help you to feel relaxed. This could be your favourite books, smells, photos, music, a list of relaxing activities, a hot water bottle, a stress ball...anything that helps you to feel a little calmer.

A rectangular box with a light gray background containing the handwritten text "Be kind to yourself." in a black, cursive script. The text is centered within the box.

Be kind
to yourself.

Making Changes

There are many reasons why we make unhealthy lifestyle choices such as eating unhealthy foods, or not doing enough physical activity.

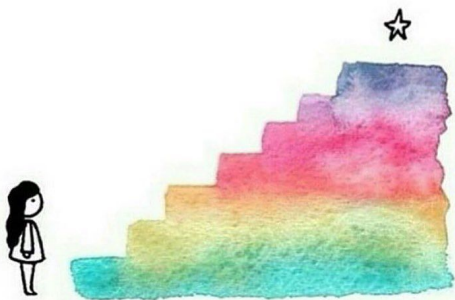
Our relationship with food can be confusing. We often eat for reasons other than hunger. We will sometimes eat out of:

- habit
- boredom
- if we're feeling stressed or upset (hence the term 'comfort food').
- feeling good and celebrating

The habit to eat everything on our plate can also be drummed into us when we are small.

It is important to tune into your body and become aware if you are hungry or not.

take a small step every day



Once we have identified unhealthy choices or habits, it can sometimes be hard to make big changes in one go.

It can be helpful to make small goals instead to help you and your family to achieve and maintain healthy lifestyle changes.

Setting Goals

Setting and working on goals takes practice. The first time you set a goal you might set it too high and make things too hard on yourself. That's okay, high goals mean that you have high hopes.

Just remember that you may have to adjust a goal to make it more manageable and to make sure you succeed. The most useful way of setting goals is to make them **SMART**.

SMART stands for:

Specific (be about something particular)

Measurable (you must know when you have achieved it)

Achievable (stretch yourself but keep it do-able)

Relevant (it must be something that you care about)

Time-based (set a time-scale so you don't put it off)



How to Write SMART Goals

Specific: Don't write fuzzy goals that leave out what you actually need to do. Pin yourself down by answering the "W": Who What Where When Why?

✖ I will get fit

✓ A specific goal would say "I'll bring the dog for a walk for half an hour three days a week".

Measurable: You should be able to measure your progress towards your goal. To make your goal measurable, ask questions such as: How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

✓ I will have five extra pieces of fruit this week- one at each small break at school. At the end of the week I'll check back to see if I did it every day.

Achievable: Set a goal that you believe you can reach. Start small and try to match your abilities. Currently if you are not doing any physical activity, an unattainable goal would be to;

✖ Run for 4 hours every day!

An attainable goal could be to;

✓ Play outside for half an hour every day

Relevant: Create a goal that is important to you and that you are motivated to change.

✓ I will practice my dancing every day so that I can perform in the show

Time-based: Choose a date, time or schedule for your goal.

✗ I will play more football

✓ I will play football for 30 minutes twice per week, on Tuesday and Thursday

It is also important to decide on a time to review your goals, maybe once a week so that you don't keep putting it off.

You can use **The Top 10 Tips** to help you to start setting some healthy lifestyle goals for you and your family...

TOP 10 TIPS

1. ESTABLISH REGULAR MEAL TIMES:

- Eat 3 meals and 2 snacks every day
- Eat together as a family

2. BE TREATWISE:

- Treat-free most days

3. DRINK YOUR WAY TO GOOD HEALTH:

- 6-8 drinks everyday (aim for water or milk)

4. CHOOSE 7 A DAY:

- 7 portions of fruit and vegetables everyday
- One portion fits into a child's hand

5. IMPROVE SLEEP ROUTINES.

- 9-11 hours sleep per night
- Screen-free bedrooms
- No food / drink an hour before bed

6. 60-180 MINUTES OF ACTIVE FUN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY/PLAY EVERYDAY.

- Outdoor play, indoor games, cycling, scooter, ball games daily

7. MAKE ACTIVITY PART OF THE EVERYDAY ROUTINE.

- Active travel- walk to / from school instead of car/ bus
- Improve independence by teaching child household chores

8. INCREASE SCREEN-FREE TIME

- Set rules about what days and times screens are allowed
- Keep track and cut back gradually (parents too!)

9. MAKE CHANGES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

- Set family goals and get everyone involved in healthy changes

10. HAVE FUN

- Preparing meals together
- Doing active things with friends or family is more fun e.g. swimming, walks, cycles, playground etc.

And Now Over To You

Set a goal for yourself; Something you can work towards for the next 7 days. Remember keep it **SMART !**

Decide on a reward. Keep a record and share it with someone close to you. Review how you have done after a week.

Example:

My goal for the week is: to eat fruit as my morning snack in school on at least 5 days this week.

If I achieve this goal my reward will be: to go to the park with my family at the weekend.

Date of goal review: _____

Your turn:

My goal for the week is: _____

If I achieve this goal my reward will be: _____

Date of goal review: _____

Grandparents and Carers

The role of a grandparent or carer is a very important one. They can provide a sense of security and safety, offer unconditional love and support and act as a role model for a child to look up to. They can also offer a lot of practical support in terms of childcare, which is a huge help to the whole family.

We know from our work with families that grandparents and carers often play a very important part in helping to make positive lifestyle changes.

In order to be successful it is important that the whole family has agreed on making healthy eating and lifestyle changes a priority, so it's really important that all carers are in agreement with these. If there are disagreements among carers about what a child eats, don't argue in front of them - try to have the conversation away from them. We want it to be a healthy environment for everyone in the household, so it is important not to make one child feel isolated or singled out. Setting some clear family rules at the start can be very helpful.

Nutrition

It is normal for grandparents to want to give treats or "sometimes foods" to their grandchild. Providing food and nutrition are natural ways to care for and look after children. However, treat foods should be limited to 1-2

times per week. If a child is spending time with grandparents, as well as at a child-minder or in school or crèche, it's important that everyone agrees on treat days and what is an appropriate treat. Some families find it helpful to send healthy treat or snack foods to grandparents. Treats don't have to be food either! You may choose to come up with some alternative treats that are inexpensive and easy to offer (e.g. stickers)

Physical Activity and Screens

As grandparents and carers it is important to encourage your grandchildren to be active so that their bodies develop properly. Grandchildren and grandparents can team up to make each other's lives a little easier. Ways to involve your grandchildren in an active day while you mind them:

1. Walk part or all the way home from school.
2. Walk to the shops instead of driving.
3. Encourage children to take the stairs instead of lifts or escalators-and lead by example.
4. Give the children some age appropriate chores.
5. Try to get out to parks or playgrounds for an hour in the afternoon if you can.
6. Bring children to the local swimming pool or walk to the local library to get an exercise boost.
7. And... turn off the screens! Children should have lots of energy after sitting in school all day, so after school they should be encouraged to play more actively rather than sit down with screens.

Useful Websites

<https://w82go.ie>

<https://childhoodobesity.ie/resources/>

<https://www.safefood.net>

<https://www2.hse.ie/babies-children/weaning-eating/nutrition-child/healthy-eating/>

<https://www2.hse.ie/living-well/healthy-eating/families/>

Original Authors

Grace O'Malley

Lois McCrea

Sarah Delaney

Maeve Muldoon

Lucinda Case

Gráinne Barrett

Norah Jordan

Rachel Flanagan

Clinical Lead W82GO Programme

Program Co-Ordinator

Administrator

Senior Dietician

Senior Physiotherapist

Senior Physiotherapist

Senior Clinical Psychologist

Counselling Psychologist

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The information contained in this leaflet is correct at time of print

If you have any comments after reading this booklet, please feel free to contact any of the authors listed above

