

Weight Management Clinic Psychologist

The role of the psychologist is to support change in child and family health behaviours. The clinic also includes a dietitian and some patients attending the Ipswich clinic also see a doctor.

Assessing child and family health behaviours

- *Identifying parent and child beliefs about food, health and body image that may contribute to child weight (e.g. feeding as an expression of love, fears that children will go hungry, family talk and modelling related to weight control behaviours)*
- *Identifying functions of eating (e.g. emotional eating, boredom, habit, high reward value of food)*
- *Assessing parent and child confidence in their ability to make healthy choices (e.g. do they feel they have the knowledge and skills required)*
- *Determining level of importance the family places on making changes to address the child's weight at this time. Do all family members agree? What are the important reasons for change?*
- *Checking that parent expectations of child's ability are appropriate (e.g. unrealistic expectations of a young child to implement own suitable food choices, level of accountability child has for food and activity choices)*
- *Psychosocial factors (e.g. bullying, teasing)*
- *Family functioning and capacity to make behavioural changes*

Treatment

Supporting behavioural change in the family

Core strategies

- Goal setting and planning
- Motivational interviewing
- Self-monitoring of behaviour and progress
- Stimulus control (e.g. recognising and avoiding triggers that prompt unplanned eating)
- Emotional coping strategies when emotional eating is identified
- Cognitive restructuring (modifying unhelpful thoughts or thinking patterns)
- Problem solving
- Parenting strategies and managing challenging behaviours related to implementing necessary changes

Additional strategies

- Assertiveness training
- Slowing the rate of eating
- Mindful eating
- Reinforcing changes
- Relapse prevention

Referral

- Inadequately managed comorbidities in the child that impair ability to benefit from the clinic e.g. global challenging behaviours associated with ADHD, ASD, II (refer for relevant specialist service)
- when the components of a healthy lifestyle cannot be implemented due to complex family problems (refer for parent psychological assistance)
- parents feel completely unable to influence the child's food choices and physical activity levels (refer for parenting assistance)