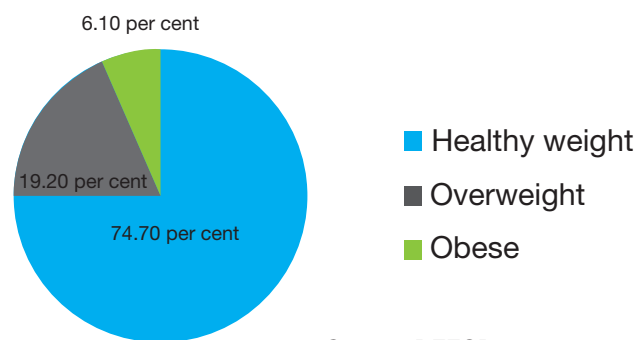


### Childhood obesity

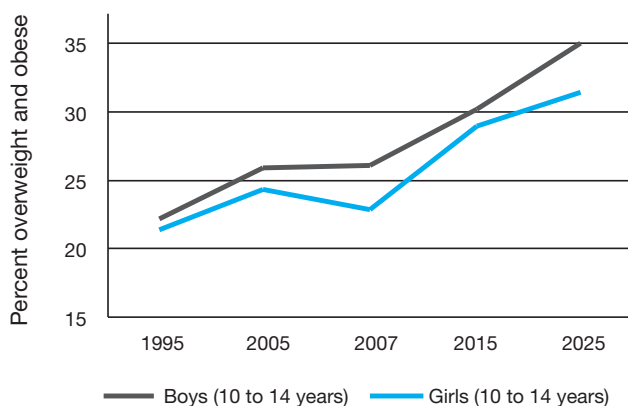
Levels of overweight and obesity among Victorian children have increased in recent years, with more than 25 per cent of children now considered to be either overweight or obese<sup>1</sup>.

Figure 1: Proportion of Australian children overweight or obese



Source: DEECD, 2012

This is a marked increase from 5 per cent in the 1960s. If this trend continues, it is predicted that 65 per cent of Australian children will be overweight or obese by 2020<sup>1</sup>.



Source: Habyetal, 2011

Figure two: Percentage of overweight and obese over time

### What are the causes?

Childhood obesity is associated with low levels of physical activity and unhealthy eating behaviours. In Victoria, only a third of children meet the recommended guidelines on fruit and vegetable intake, fast food consumption has increased and we are now seeing higher levels of sedentary behaviour<sup>2</sup>. There are other, more entrenched, determinants of childhood obesity. These include low socio-economic status, the physical and built environment and the family environment.

### Wodonga children

- 20.3 per cent of children aged five to 12 years were reported to use electronic media for more than two hours every day. This has increased from 19.3 per cent in 2006;
- 65.9 per cent of children aged five to 12 years were reported to do the recommended levels of physical activity every day. This has dropped from 71.8 per cent in 2006; and
- 66.9 per cent of children aged four to 12 years do not eat the minimum recommended serves of fruit and vegetables<sup>4</sup>.

### Why is this issue important?

Being overweight or obese has short and long-term consequences for physical and mental wellbeing for children. Physical consequences include sleep apnoea, joint and mobility issues and increased risk of the development of diabetes and heart disease. The most significant concern is the increased likelihood of becoming overweight or obese in adulthood. Psychosocial problems include increased exposure to teasing, bullying and social exclusion, which can impact on learning and developmental outcomes<sup>3</sup>.

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