



# Keeping children healthy (5–12 years)

You are an important role model for your children. Your child will watch what you eat, how much you exercise, how much screen time you use and how you look after yourself.

Children who grow up in families that enjoy a healthy lifestyle are more likely to make their own healthy choices as they get older.

## Physical activity

Physical activity is anything that gets children moving, makes their breathing quicker and their hearts beat faster.

Children aged 5 to 12 years should do **at least one hour** of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. Here are some ideas for keeping physical activity fun:

- When driving, park further away from your destination and walk some of the way.
- Go for walks around the neighbourhood.
- Visit local playgrounds and parks.
- Encourage cycling or scooting as part of a family outing.
- Meet friends for a play at a favourite or new place.
- Encourage active games like chasey, hide and seek, dodge ball or their favourite seasonal sport.
- Spend a day in a National Park and enjoy what nature has to offer.

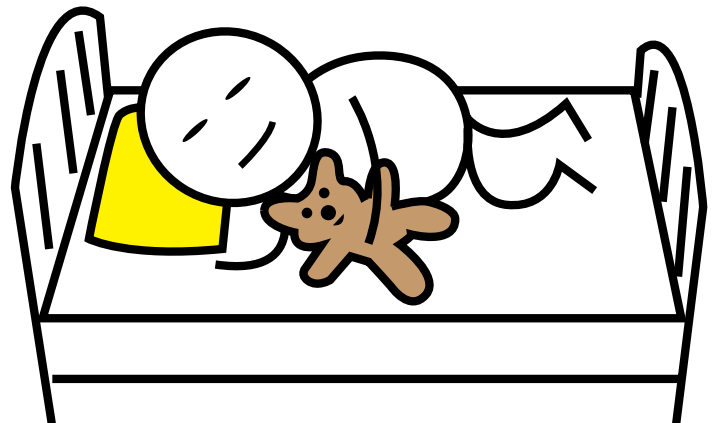
## Further information

- **Nature Play WA:** great ideas for outdoors activities ([natureplaywa.org.au](http://natureplaywa.org.au))
- **Active Living:** information and ideas for the whole family ([heartfoundation.org.au](http://heartfoundation.org.au))
- **Explore Parks WA:** to plan activities in National Parks ([parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au](http://parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au))

## Sleep

A well-rested child will have more energy to play and learn. Young children should have **10 to 12 hours of sleep** every night.

- Good sleep is important for the whole family. If parents don't get enough sleep, children are also more likely to have too little sleep.
- It's best to avoid screen time in the 90 minutes before bedtime. Watching screens makes it more difficult for children to fall asleep, and reduces overall sleep time.
- Go to the **Raising Children Network** for information about sleep for primary school aged children ([raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au))



## Healthy eating

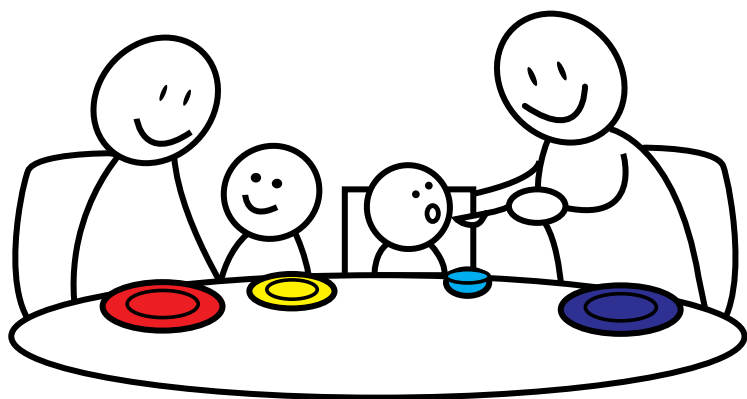
Healthy eating habits start early and set children up for life.

Make healthy eating an everyday priority that becomes a family lifestyle.

- Set a good example for your child by modelling healthy eating habits and daily activity.
- Plan 3 main meals for your child each day. Include lots of vegetables, some reduced-fat dairy products, some meat/chicken/fish, legumes or egg, and wholegrain cereal foods.
- Between meals, offer 1 or 2 small nutritious snacks such as cut-up fresh fruit and vegetables, reduced-fat yoghurt or wholegrain crackers.
- **Drink lots of water.** Avoid sugary drinks (including juice).
- Limit foods that are high in sugar, fat or salt. Only offer these occasionally.
- **Eat meals together** at a table, with the TV and other electronic devices turned off.

### Further information

- **Eat for Health** for a healthy eating guide, recipes and more ([eatforhealth.gov.au](http://eatforhealth.gov.au))
- **Livelifter** helps families achieve healthier lifestyles. ([www.livelifter.com.au](http://www.livelifter.com.au))



## Screen time

Screen time is the time spent watching TV or DVDs, using computers, playing video or hand-held computer games, or using tablets and smart phones.

Children aged 5 to 12 should have **no more than 2 hours** screen time each day, with regular breaks.

- Remove all sources of screen time from your child's bedroom, including phones, TVs and computers.
- Use a timer or an alarm clock to keep track of how much time your children spend watching TV, using a computer or playing electronic games.
- Try to have at least one full day every week where your family doesn't use screens.

## Growth

Weight loss is not usually needed for a child who is above the healthy weight range. It is better to help children develop healthy habits so that they can 'grow into' their weight.

Avoid talking about weight with your child. Instead, speak positively about body image and focus on healthy habits that will help everyone in the family.

## Parenting support

- **Triple P** supports parents to raise happy and confident children, through small changes and simple routines. To find parenting groups, visit [healthywa.wa.gov.au/parentgroups](http://healthywa.wa.gov.au/parentgroups) or phone 1300 749 869.
- The **Raising Children Network** offers reliable and practical child health and parenting information and activities for Australian families ([raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au)).
- **Ngala** offers parenting support for families with children from birth to 18 years. Visit [ngala.com.au](http://ngala.com.au) or phone 9368 9368.
- Your **family doctor** may also offer growth monitoring and support.
- See your **child** or **school health nurse** if you need further support.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.