

Client: Temple Street Childrens University Hospital
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'SLASH PORTION SIZE TO CONTROL WEIGHT'

Cutting treats also vital

■ Laura COLGAN

REDUCING portion sizes and managing treats are key to tackling the childhood obesity crisis, a leading dietitian said.

Catherine Shortall, a dietitian at the W82GO Healthy Lifestyles programme in Temple Street, is one of the frontline workers treating obese children.

The W82GO programme takes a multi-disciplinary approach, with dietitians, physiotherapists and clinical psychologists working to improve the health of children and their families.

The programme was first set up in 2005 and around 250 children and their families attend each year.

Patients on the programme have a BMI (body mass index calculated by weight and height) above the 98th percentile for their age.

Weight

Ms Shortall explained: "My role in W82GO is dealing with assessment in terms of the child's dietary intake and

their weight and height.

"I also look at their BMI (body mass index) and waist circumference. I look at their dietary intake, in terms of nutritional qualities and portion sizes and treats.

"From there, we suggest whether a child is appropriate to attend the group programme.

The W82GO programme involves a weekly

two-hour session for seven weeks. For one hour, children take part in an activity session with physiotherapists while the parents have a session with the clinical psychologist.

In the second hour, the dietitian leads a session with both the children and parents, where topics such as the food pyramid, portion sizes and fat and sugar content in foods are addressed.

It also involves a cooking lesson, a trip to a supermarket and a guide to reading food labels.

Ms Shortall said the multi-disciplinary approach is vital in ensuring obese children and

their families move towards a healthier lifestyle.

"Nearly every child needs to improve their phys-

ical activity and there can be some -

PROBLEM: Cutting treats can be hard

times be barriers to that.

Age

"Physiotherapists assess their mobility, balance and the movements they should be able to do for their age. They're given specific exercises to help them.

"Psychology is really important because making changes to habits is difficult for anyone to do."

She said obese children are encouraged to make SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely goals), such as having vegetables for dinner each evening.

Ms Shortall said managing portion sizes and treat foods are the most common issues.

She said: "Portion size and treat foods are the most common issues we come across from a diet point of view.

"Portion size is a really big one because it is habit. Parents or carers often just fill the plates.

"Often you find families are eating freshly-cooked meals that are cooked from scratch using healthy cooking methods but still having too much on the plate.

"It's healthy and nutritious food that we want them to eat but we want them to have smaller portions.

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