

KEY MESSAGES

Obesity prevention in infants using m Health: the Growing healthy program

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Policy context

About one quarter of Australian pre-school children are overweight or obese. Early childhood is an important period for establishing behaviours that will affect weight gain and health across the life course. Early feeding choices, including breast and/or formula, and the timing and nature of solid food, are considered likely determinants of childhood obesity. Parents across all socio-demographic groups frequently access primary health care (PHC) services including nurses in community health services and general practices, providing unparalleled opportunity for engagement to influence family behaviours.

One emerging and promising area that might maximise engagement at a low cost is the provision of support for healthy parenting through electronic media such as the Internet or smart phones. The *Growing healthy* study engaged parents and PHC practitioners to understand and in turn to inform the feasibility of providing information and support for healthy parenting through electronic media in the form of an application for smart phones and a website.

Key messages

Key messages are provided for the levels of Primary Health Network and State/Australian government.

Strategies recommended at Primary Health Network level:

- > Nurses in maternal and child health and general practice need support and training to enhance their consultations with parents of young children around aspects of infant feeding associated with the development of obesity. In particular:
 - Helping parents to understand infants' feeding cues around hunger and fullness
 - Advising parents who are not breastfeeding about best practice formula feeding to discourage overfeeding.
- > Reliable and trustworthy referral options need to be available to reinforce key messages.

Strategies recommended at government level:

- > Parents access a range of internet sources for support and advice and not all sources are based on evidence or consistent with Australian guidelines. Governments should provide access to reliable apps and websites for PHC practitioners to refer parents. These sources should be widely publicised to parents in the antenatal and postnatal period.

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