

Making the difference

# Healthy choices



As parents, carers and family members you have a huge role to play in your children's physical, social and emotional health and well-being. What your child eats and drinks, how active they are and how they feel about themselves has a big effect on their health now and in the future. By working together with the school, you can make a real difference to your child's health by giving them good advice and helping them to have a healthy lifestyle.



## What are schools doing?

Many schools actively promote health through becoming Health Promoting Schools, working with a wide range of partners to:

- ▶ provide happy, safe, supportive and secure environments for learning
- ▶ support and encourage children, parents and staff to become involved in making healthier choices about lifestyle
- ▶ teach children about a wide variety of health topics such as healthy eating, physical activity, sexual health and relationships, drugs, smoking and alcohol – issues that can really affect their lives.

To find out what your child's school is doing to promote health and wellbeing, get in touch with the school.

# How can my child benefit?

If children get the same messages at home and at school they are much more likely to make healthier lifestyle choices. By encouraging your child to eat healthily and be physically active you will help them to do better at school.

With a balanced diet, regular physical activity and the confidence to make good lifestyle choices, your child will:

- ▶ have more energy
- ▶ have a more positive happy outlook
- ▶ be able to concentrate better
- ▶ stay at a healthy weight
- ▶ get fewer illnesses
- ▶ feel less stressed
- ▶ not get bored so easily
- ▶ sleep better.

## Healthy eating – the facts

There has been an increase in children who are overweight. The right balance of foods will give your child all the nutrients they need for healthy growth and development. A balanced diet also helps to reduce the risk of serious diseases later in life. However, many children and young people have unhealthy eating habits:

- ▶ **53% drink fizzy or sugary drinks at least once a day**
- ▶ **16% eat fresh fruit only once a week or less**
- ▶ **40% eat vegetables only once a week or less**
- ▶ **24% don't eat breakfast**
- ▶ **40% eat chocolate, crisps or biscuits more than once a day.**



## What can I do?

- › make sure the family eats healthy meals at home. You can get advice on healthy eating from a wide variety of places including your doctor, health visitor, public health nurse and health centre
- › involve your child in cooking and preparing meals at home
- › encourage your child to eat school lunches. These have improved recently – there are more choices and the food is now better quality, tastier and healthier
- › think about healthy options for snacks and lunchboxes.



## Physical activity - the facts

As a nation, we are not active or fit enough and are increasingly overweight. Two-thirds of us are at risk of serious health problems as a result of our inactivity. This trend starts before we leave school. For children to be healthy they need at least one hour of physical activity a day but 27% of boys and 40% of girls are not doing this.

If your child is active every day, they will feel better, physically and mentally. It helps them to relax, relieves stress, stops them getting bored and gives them more energy.

## What can I do?

- › Encourage and support your child to take part in extra-curricular activities (dance, sports, games) at their school. As well as keeping them active, these provide a good opportunity for your child to meet friends and make new ones.
- › Your child doesn't have to be good at sport to be active! Small changes to their everyday routine, such as walking or cycling to school instead of going by bus or car, will give them an opportunity to be more active.
- › Leisure activities with friends or family, such as playing football, going swimming, ten-pin bowling, dancing, skateboarding or rollerblading, are a great way to keep active, socialise and have fun at the same time.

# Emotional well-being – the facts

Good mental and emotional health is very important for general well-being. There are strong links between children's emotional well-being and their personal, social development and academic and other achievements.

In Scotland, one in ten children and young people experience mental and emotional health problems which impact on their thoughts, feelings, behaviour, learning and relationships on a daily basis. Schools can support children to feel good about themselves by providing a happy, safe, supportive and secure environment.

Emotional health affects everyone's quality of life. To be emotionally well your child needs to feel:

- ▶ loved, trusted, valued and understood
- ▶ safe and secure
- ▶ nurtured and cared for
- ▶ listened to
- ▶ accepted
- ▶ respected
- ▶ included
- ▶ able to talk about their feelings
- ▶ confident in their own abilities.

## What can I do?

- ▶ Try to make sure your child eats well, gets enough sleep, is physically active and has time to relax
- ▶ Take time to listen and talk to your child about the things that matter to them or concern them and give support when they need it
- ▶ Encourage your child to think positively, to set realistic goals for themselves in life and take things one step at a time. Discuss their goals with them and offer praise when these are achieved
- ▶ It is important to remember that stress is a natural part of life. It only becomes harmful when the problems and hassles of daily life overwhelm your child. There are times when your child may feel stressed by things like exams, bullying, or family problems. Let the school know as soon as possible about any problem your child is having so that they can support and help you to resolve the problem.

# Useful links and contacts

## Parentzone

[www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk](http://www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk)

## Health Promoting Schools

[www.healthpromotingschools.co.uk](http://www.healthpromotingschools.co.uk)

## NHS Health Scotland

[www.healthscotland.com](http://www.healthscotland.com)

## Healthy Living

Tel: 0845 2 78 88 78

[www.healthyliving.gov.uk](http://www.healthyliving.gov.uk)

## Health and Well-being

[www.direct.gov.uk/HealthAndWellBeing/HealthyLiving/fs/en](http://www.direct.gov.uk/HealthAndWellBeing/HealthyLiving/fs/en)

## Healthy Eating

[www.5aday.nhs.uk](http://www.5aday.nhs.uk)

## School Meals

[www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/School-Education/18922/19348](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/School-Education/18922/19348)

## Healthy Respect

[www.healthy-respect.com](http://www.healthy-respect.com)

## Drugs

[www.sad.org.uk](http://www.sad.org.uk)

## Emotional Health

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

## Dealing with Stress

[www.practicalparent.org.uk/stress3.htm](http://www.practicalparent.org.uk/stress3.htm)

## BBC Parents

[www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents)

## Parentscentre

[www.parentscentre.gov.uk](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk)

## ParentLine Scotland

Tel: 0808 800 2222

[www.children1st.org.uk/parentline](http://www.children1st.org.uk/parentline)

## Parent Network Scotland

Tel: 0131 555 6780

[www.parentnetworkscotland.org.uk](http://www.parentnetworkscotland.org.uk)

## One Parent Families Scotland

Tel: 0800 018 5026

[www.opfs.org.uk](http://www.opfs.org.uk)

This leaflet is the seventh in a series. It highlights the real difference parents can and do make to their children's learning. Together with the local advice you will have on the arrangements in your child's school, this series will offer information to help you become better involved in your child's education. Other published leaflets are: Homework, Sharing information, Parents' evenings, School holidays, Starting a new school year and Out of school learning. The series also includes materials for schools and teachers on these topics.

If you would like to contact us, or suggest topics for future leaflets, please visit [www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk](http://www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk) or telephone 0131 244 0956. This leaflet will be available in community languages and alternative formats from your child's school and the Parentzone website.

This series is prepared in partnership with the Quality in Education Centre (University of Strathclyde) and Children in Scotland. This leaflet has been prepared with the Scottish Health Promoting Schools Unit.



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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