

---

## Kids and energy needs

---

### Summary

- It's important for kids to eat a wide variety of foods for a healthy, well-balanced diet and to be physically active.
  - Overweight and obesity often start during the primary school years.
  - Every child is different, so it's best to consult a health professional if you are concerned about your child's weight.
  - When you talk to children about healthy eating and physical activity, think about fostering positive body image.
- 

It's important for kids to eat a wide variety of foods for a healthy, well-balanced diet and to be physically active. Healthy habits in childhood lead to healthy decisions, actions and habits throughout life.

Kids maintain a healthy weight by balancing the amount of energy going into their body - food and drink - with the energy they use for their body to function and grow, and to be physically active.

To help you figure out how to balance energy in (food) and energy out (exercise), use our [kilojoule calculator](#) tool to find out how many kilojoules your child needs to fuel their growing body and maintain a healthy weight.

### Energy in – one size doesn't fit all

Every child is different, so it's best to consult a health professional if you are concerned about your child's weight. Health professionals like doctors and maternal health nurses use growth charts that compare a child's weight with their age and height to determine if their weight is within a healthy range. This will guide you on your child's dietary (energy in) needs.

Find out more about [healthy eating at all stages of life](#).

### Energy out – keeping kids active

Kids love to be active. Making physical activity (energy out) a part of their daily routine is not only fun, but also healthy.

Find out more about [keeping children active](#).

### Talk to children about energy in and out

Overweight and obesity often start during the primary school years. This is a major concern, because many overweight children continue to be overweight as adults.

Simple lifestyle changes and a conversation about energy needs can make a difference. While these topics might seem hard to discuss, it can be as simple as explaining the difference between healthy foods and '[sometimes foods](#)' and the importance of physical activity.

The main influence on the diet and lifestyle of children is their parents. Children tend to follow their parents' lead, so set a good example – eat and enjoy healthy food and drinks in front of your child and be physically active together as a family.

When you talk to children about healthy eating and physical activity, think about fostering positive body image. Don't focus on weight and 'dieting'. Rather, focus on cooking and preparing healthy foods, the fun and social aspects of doing exercise, the benefit of nutritious foods for growth, strong bones and good teeth. Be aware of the impact of negative body talk around children. Don't put a lot of emphasis on physical appearance, or your child will too.

Find out more about [childhood obesity](#)

---

**This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:**

Content on this website is provided for information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not in any way endorse or support such therapy, service, product or treatment and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. The information and materials contained on this website are not intended to constitute a comprehensive guide concerning all aspects of the therapy, product or treatment described on the website. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions and to ascertain whether the particular therapy, service, product or treatment described on the website is suitable in their circumstances. The State of Victoria and the Department of Health & Human Services shall not bear any liability for reliance by any user on the materials contained on this website.

For the latest updates and more information, visit [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

**Copyright © 1999/2019** State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel ([www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.