

Toddler Better Health Programme



The Toddler Better Health Programme is an exciting new evidence-based healthy lifestyle programme for families with children aged 2-4 years old. It encourages healthy eating habits and being physically active each day. A joint initiative between Nelson Bays Primary Health and Sport Tasman it's the first of this kind in the Nelson region.

Toddler Better Health aims to encourage families to be more active and make healthy choices with their food as well as making small healthy changes in the family home. It's a free programme and is delivered once a week over a ten-week period. Each session involves toddlers and parents/caregivers sharing the experiences of learning in a fun way.

Although the primary target is families with an overweight/obese child or a child at risk of becoming overweight, it's suitable for all families with children aged between 2-4 years old. Families can be referred by a health professional or they can self-refer. It is advertised in a number of ways to the community including GP practices, public health nurses, Plunket, family start, dietitians, paediatricians and early childhood services.

The programme includes 30 minutes of play-time (parents and children learning how to play together), snack time (children and parents get to try new and exciting healthy foods) and 45 minutes of fully supervised creative play for the children, while parents learn about healthy eating and how to make behaviour changes at home.

Through the activities set up toddlers are able to practise basic skills like kicking, catching, jumping and balancing. Reducing sedentary behaviour is also a big part of the program and families are encouraged that children watch less than two hours of television a day.

Snack time allows toddlers to try new foods and targets fussy eaters. Each week they try a different fruit and vegetable with

the help of puppet Max Moon, who came to Earth but was unsure of trying new foods. The kids touch, smell and even kiss foods to get familiar with it before tasting it.

"We find at this age there are a lot of fussy eaters and that often leads into behaviours which are really difficult to change and can influence their health and weight. We have seen changes in the kids, I think having the snack time has been great, watching children sit down and being very hesitant at first to try things like raw broccoli and cauliflower but they have given it a go" says Tonia Talbot community dietitian at Nelson Bays Primary Health who facilitates the programme.

The program was originally developed in the United Kingdom and has also been implemented in Australia. It was tailored to suit the New Zealand context.

There has been some great feedback and success stories from families participating so far:

- 60% of parents said their children were spending more time being physically active
- 60% of parents have seen a reduction in the time their children are spending on screens (such as TV, computer)
- 80% of parents also said their children are eating more vegetables on a daily basis.

"The programme has had a real flow on effect to my extended family. My mother sent the children money instead of chocolate for Easter this year and my sister and brother in law don't offer fizzy drinks when we come to visit now" said a parent on the programme.



For more information please contact:

Tonia Talbot
Nelson Bays Primary Health

E: tonia.talbot@nbph.org.nz

Jenny Dravitzki
Sport Tasman

E: jenny.d@sporttasman.org.nz