Queensland Child and Youth Clinical Network

SMART goals
Supporting parents to set healthy lifestyle goals with their children.

SMART goals are; Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time specific.

SMART Goals can help children and their families make small and sustainable changes in health behaviours. As a health professional you can guide the child and family to set and agree upon SMART Goals. Exploring families’ priorities, values and underlying motives for goals should be a part of the goal setting process.

Specific
Ensure the goal is clear. Some goals can be too broad, making it hard to know when they have been achieved.

× ‘I want to eat more vegetables’ is a broad goal.
✓ ‘I want to eat two serves of vegetables at dinner every night’ is specific.

Measurable
Make sure that it is clear what you need to do to achieve the goal.

× ‘I want to eat more vegetables’ is a goal that is hard to measure because there is no set amount or idea of frequency.
✓ ‘I want to eat two serves of vegetables at dinner every night’ is measurable.

Achievable
Make sure the goal can be achieved.

× ‘I want to eat five serves of vegetables at dinner’ would not be achievable if a child currently eats zero vegetables with their dinner.
✓ ‘This week I want to eat two serves of vegetables with dinner and by the end of the month I want to eat five serves of vegetables with dinner.’ Starting with smaller goals and increasing the challenge gradually makes the goal more achievable.
**Realistic**

Make sure the goal fits in with a child’s everyday activities and commitments.

× ‘I want to walk for 60 minutes each morning’ may not be realistic if a child has to attend before school care.

✓ ‘After school I want to play in the park’ could be a more realistic goal.

**Time specific**

Make sure you set a time or date for when the goal is to be achieved.

× ‘I want to eat two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables’ does not outline when the goal will be achieved.

✓ ‘In six months’ time I want to eat two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables every day.’ Setting a time or date for when the goal is to be achieved can boost motivation. Using consultation dates could be useful.

**Questions that can help goal setting:**

“Would you like to make some changes towards a healthier growth…?"  
“What changes do you propose e.g. in nutrition, physical activity…?"  
“What could you achieve before the next consultation…?"  
“How can I help you achieve this…?"  
“Does that fit into your current routine/lifestyle…?"