



# LOOKING AFTER YOUR PHYSICAL WELLBEING

For dads with kids in mind ...



**Being** active

**Eating** well

**Alcohol** and other drugs

**Sleeping** well

*“Dad says kids don’t play outside like he did when he was a kid. He should play outside with us.”*

Kids Talk

*“Dads need to let their kids know they have a responsible parent who’s looking after himself to be sure they’re going to be safe.”*

Dads Talk

*“When your body is healthy you are better equipped to handle emotional challenges.”*

Health Workers Talk



When your physical health is at its best, you are better equipped to manage your emotional health. A healthy lifestyle can reduce the risk of disease, lift your mood and provide a sense of control in your life.

People under stress for long periods of time or who have a mental illness are at higher risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. So it’s important to make sure you are eating well and getting enough exercise. This will increase your energy levels, make you feel good and also improve your sleep quality, another key factor of good health.

Looking after your own health and wellbeing is important for your child too. Fathers are key role models for their children. Lifestyle choices you make will influence behaviour patterns your child adopts and takes into adulthood. Your attitude to health can have a profound effect on your children’s future health and wellbeing.

## Choosing an active lifestyle

Controlling your weight is an important part of maintaining good health. It also affects your family. Research has found where fathers are overweight, the chances of his children being overweight quadruples, even when their mother is a normal weight. Overweight people usually develop their eating and exercise patterns early in life, so your children will learn from you. Control your weight by eating healthy food, not overeating and getting enough exercise.

Being active benefits you physically and mentally. If you include your children in physical activities, you will create positive habits for them too. Involving children can make the activity more enjoyable,

and be a more effective use of time. You’ll benefit emotionally too, by building better relationships with your child.

## What you can do

- Exercise or play with your children — kids love ‘rough and tumble’ games like pillow-fights, touch footy or ‘zombie play fights’.
- Walk the dog regularly with the kids or take them to the park and take a ball. As you get near home pick up the pace by yelling “last one back is a rotten egg!”
- Build a go-kart with the kids and take turns pushing it around.
- Make kites (check out the internet or library for instructions) and take the kids to the beach to fly them.
- In autumn get the kids to help rake up leaves. In winter collect wood for the fire together. This makes chores more fun too.
- Walk the kids to school or ride your bike at least once a week.

## Healthy eating

Perhaps you need to assess what you’re eating and make changes. Eating patterns are usually habitual, so changes may seem difficult at first. Try starting with a small change and introduce others once you’ve got it ‘down-pat’. Persist, as it won’t take long until it becomes natural and enjoyable.

Like exercise, involving your children in your eating habits can make it more fun for both of you. It also reminds you it’s important to be healthy for each other.

### What you can do

- Make healthy meals with or for your children. Get them to help with a fruit salad for dessert or peel and prepare vegetables.
- If you're not much of a cook, you can enjoy learning. Your local library has plenty of basic cook books you can borrow.
- Learn to cook with your kids. Take it in turns to read the instructions. Then you can all wash up together.
- Make a chart for the fridge to record the family's fruit and vegetable intake. Mark off everyone's 5 serves of vegies and 2 serves of fruit with a smiley face.
- Break bad habits by thinking them through before they happen and be ready to counteract, eg. if you usually buy icecream when you stop for petrol, keep an apple in the car to eat instead.

It's the quirky 'dad' things you do with your child that will always endear you to them. When you (or your partner) aren't well, you can forget to have fun but it's important for the whole family. Laughter is great medicine.

### Alcohol and other drugs

Alcohol, cigarettes and drugs (including misuse of prescription drugs) can affect your physical and mental health and your children's. They might make you feel good for a while, but can harm the health of your children and affect your ability to parent.

If taking these drugs has become a habit, you might not know until you try stopping and find it hard. There are plenty of free services that can help you quit and won't make negative judgements about you.

### What you can do

- Reduce your use of alcohol and other drugs if necessary.
- Quit smoking. Call the Quitline 13 78 48 for help.
- For help on managing your drinking, contact your state drug and alcohol services.

### State drug and alcohol services

ACT [02] 6205 4545  
 NT 1800 629 683 | Darwin 08 8922 8399 | Alice Springs 08 8951 7580  
 NSW 1800 422 599 | Sydney [02] 9361 8000  
 QLD 1800 177 833 | Brisbane [07] 3837 5989  
 SA 1300 131 340 | Adelaide [08] 8363 8618  
 TAS 1800 811 994 | Hobart [03] 9416 1818  
 VIC 1800 888 236  
 WA 1800 198 024 | Perth [08] 9442 5000  
**Smoking Quitline** | 13 78 48

2 x fruit 5 x veg	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
Connor's fruit							
veggies							
Jade's fruit							
veggies	###						
Mum's fruit							
veggies	###						
Dad's fruit							
veggies	###						

### Get quality sleep

A good night's sleep refreshes the mind and repairs the body. Poor sleep can make you irritable and sap your energy, making you tired throughout the day. When you don't get enough sleep you will find it hard to concentrate on things and it will increase your stress.

### What you can do

- Be physically active and avoid sleep during the day, unless you are a shift-worker.
- Talk to family or friends to get things off your chest. Bottled up thoughts can play on your mind when you're trying to sleep (see 'Looking after your emotional wellbeing').
- Have a routine so you wake up and go to bed the same time each day and night.
- A dim, cool, restful bedroom will help with sound sleep.
- If you have trouble getting to sleep, do something relaxing like reading or listening to music at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Aim to get a good 8 hours sleep in each 24 hour period.

Visit [www.copmi.net.au/dads](http://www.copmi.net.au/dads) to view video and links to more information



### Talk to someone | Get more info

**MensLine** | 1300 78 99 78 | [www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au)  
**Beyond blue** | 1300 22 4636 | [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)  
**SANE Australia** | 1800 18 SANE (7263) | [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)