

Key messages: EATING WELL AND BODY CONFIDENCE IN CHILDREN (Appendix 1 from Toddler and Young Children: food, mood and health guidance.)

A well balanced diet and an active lifestyle can positively affect physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. This is true for children of all shapes and sizes.

- Parents/Carers focus on making a nutritious and varied diet available, rather than attempting to micromanage how much a child eats.
- Parents/Carers lead by example and model the enjoyment of the most nutritious and well balanced diet they can provide
- Families eat meals together when they can.
- Parents/Carers model and encourage an active lifestyle, with an emphasis on enjoyment rather than “calorie burning”.
- If a child has their weight measured by a health professional, and it is well above or well below the “*Ideal healthy weight range*”, a conversation about what might be influencing weight can take place.
- Very often, heavier children (with a high BMI), are actually eating a varied and nutritious diet.
- Children (and adults) often need to re-learn how to tune into their body’s natural sense of hunger and fullness.
- Ideally, a child will eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full! This is better than dietary restraint or eating with abandonment.
- The pursuit of weight loss (dieting) is not recommended as it leads to weight gain in the long term.
- Parents/Carers encourage their children to be confident about their own bodies, emphasising that not everyone should be the same size or shape.
- Parents/Carers lead by example. “Diet talk” or judgments on people’s size or shape may not be helpful.
- Sometimes children may be bullied because of their size or shape; weight loss is not the answer - bullying is never acceptable
- Parents/Carers and older children are advised that *health gain* through better food and physical activity choices, is achievable *with or without* a change in body size or shape.

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