



## Discussing a child's BMI with parents

### Ways to discuss BMI with parents

- Weight and BMI should be discussed in a **sensitive manner**
- Think of ways to open discussions about BMI, for example ‘...ok, so we’ve taken his/her height and weight and calculated their BMI, would you like to see the results?’
- Show the BMI charts and explain what they mean
- Explore trends in the child’s eating and lifestyle behaviour by using a combination of open and closed questions, try not to use leading questions
- Provide parents with information in general terms, for example “...we know that low fat milk is fine for children over the age of 2 years” or “...recommendations say that we should all aim for 2 servings of fruit and 5 servings of vegetables every day” or “...we know that children tend to be much more active when they are outside”
- Relating the information that the parent has provided and the information you know about healthy lifestyle recommendations for children, discuss in an open and non-judgemental way possible changes that the family to help their child achieve a healthy weight

**Key messages** - The key messages to give parents regarding growth, healthy diet and activity for young children are summarised below.

### Growth

- Growth patterns are individual
- Growth patterns over time are more important than a single measurement (repeated measurements every 6 months is ideal)
- Growth is one sign of general health
- A child’s growth often reflects family growth patterns – for example a child with two short parents is unlikely to be tall themselves. However, if both parents are overweight this does not make it OK for the child to be overweight too!

### Healthy diet

- Parents are responsible for **what and how much** they provide their child; children are responsible for **what they choose** to eat from the food provided
- Parents should offer a varied diet, including foods from all food groups
- Aim for 5 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruit every day
- High fat, sugary foods should be limited and ideally kept for special occasions
- Water is the best drink; juices, fizzy drinks and cordials should be avoided
- Reduced fat milk and dairy products should be used and milk consumption should not exceed 500 - 600mls a day, (less if other dairy products are eaten)

### Activity

- Children need at least 2 hours of physical activity every day, usually carried out in short blocks of time
- Physical activity includes both structured and unstructured activity
- Outdoor play should especially be encouraged
- Screen time (TV watching and using a computer) should never exceed 2 hours a day and ideally should not be more than 30 minutes a day for young children
- Child physical activity is easier if parents act as a good role model