

28 May, 2015

NSW Health's free healthy lifestyle program – Go4Fun – changing local kids' lives

With Term 2 now underway, NSW Health is encouraging families to join Go4Fun, a free after school program offering weekly physical and nutritional educational activities to kids, who are above a healthy weight and their families.

Go4Fun is available free to eligible seven-13 year-olds and their families in NSW and since its inception in 2009 has delivered 578 programs to more than 6000 families, providing fun practical games and tips about healthy foods, label reading and portion sizes.

Linda Trotter, Health Promotion Officer, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, (SESLHD) said the prevalence of overweight and obesity among young people aged five to 17 years was still at concerning levels, with more than one in five (22.8%) being overweight or obese.

"The Go4Fun program has been highly successful in improving the long-term health of children by encouraging physical activity, as well as better nutrition choices, resulting in a reduced BMI and waist circumference," Ms Trotter said.

"The program gets results because targets the family unit, asking parents to also embrace diet and lifestyle changes, to support their child."

Seven-year-old Malabar resident Alyssa Costa attended the program and said the results have improved her mood and confidence.

"I am a lot happier now and have more confidence. It was so much fun and I have made lots of friends; I don't think I would have been able to do it without the other kids. It's the best thing I ever did," she said.

Alyssa's Mother Patricia Costa said she has also noticed a significant change in Alyssa's approach to diet and exercise and said parents should encourage their children to enrol in Go4Fun.

"Since starting the program we haven't looked back, Alyssa would do it every day if she could. She is definitely more conscious of her food choices and making sure exercises regularly," Mrs Costa said.

"As a mum you get a lot out of it, you learn what is best for your kid's health. It was absolutely magnificent - staff even check up on you after the program finishes to keep you on track. Parents should definitely do it."

Ms Trotter said Alyssa's family is one of many who have made positive changes as a result of participating in the program.

"In one year, across New South Wales, participating children combined were drinking 288 less sweet drinks in total each day, 253 more serves of fruit each day, 729 more serves of vegetables each day and doing an additional 7,400 hours of physical activity each week," Ms Trotter said.

On average, at the end of the 10 week program, participants achieve:

- A Body Mass Index (BMI) reduction of 0.4 BMI units
- A decrease in waist circumference of 1.7cm
- Higher Fruit and vegetable intake
- Increased physical activity by 3.7 hours per week
- Decreased sedentary behaviours such as watching TV by 4.0 hours per week
- Improvements in overall self-esteem.

Complementing the Go4Fun program is a suite of preventative health programs being run in schools and child care services under the NSW Healthy Children Initiative.

Register your interest now by contacting Go4Fun on 1800 780 900 or visit the website at www.go4fun.com.au

Local programs will be held at Bondi, Hurstville, Miranda and Maroubra starting school Term 3 2015.