Children's health

It's official – British children are getting fatter. According to a survey published in the British Medical Journal in 2001, nearly 16 per cent of two-year-olds are overweight and more than 20 per cent of four-year-olds are overweight. And since 2001, the problem has got worse. The government's latest health survey found that today about 30 per cent of all children are overweight.

WHY?

Children watch too much television and they see ten food advertisements for every hour of TV they watch. They do less exercise, play less sport, and spend more time watching videos or playing computer games than they did in the past. The problem isn't that children eat too much food or the wrong kind of food – though of course it's better to eat healthy foods than too much fat. The real problem is that too many children don't get any physical exercise.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

So how can we help our children develop a healthy attitude to food and exercise? Well, parents should try to help children to eat healthily when they're still young – we need to give children good habits at an early age. This means, for example, giving children fruit, not sweets, and eating meals together as a family if possible. Cooking with children is also a good idea to teach them the importance of good food. A lot of children don't like vegetables but even a few vegetables every day can help to improve their diet.

And instead of driving our children everywhere, we should encourage them to walk or cycle. We should make exercise interesting and exciting for them. Playing football in the park is much better for children than playing on the computer.

a Read the newspaper article and mark the sentences T (True) or F (False)

1 British children are fatter than they used to be T

2 Children don't see a lot of food advertisements ___

3 Children get less exercise than in the past ___

4 Children are overweight because they eat too much food ___

5 Children are overweight because they aren't doing enough exercise ___

6 It's important for young children to have a healthy diet ___

7 Parents should eat meals with their children ___

8 Playing on computers isn't very good for children ___