

# Ask 'Doctor D' ....

## about Childhood obesity



*Ask 'Doctor D' is your opportunity to put questions people often want answers to, but don't like to ask, to the Doctors based at St. Andrews. (You can also drop your question in to Café Bliss in the high street if you prefer).*

### What's the problem?

The 2013 **National Child Measurement Programme 2013** found that:

- **1 in 5 five** children in reception year is **overweight or obese**.
- **1 in 3** children in year 6 (aged 10-11yrs) is **overweight or obese**.

### Why's it happening?

Many children are overweight simply because they eat and drink more than their body needs.

### Why it's so important to prevent this happening

Childhood obesity has serious consequences for children's health and wellbeing including:

- Hip and joint problems and sleep disorders
- Emotional and social problems: such as bullying, poor self-esteem and body image, depression and eating disorders

If children remain obese from early childhood there are close links with obesity in adulthood and associated illnesses and health problems are more likely to occur including:

- Cardiovascular disease, type-2 diabetes, types of cancer, infertility and skin disorders.

### How can I prevent this happening to my child?

Aim for a **balanced and varied diet** for the whole family.

Encourage your child to eat **meals at regular times** and to watch **how often they are eating**. **Avoid snacking** as much as possible.

Try to **eat meals in a sociable atmosphere** as a family, without distractions such as the TV.

**Make snacks healthy**, (e.g. fruit) not sweets, chocolates, crisps, nuts, biscuits and cakes.

**Make drinks low calorie – not sugary** - (water is best).

**Don't reward** by using snacks or food.

Encourage your child to **watch the portion sizes** of the food that they are eating.

Make up the bulk of most of your child's meals with **starch-based foods** - such as cereals, bread, potatoes, rice, pasta. Wholegrain starch-based foods should be eaten when possible.

Make sure that your child eats plenty of foods **high in fibre** e.g. wholegrain bread, brown rice and pasta, oats, peas, lentils, grain, beans, fruit, vegetables and seeds. Foods high in fibre help to fill your child up.

Aim for **5 portions a day** of a variety of fruit and vegetables.

Children need some fat in their diet but aim to **grill, boil or bake** rather than fry foods.

### Doing plenty of physical activity

All children should do at least **60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily**. They can break it up into 10-15 minute blocks.

Sedentary activities - watching TV, using a computer, or playing video games, should be less than 2 hours each day.