

BOOTCAMP for tots



Water break: Two-year-old Will Gaunt takes a breather from fitness instructor Dale White's boot camp for toddlers at Woodlands.

Pictures: Jamie Hanson

But experts say we're missing some home truths

Anna Chisholm
Felicity Caldwell

CHILDREN as young as two are lining up to join "toddler boot camps" as chubby tots start the battle with the bulge.

Parents struggling to find time to get children to play outdoors are booking them into "boot camp" classes.

Rip Fit Tots fitness coach Dale White said parents booked their children into the classes before school age.

"A lot of people want to take their kids outside and play but don't have the time," Mr White said.

"The instructor can do all the running around and organise the equipment for them - it's easy for parents.

"Toddlers are at the perfect age to start moving and get

into a routine ... they get hand-eye co-ordination skills while getting outdoors and playing with other kids."

Mum Virginia Pedler, 37, of Waterford, said it was a good opportunity for her two-year-old son Kylan to get active.

"He's not even three but he's a big boy, so any exercise is good," Mrs Pedler said.

My Fitness Club at Sippy Downs holds hour-long exercise sessions for children aged five to eight and nine to 12.

The program, which changes every week, includes strength training, obstacle courses, mini Olympics, fitness education and boxing.

Gym floor supervisor Mel Charlton said parents appreciated the chance to work

out while their children improved their own fitness.

"We have a couple of overweight children but since they've been with us their co-ordination and confidence has increased," Ms Charlton said.

Even childcare centres are getting in on the trend, using benches with 2kg weights, exercise bikes, pint-sized rowers, air-walkers, exercise pony and non-motorised treadmills.

But Queensland Food Smart Schools Program dietitian Kellie Hogan said toddler fitness groups were "futile". "They're counterbalancing a complete lack of activity at home," Ms Hogan said

"We have an opportunity to engage them and keep them active at home in an unstructured way.

"Because of too much screen time in front of TVs and gaming consoles, parents feel the need to put them through formalised fitness but helping out doing chores around the house and in the garden can be just as effective."

Nutrition Australia dietitian Aloysa Hourigan said toddlers should be strengthening their limbs for growth and development.

"Toddlers and preschoolers should have at least three hours of activity per day," Ms Hourigan said.

Fitness Australia said there

were some benefits for toddlers from aerobic and resistance training.

One in four Queensland children are overweight or obese, with 122,000 aged 5-17 overweight and 71,000 obese in 2007-08. US research shows preschoolers consume more sweetened beverages, desserts and snack foods in a day than fruit or vegetables.

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