

Parents hit in fat kid crisis

Child obesity levels at 7-year high

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THE number of NSW kids who are overweight or obese has spiked to its highest level since 2012, with experts saying busy parents now need to make more time for their kids' health.

New NSW Health statistics show that the number of children aged between five and 16 classified as overweight or obese has risen to 24 per cent — an increase of 3 per cent on the previous year.

Boys were more likely to be obese or overweight at 26 per cent, compared to girls at 21 per cent.

Leading nutritionist Kristen Beck said that while schools and governments should play a part in keeping kids healthy, parents must also be good role models.

"Most important is role modelling from the parents, which includes exercising regularly, eating proper meals at the table and plenty of fresh food. It's also important to limit sugary drinks," she said.

Ms Beck also said anxious parents not encouraging incidental exercise like riding bikes to school could also inadvertently contribute to childhood obesity.

"Parents are more and more careful, there are less

kids walking to school and riding their bikes," she said.

"Parents aren't solely responsible, but they are major players. At the end of the day it's still mostly parents who have control over what their children eat."

NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard said tackling childhood obesity was challenging: "It's a tough gig getting everybody on the same page — families and government — to create healthy lifestyles for young people."

The federal government will release its National Obesity Strategy later this year, which will consider recommendations including a sugar tax.