

Healthy weight, healthy eating and physical activity for children

Find information on healthy eating, physical activity and support to help children achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Who is this page for?

This page is for parents, carers, families and anyone supporting children to eat well, be physically active and maintain healthy weight.

About healthy weight, healthy eating and physical activity

Healthy eating and regular physical activity help children grow, develop and stay healthy. Encouraging healthy habits and regular physical activity from an early age helps children grow, supports lifelong health and wellbeing and can reduce the risk of overweight and obesity.

Healthy eating for children

Healthy eating during childhood provides the nutrients children need to grow, learn and stay healthy. What children eat and drink during their early years can affect their health for many years to come. Encouraging healthy eating habits from an early age can help children develop good eating habits when they are young will also mean they are more likely to eat healthily as they grow up.

Find more information about:

- Healthy eating for children one to five - [Getting a good start: healthy eating from one to five \(English and translations\) | HSC Public Health Agency](#)
- Healthy eating guidance - [Healthy eating for children | nidirect](#)
- Healthy lunchboxes, nutrition videos, webinars - [Public Health Dietitians - Eating Well - YouTube channel](#)

Physical activity for children

Regular physical activity supports children's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. It also helps children develop movement skills, build confidence and maintain healthy weight.

Find information about:

- recommended levels of activity
- being active everyday
- active travel to school
- physical activity resources

UK Chief Medical Officer physical activity guidelines:

- [Physical activity | nidirect](#)
- [Exercise - NHS](#)
- [UK CMO Physical Activity Guideline Infographics](#)

NHS physical activity advice:

- [Physical activity guidelines for children \(under 5 years\) - NHS](#)
- [Physical activity guidelines for children and young people - NHS](#)

PHA physical activity resources:

- [Healthy choices. Choose wisely: advice for parents | HSC Public Health Agency](#)
- [Active fun for everyone: improving activity in children and young people with physical disabilities | HSC Public Health Agency](#)
- [Your activity record sheet | HSC Public Health Agency](#)

Other organisations recommended by PHA:

- [Outdoor trails and venues in Northern Ireland](#)
- [Disability Sport NI |](#)
- [Active Living |No Limits](#)
- [Get Active | Sport NI](#)
- [Local councils in Northern Ireland | nidirect](#)
- [Move More, Live Better | Department for Communities](#)
- [Play Activities – PlayBoard NI](#)

Healthy weight and childhood obesity prevention

Overweight and obesity affect many children and adults across Northern Ireland and are more common in areas of greater deprivation.

The Public Health Agency works with partners to support children and families to develop healthy eating habits, increase physical activity and maintain a healthy weight through the [Healthy Futures](#) strategy, which aims to prevent and manage obesity through education, treatment services, and a person-centred approach.

How the Public Health Agency (PHA) helps?

The PHA supports healthy weight, healthy eating and physical activity through a range of programmes and initiatives across Northern Ireland, including:

- **Weigh to a Healthy Pregnancy programme (WTHP)** - supporting pregnant women with a BMI greater than 38 through dietetic, midwifery and physiotherapy input.
- **Breastfeeding** - promoting and supporting breastfeeding to give babies the best nutritional start in life through [Breastfed Babies](#).
- **Early Years Obesity Prevention Programme (HENRY)** - training Health and Social Care Trust and SureStart staff to support families with healthy lifestyles across Northern Ireland.
- **[Active School Travel in Northern Ireland - Walk Wheel Cycle Trust](#)** - encouraging children to walk, wheel and cycle to school through a programme delivered by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (Sustrans).
- **[The Daily Mile](#)** - supporting children to walk, run or jog for 15 minutes during the school day.
- **Nutrition training and education programmes** - providing resources, training workshops, webinars and videos for childcare providers from playgroups, day nurseries and childminding sector and parents. Offering a suite of nutrition videos covering a range of key nutrition issues such as weaning, kids' lunchboxes, constipation in children through [Public Health Dietitians - YouTube channel](#).
- **Food in Schools (FIS)** - working with the Department of Education to support healthy food environments through the Health Food for Healthy Outcomes policy [Food in schools policy | Department of Education](#).
- **Resources Publication (leaflets and posters)** - producing leaflets, posters and other educational materials to support healthy eating and healthy lifestyles, which can be downloaded from the PHA's website or sourced locally from the Health and Social Care Trust libraries.

Did you know?

- 2 in 3 adults (67%) in Northern Ireland are living with overweight or obesity. [Health Survey Northern Ireland First Results 2024-25](#).
- Children living in the most deprived areas are significantly more likely to be affected by obesity than those living in the least deprived areas. In 2024/25, the obesity rate among Primary 1 pupils was 73% higher, while for Year 8 pupils it was 87% higher. ([Health Inequalities Annual Report 2026 | Department of Health](#)).

PHA resources



[Getting a good start: healthy eating from one to five \(English and translations\)](#)

This booklet outlines advice on many key nutritional issues for children aged one to five. It includes information on how to provide a healthy, balanced diet for this age group, guidance on suitable snacks and drinks, feeding a vegetarian c

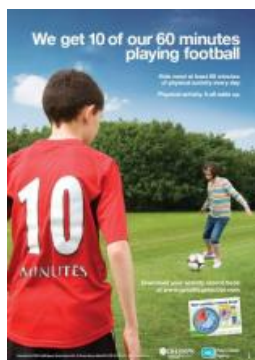


Healthy choices. Choose wisely: advice for parents

This booklet shows how parents and carers of primary school children can choose food from the different food groups to make sure their family is getting all the nutrients they need to stay healthy.



Nutritional standards for school lunches



We get 10 of our 60 minutes playing football



Physical activity infographics



Active fun for everyone: improving activity in children and young people with physical disabilities



Your activity record book (English and Irish translation)

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Related content

- [School health](#)