

A healthy mind in a healthy body

Time to start year 7 – A parent's guide to starting high school



Being fit, healthy, and active provides all kinds of social, emotional and intellectual benefits for your child.

Research has shown that children doing regular physical activity can have:

- improved emotional wellbeing - helps young children feel more confident, happy and relaxed, with improved self esteem and self concept
- improved health - encourages healthy growth and development of children's bodies
- improved mental health - improves concentration skills and ability to manage anxiety and stress
- enhanced social skills - develops skills such as cooperation and teamwork, meeting new people and developing friendships
- increased capacity for learning and productivity - active children are generally more motivated and better organised than

children who are inactive, and physical activity has direct links to improved learning outcomes

- a more positive school environment - active students are generally less aggressive and experience fewer discipline problems.

Your child will participate in a wide range of physical activities at school and learn more about positive body image and self-esteem issues in their Personal Development, Health and Physical Education classes.

There are also many ways that parents can help to promote a healthy body image and healthy habits for your child at home. Here are some tips:

- Plan to eat home-cooked meals together as a family as often as possible
- Discourage eating meals or snacks while watching TV
- Encourage family activities that include enjoyable physical activity for everyone
- Ensure a safe environment for children and their friends to engage in active play, e.g. swimming, cycling, ball sports

- Decrease the time spent in activities involving sitting, e.g. watching TV, playing video and computer games

- Encourage active commuting such as walking to school or walking to the bus or train.

The Australian Government has recently developed Physical Activity Recommendations for Children and Young People.

- Children and young people should participate in at least 60 minutes (and up to several hours) of moderate - to vigorous intensity physical activity every day
- Children and young people should not spend more than 2 hours a day using electronic media for entertainment (e.g. computer games, Internet, TV), particularly during daylight hours.

Getting a good start

A nutritious breakfast gives teens a great start to the school day. Recent research has shown that even simple meals like cereal, toast and baked beans are excellent sources of 'brain food' for your child.

A child that has not eaten breakfast has far more trouble concentrating in class and will have no energy for activities during the day.

Encourage your child to be organised in the mornings by setting the alarm clock, getting clothes ready etc the night before. That way they won't skip breakfast because they're running late.

Taking enough time to eat a healthy morning meal will help your child develop healthy food habits and improve their concentration and performance at school.

Healthy Lunchtime habits

Eating a healthy lunch is as important as getting a good start to the day. Healthy lunches and snacks are important for active children. Eating healthy food helps children concentrate and learn.

As children enter into their teens, they become more independent. Encourage your child to prepare their own lunch and choose healthy foods. Praise your child when they choose well.

There are lots of food choices available for lunch boxes. However, it can sometimes be difficult to decide which foods are healthy choices. Suggestions include:

- Fresh fruit
- Crunchy vegetables
- A meat or protein food such as slices of lean meat, or hardboiled egg
- A dairy food such as cheese stick or slice, grated cheese, milk or yoghurt
- Starchy food such as bread, a roll, pita or flat bread, fruit bread or crackers
- A frozen drink such as water or milk, an icepack or freezer pack.

Foods such as sandwiches can be prepared the night before or on the weekend, frozen, then taken for each day's lunch box.

Suitable foods to freeze include:

- Bread
- Cooked meat
- Cheese
- Baked beans
- Mashed eggs
- Yeast or vegetable spreads.

School canteen

Your school canteen also plays an important part in your child's healthy eating routine. School canteens provide food that is healthy and nutritious in line with the Department of Education and Training's healthy canteen policy.

Although canteens may vary from school to school, they all exist to provide students and staff with a varied selection of foods and drinks which are nutritious, safe and affordable.

The canteen can also provide your child with exposure to a variety of foods, new tastes and different textures. It can also create a situation where teachers, parents and students are all seen to be eating and enjoying nutritious foods.

Go to:

www.dsr.nsw.gov.au

www.health.nsw.gov.au/living/nut.html

www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au

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