

# RESILIENT KIDS

NEWSLETTER by Michael Grose - Australia's leading parenting educator

## Keeping kids healthy and fit

**Good health and well-being maximises children's school and social experiences. There is heaps of evidence to suggest that fit children learn more and also enjoy a healthy range of social experiences. Conversely, children who are overweight and unfit frequently have problems with self-esteem and self-image in adolescence.**

Developed countries such as Australia have the resources at hand to maximise children's health and fitness yet there is currently a huge concern about overweight and unfit children. Sedentary lifestyles, the high use of labour-saving devices and modern transport are just some of the challenges to children's fitness levels. The high availability and attractiveness of less than healthy foods is also a challenge for parents no matter how keen they may be to keep the calories off children.

Parents need to work hard to ensure children lead lifestyles that maintain their health and fitness and maximise learning and social opportunities.

**The following simple ideas can be adopted to ensure children grow up healthy and fit:**

1. Limit the amount of children's television, computer and electronic games usage to a maximum of two hours a day. Send children outside, suggest they walk or ride to a friend's house or even suggest they have a friend or four over to play.
2. Children walk or ride a bike to school each day. Recent research revealed that 60 per cent of Australian 6 – 13 year olds would like to walk to school but only 30 per cent actually do. Most children would get their required

minimum two hours of exercise a week by walking or riding their bikes to school.

3. Keep unhealthy food out of the shopping trolley and include more fruit. This may be stating the obvious but as keepers of the family purse parents have the main say about what food goes in and what stays out of the shopping trolley.
4. Serve healthy meals at the table on a regular basis. Far from being a refuelling stop mealtime is an opportunity for everyone to catch up and to share good healthy, well-prepared food.
5. Parents play with their children or join them in a physical activity. The family that plays together stays fit together could well be the motto of our times.
6. Encourage children to be involved in at least one organised physical activity each week. There is no shortage of options for children these days as there are activities and sports that cater for a diverse range of interests, abilities and body types.
7. Parents model a healthy lifestyle. Do as I do not as I say is the idea here. It is little use parents telling their kids to go out and play as they tuck into their second wine or they slump onto the couch. Modelling is the most important tool in the armoury if we want children to develop sustained healthy eating and exercise habits.

This plan has a great deal going for it. It is cost-free, easy to use and has the added bonus of promoting healthy relationships. If you follow this plan parents and kids should spend more time together, which can't be a bad thing.

## WHAT'S YOUR CHILD LIKE?

HOW HEALTHY IS YOUR CHILD'S LIFESTYLE?

### DOES HE

1. Get a minimum of an hour's physical activity every day? **Yes [2] No [0]**
2. Spend more than two hours per day watching television, playing computer games and using the computer? **Yes [0] No [2]**
3. Mostly eat according to the healthy eating pyramid? **Yes [2] No [0]**
4. Get sufficient sleep so that they don't tire in the middle of the day? **Yes [2] No [0]**

5. Eat a good, healthy breakfast every day? **Yes [2] No [0]**

### SCORE:

- 10:** More than likely a healthy specimen. Keep it up.
- 6-8:** Needs some work. Is it food, sleep or exercise that needs attending to?
- 0-4:** Lifestyle needs looking at. Where to start?



## TRY THIS...

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

**To promote health and fitness in your children try the following four strategies:**

1. Have a **TV-free day** once a week or TV-free period each day.
2. Put up the **healthy eating food pyramid** at home and get kids to identify the healthy foods they eat.
3. Organise for your children to **walk** to and from school each day establishing processes to ensure their safety.
4. Join your children in a **physical** game or activity each day.

## ACTION PLAN

First Step . . .

Next Step . . .

For more ideas about promoting resilience in children visit [www.parentingideas.com.au](http://www.parentingideas.com.au)

## QUOTE

*"One of the reasons why adults should look like they are having fun is to give kids a reason to want to grow up."*

PATCH ADAMS