

FACTSHEET



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Preventing holiday weight gain - Managing school holidays

School holidays can be really challenging times for parents who are trying to help a child or teenager lose weight. Keeping a healthy lifestyle going for the whole family can be difficult.

- Holidays mean that there is not the “structure” of school or any of the usual activities your kids do.
 - The availability of a large amount of food as well as being less physically active leaves children at risk to weight gain.
 - Keeping your child as active as possible is a good way to help prevent too much weight gain during school holidays.
 - Encourage your child to be physically active outdoors by doing vigorous activity for at least an hour each day. Vigorous activities are activities that make you “huff and puff” such as running, bike riding, skateboarding and swimming.
 - Swimming is a great summer holiday activity, as is bush-walking and school holiday camps. The following websites have more information on formal holiday activities and exactly how much physical activity your child or teenager needs.
 - NSW Government Office of Communities Sport and Recreation www.dsr.nsw.gov.au/holidays/index.asp
 - Camp Australia www.campaustralia.com.au
- Australian Government Department of Health www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/pasb
 - Limit television, video/DVD and computer access to no more than two hours each day. It can help to make a rule that there are no screens for anyone until after a certain time.
 - To help prevent overeating, encourage your child to keep to his or her school pattern of eating with breakfast, recess, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner rather than adopting a grazing style.
 - Try packing lunch and morning and afternoon tea ahead of time each day, just like you might on a school day. Store the prepared food in the fridge.
 - Try not to over buy high calorie, high fat foods such as chips, chocolates and lollies. If they are kept in the house, your children will want to eat them.
 - Make water your main drink. If you are buying cordial or soft drinks then have diet soft drink and cordial at home, rather than sugared varieties.
 - Ask family members not to buy the children extra lollies and chocolates. For example, at Easter ask them to buy a gift such as a small toy instead of chocolate.
 - If your child does have treats, spread them out over the course of the week or holiday period.

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- When eating out, ask for lower fat options to deep fried foods such as chips and nuggets, and instead choose foods such as wraps, sushi, low fat smoothies and grilled chicken burgers.
 - If you are seeing a health professional for your child's weight, then make an appointment (if possible) during the school holidays. Another good idea is to keep in touch with them via e-mail and report on what you are doing.
 - It is helpful to plan things to do with the kids for each day of the holidays.

Remember

- The school holiday period can leave children at risk to weight gain.
- Keeping children active for at least 1-2 hours each day is a key way to reduce weight gain during the school holiday period.
- Try and stick to set meal and snack times during school holidays to avoid overeating.
- If on holidays and most meals are eaten out, encourage healthy choices and include vegetables. Good options include sushi, stir fries, lean meat burgers and wraps.