



## Getting Kids Active is Life changing

**Having healthy habits in childhood; being active and having a varied and nutritionally balanced diet is important to long term health outcomes, well into adulthood.**

A lack of regular activity and high body fat in children has been shown in studies to cause a range of physical, social and mental health problems. Overweight and inactive children are more likely to be overweight into adulthood, and risk developing diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular diseases.

The Ministry of Health reports that in New Zealand, 31% of children aged 2-14 years are overweight, and this trend has been on the rise in recent years. Internationally the World Health Organisation reports that 42 million under the age of 5 are overweight (2103 figures).

We face a unique moment in history where most of the world's population live in countries where overweight and obesity kills more people than underweight.

For parents and those who have an interest in the future health of their children, it is clear that a lifelong healthy lifestyle needs to start in childhood, and as it is adults who make the health decisions for children, we have a real opportunity to turn around the health of our children. By encouraging and supporting them to get active and engaging in healthy eating when they are young, we can make it easier to maintain those habits into adulthood.

It's not just about the health risks either. Getting kids active helps them with their physical development helping to build strong bones, muscles and joints, and healthy heart and lungs. It will improve their balance, coordination and cognitive skills and it will help them be more confident and socially interactive.

Sports New Zealand states that early childhood experiences are critical to the development of the skills, attitudes and confidence required to become an active participant in sport and recreation in later life. While physical activity and childhood goes together, more and more there is competition for getting active. Nearly half of children aged 5–14 years (53%) usually watch two or more hours of television a day, and this time increases into the teen years. This means we cannot just assume kids will stay active, just as we plan time to exercise and engage in physical activity, our kids need to plan for it as well.

So let's get our nation's children active. There are plenty of ways you can integrate activity into family life with young children including:

- Limit screen time
- Whenever possible use active transport
- Involve your children in your activity and exercise choices. While it may not be appropriate to take your preschooler to the gym, they can come along for active family activities.
- Get the kids to help around the house and garden. Teach them that working up a sweat is a positive thing.

Once kids head into their teenage years and beyond there's no reason they can't enjoy exercise in the way we do. Why not take them along to an exercise session with you? By seeing you as their parents or carers doing the right thing, this sets the right pathway to a life long love of exercise and physical activity.

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### Contact details for further information about the exercise industry:

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**NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs)** - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the "warrant of fitness check" that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - [www.icreps.org](http://www.icreps.org)

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**Exercise Association of New Zealand** - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its *mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.*

