

# play 4 life

## local supporter's guide

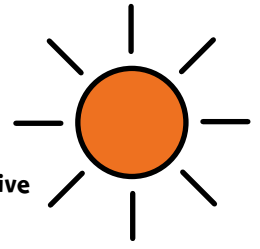
Your guide to getting families and children up and about through play



Created in partnership with



# welcome to play4life



Play4Life is one of the initiatives from Change4Life, the nationwide movement to help us all live healthier, happier and longer lives.

The toolkit is designed to help everyone who works with families and children support and encourage active play as part of a healthy lifestyle. This guide for local supporters is for you to pass on helpful tips to parents on play. The guides to indoor and outdoor games are for parents to use to generate ideas for play in and around the home and neighbourhood to get everyone up and about and having fun.

Playing for children is the most natural and enjoyable way for them to burn off their energy and use their bodies to the full. We want to help parents and carers find simple ways to include play-time in their children's daily lives, and to show that all kinds of play can help children to be more active. Playing together is a great way to spend time as a family and help develop children's confidence and communication skills. It can also help parents and other family members stay active too!

In the '[Play4Life Toolkit](#)' you'll find a balance of games for adults to introduce to children, and play where children do their own thing and give their imaginations a good workout. Many of the activities are free – only a few need paid-for equipment. Often the best play activities come to life with everyday household items, things that can be picked up for free, or just a bit of imagination.

The toolkit also contains important safety information and some general information about Change4Life. The activities in these guides are aimed at children up to the age of 8.

## Government support for outdoor play

The [Department for Children, Schools and Families](#) is investing £235m between 2008 and 2011 to support local authorities, communities, parents and children in providing safe and exciting play facilities. This will fund 30 new, staffed adventure playgrounds and 3,500 new or refurbished play areas. All local authorities in England have been given at least £1m, so contact yours to find out where the nearest play facilities are or will be located.

## New to Change4Life?

It's the nationwide movement which aims to help everyone, especially children, to eat well, move more and live longer. Find out more by reading the '[Change4Life Local Supporter's Guide](#)' [here](#).

**Note:** This guide has been written for local supporters from a wide range of professions and backgrounds. When referencing this guide, please follow your industry's or association's professional guidelines.

# small changes, big benefits

Change4Life is all about making small lifestyle changes that add up to big health benefits. One of these changes we call 'up and about' – in which play has a very important role, especially for younger children.

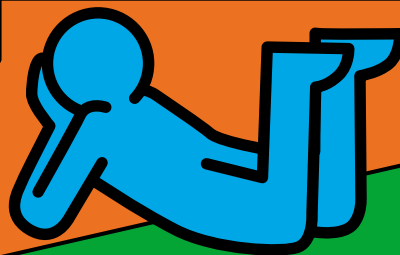
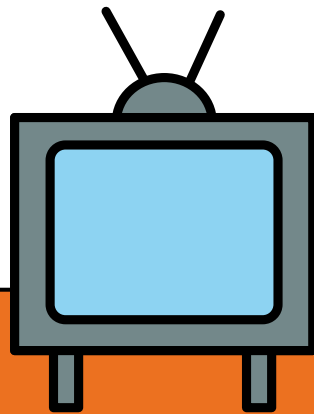
## up & about

Modern life has made things much more comfortable for us – so comfortable, in fact, that most of us spend too long in sedentary activity that doesn't burn off the energy we are consuming.

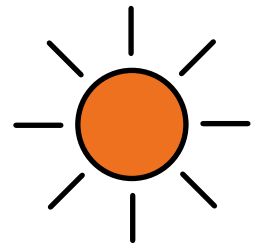
Of course it's important to relax, but there's also a time in the day to get up and about. Inactive children are at risk of storing excess fat in their bodies.

The solution is simple – get up and play! Being up and about burns energy and helps prevent serious illnesses like type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer in later life. Encouraging them to play is a great way of making sure everyone is moving around and having fun – and learning at the same time!

Want to read more about the 8 ways to Change4Life? Read the 'Change4Life Local Supporter's Guide' [here](#).



# how can you help families play4life?



We think the best things about playing are that it's fun, anyone can join in, and it doesn't have to cost much at all. We understand that there are things that may be stopping families from playing together, and parents from helping their children to play.

This next section helps you to provide solutions to some of these with the families you work with.

## “There's nowhere for my children to play”

There's always somewhere to play. Start at home with our '[Indoor Play](#)' guide and check out the outdoor section in case there are play areas nearby you hadn't thought of. Every local authority in England is working to improve play facilities in their area, and new areas are being built right now with fun, modern equipment. Search for your local authority's website online to find your nearest one.

## “What about when it's raining?”

Research shows that adults are often more put off by bad weather than children! Splashing around in puddles in a raincoat and wellies can be great fun, and lots of the games and activities in our '[Outdoor Play](#)' guide won't let rain stop play. Sometimes indoor play wins though, so don't forget to check out our '[Indoor Play](#)' guide for ideas for play inside the home.

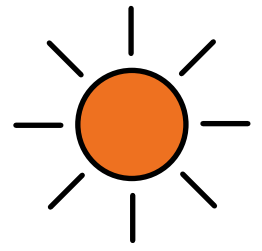
## “I don't have time to play with my children”

Making time for play together is an important part of a child's development. But if some days just seem too full, there are lots of games they can play by themselves while you're in the next room. Look at the '[Indoor Play](#)' guide for some great ideas to get the kids up and about.

## “I'm on a really tight budget and can't afford toys or play equipment”

Most people have a free outdoor play area or facilities near to where they live. And when the children are playing indoors, there are things you can find around the home that you or they can use. Cushions make great stepping stones, a blanket over a table makes an instant den, and empty cardboard boxes can be made into cars, castles or even spaceships!

# how can you help families play4life cont.



## “It’s not safe for my children to play outside”

As long as they are supervised when they’re out in public spaces like parks or play areas, there’s no reason why they can’t interact with other children their age and have lots of fun. Make sure children are aware of any dangers in their surroundings, like roads and talking to strangers, for example.

Direct parents to [www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk](http://www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk) to find out more about road safety, and the ‘[Play safe](#)’ section of this guide provides more detail on safe play in and outside the home.

## “I’m worried about them being bullied when they’re outdoors”

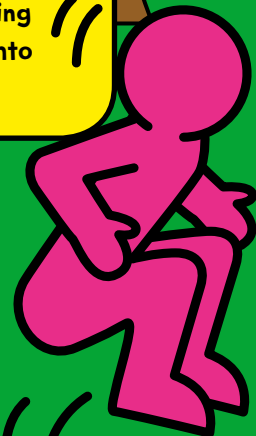
If you are worried about your children being bullied, visit [www.beatbullying.org](http://www.beatbullying.org) for some great advice on helping to prevent or stop it.

## “My children should be doing their homework, not playing”

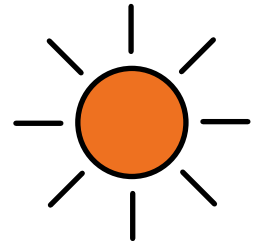
Play is an important part of learning, especially for under 5s. But for older children just one active hour a day can help them concentrate at school and during homework – making time spent at their desk more productive. Best of all, they should get a better night’s sleep and feel fresher in the morning.

## “I can’t take the mess and noise!”

It’s normal for children to be a little noisy when they’re having fun. A bit of noise shows that children are tiring themselves out and are less likely to have problems getting to sleep and being noisy later on! If the noise is a real problem, try suggesting other quieter games or play that are just as fun. To avoid mess, build the tidy-up into play-time as another game to finish on.



# the benefits of play



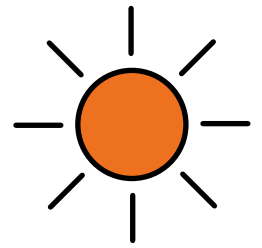
Children benefit most from having a wide range of play experiences, contributing to their health, well-being and development. This can be achieved by making sure that children are able to choose from different games, activities and resources that offer physical, emotional, social and creative opportunities.

These are just a few examples of the ways in which children play and the main benefits that children get from this variety of activities.

	Having fun	Being physically active	Building friendships	Communicating with others	Developing imagination and creativity	Developing skills and dexterity	Building confidence and resilience
<b>Physical play</b> e.g. running, skipping, ball games, tickling, tag, bulldog, balancing, tree climbing, jumping from heights	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
<b>Play acting and role play</b> e.g. talent shows, charades, playing house, dressing up	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Social play</b> e.g. games with rules such as, hide and seek, Simon says	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
<b>Communication play</b> e.g. mime, singing, rhyming, imitation	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Creative play</b> e.g. self expression using drawing, paint, paper, clay	✓				✓	✓	
<b>Discovery play</b> e.g. exploring, measuring water, testing objects	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
<b>Changing the world around you</b> e.g. building dens, making cars from old boxes, digging holes, making sandcastles	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓



# ideas for outdoor play



Gardens are great for play, but there are lots of other outdoor options too. Look for the nearest park, common or play area – these are just as good for running around in and having fun.

Make sure parents and carers make their children aware of road safety and any other risks of playing outside. See our section entitled '[Play Safe](#)' for more details. All parents and carers will use their own judgement on their children's safety – as long as they know it doesn't have to stop their children from playing.

We've included a few of our favourite games and activities – and some suggestions from the experts – in the '[Outdoor Play](#)' guide. It has some great ways of encouraging children to play, ideas that are easy to do and most of which don't require paid-for equipment.

There really is something for everyone.

## Organising an outdoor event

As a Change4Life local supporter, you might want to organise your own Play4Life outdoor play event. A great way to get started is to read the easy-to-use guide produced by [www.playday.org.uk](http://www.playday.org.uk) that offers hints and tips on everything you need to know. It covers all the important areas, including child supervision; fire precaution and first aid; food and drink; insurance; licenses and permits; risk assessment and waste disposal.

Your local authority may have a guide to planning events, with local contact details and procedures – have a look at the Directgov website at [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

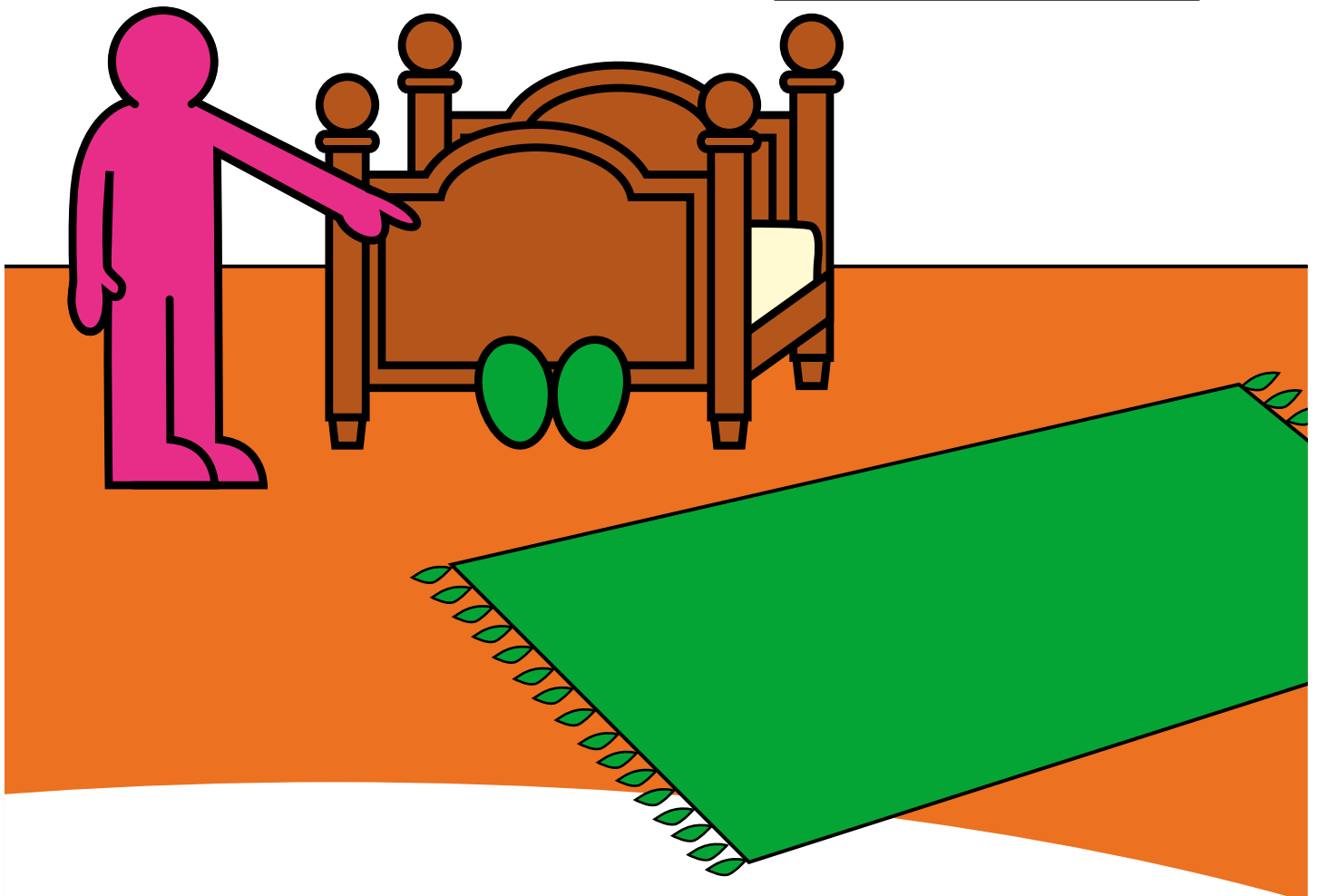
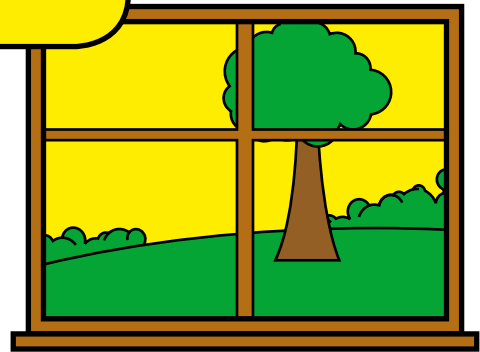


# ideas for indoor play

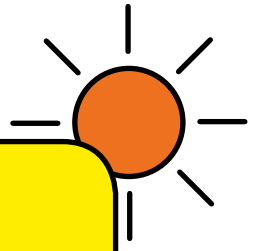
The home is a great place for games – and not just when the weather is bad or it's too dark to be out. Often just the corner of a room is enough. Sometimes it pays to allow a little mess to keep the children occupied in a good game – especially if that game involves tidying up afterwards!

There are a few suggestions in the '[Indoor Play](#)' guide to really spark their imaginations. There's a whole variety of fun, yet safe ideas that don't require too much room, including old favourites like hide and seek or building a den out of cushions and blankets.

Of course, it's important to remind parents and carers that they should take precautions when playing indoors just as they would if playing outside. The '[Play Safe](#)' section gives tips on how to make an area safe for indoor play.



# play safe



## The safe outdoors

Everyone's neighbourhood is different, but wherever people live there's sure to be a local park or playground nearby. And with the Government providing funding for local authorities to create 30 new adventure playgrounds and develop 3,500 new or refurbished play areas in England by March 2011, there are bound to be even more options in the near future.

When playing outdoors, if parents or carers are unsure about safety, they should check the area themselves before taking their children to play there. Most modern play areas are made from impact-absorbing materials rather than concrete, and grass is an ideal surface along with most other natural surfaces.

Traffic is another consideration. Parents need to talk to children about the basics of road safety and appropriate supervision, to allow them to play safely in their local neighbourhood and on their routes to play areas and schools.

## Safe indoor play

Most parents will have taken steps to make their home safer when their children start crawling and walking. Here are some more tips on making play safer around the home:

- If there's space, allocate part of a room, either temporarily or permanently, as the designated play area.
- Make the play area safe by removing all sharp and breakable objects.
- Cover or move furniture with sharp corners or edges.
- Block the route to any areas of plate-glass – chairs can easily make a practical barrier.
- Make sure there is no furniture near windows that children could climb up onto and fall out of.

At the end of play-time, make the area safe for adults too by looking out for rogue toys or crayons that could be slipped on or tripped over.

## Risk and reward

It's important to remind parents that risk is an essential element of play. Risk taking often means mastering new tasks or conquering fears. Young children need the opportunity to learn to manage such risks for themselves as a vital part of their development of new skills and independence.

The key is understanding the risks involved and balancing them with the many benefits and rewards of play. If life is too boring at home, children may seek excitement elsewhere, at much greater danger to themselves, and others.

Children and parents are sometimes worried about anti-social behaviour, such as bullying. If this is a serious concern, it may be best for parents to speak to their school or neighbourhood police for expert advice. You can follow [this link](#) for more advice.

# personal development

Play is good for a child's emotional well-being and physical development. Play helps to develop communication skills, build relationships and offers valuable lessons in sharing, negotiating and even arguing!

It all adds up to creating a sense of 'give and take' that will come in useful in later life by broadening a child's mind to the opinions of others.

The only limit to children's games is their imagination, so play stimulates innovative thinking and creativity.

Play can help shy children be more adventurous and join in more. Playing even relieves depression and anxiety.

Finally, the harder they play, the better they rest. After a good session of play, a child is less likely to have trouble falling asleep and should wake up refreshed and ready to go again the next day – helping with concentration at school.

## Play for all families

At Change4Life, we believe that all children should be encouraged to play. Some of the games outlined in this guide may not be suitable or practical for all families, but many of them can be adapted to individual families including children or parents with disabilities.

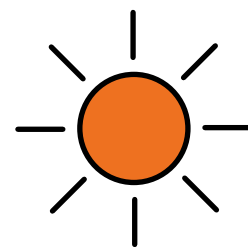
Parents can get more ideas for play geared towards disabled children or families by downloading the following documents from the '[Contact a Family](#)' website:

[www.cafamily.org.uk/pdfs/holidays.pdf](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/pdfs/holidays.pdf)

[www.cafamily.org.uk/pdfs/westmids/WM061.pdf](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/pdfs/westmids/WM061.pdf)



# healthy eating is important too!

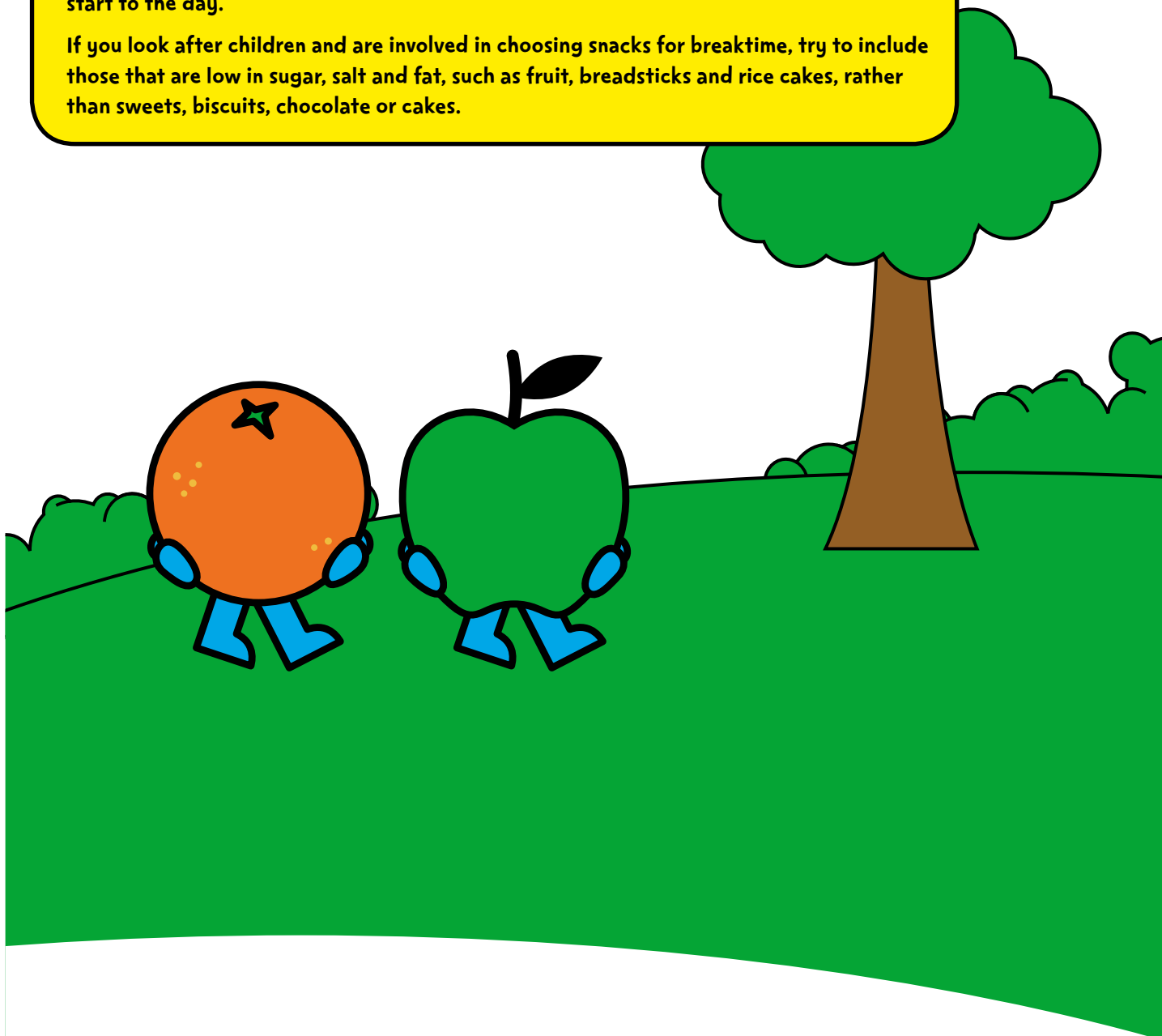


Medical evidence suggests we need to keep an eye on what we eat as well as how much energy we burn through activity if we want to prevent fat building up in our bodies. So when you talk to families about Play4Life, it's a good idea to remind them of the importance of eating healthily too - and cooking with children can be part of play-time!

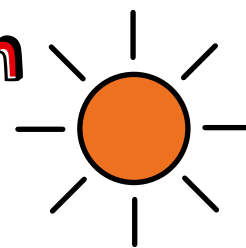
Don't worry if your usual work or activities focus on keeping active and you don't feel confident talking to parents about eating healthily. You don't need to become an expert in a new subject. All we ask is that you tell families that both activity levels and diet are important, and signpost them to where they can find out more.

A good place to suggest they look is the Change4Life website at [www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life) where they can also find out about '[Breakfast4Life](#)', designed to help them get the best start to the day.

If you look after children and are involved in choosing snacks for breaktime, try to include those that are low in sugar, salt and fat, such as fruit, breadsticks and rice cakes, rather than sweets, biscuits, chocolate or cakes.



# discover more information



There are lots of Change4Life resources that you may find useful. They're all available online, but some are also available as a printed pack for those who don't have internet access.

## Making a Change4Life

Change4Life encourages families to make 8 changes around diet and physical activity for a healthier future. Read more about these changes, why they're important and tips on helping parents make them in the 'Change4Life Local Supporter's Guide' [here](#). [

## Talking about Change4Life

Our research shows that some ways of talking about the issues surrounding Change4Life are received better by parents than others. Get tips on how to explain things to parents, plus more ideas for ways you can support the campaign, in the 'Change4Life Local Supporter's Guide' [here](#).

## The research behind Change4Life

Read more about the research behind Change4Life in the Department of Health's 'Consumer Insight Summary' [here](#).

## FREE Change4Life resources

Lots of colourful resources are already available for you to use with families, including posters, leaflets and game sheets. Download them [here](#). [

We are releasing more toolkits like this one to support different activities. Look out for Breakfast4Life, Walk4Life, Swim4Life, Play4Life and Dance4Life [here](#). [If you haven't already, please [register](#) as a local supporter and we will tell you when new toolkits are available. You'll also get access to all the Change4Life logos for you to use on your own communications.

## Contact us

The 'partners & supporters' area of the website has information, ideas and resources for local supporters including:

- case studies
- partner tools
- FAQs
- useful links

Go to [www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life) and click on 'partners & supporters'. [

Not online? Call the local supporter helpline on **0300 123 3434**.\*

## Useful links and further resources

[www.playengland.org.uk](http://www.playengland.org.uk)

[www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk](http://www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk)

[www.beatbullying.org](http://www.beatbullying.org)

[www.playday.org.uk](http://www.playday.org.uk)

[www.playproviders.org.uk](http://www.playproviders.org.uk)

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

[www.dcsf.gov.uk](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk)

[www.ncma.org.uk](http://www.ncma.org.uk)

[www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)