



SickKid.Net is committed to assisting you with a variety of health information and resources for your children. Our organization is dedicated to helping you with sick childcare needs, when you need it most.

Children's Hospital Spotlight

CHILDREN'S HEALTHCARE RESOURCE NETWORK

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If this is a possible life-threatening illness or injury, call 911 immediately.

SickKid.Net - Nutrition Notes

Helping Your Child Eat Healthy and Balanced Meals

Do you want to teach your child to enjoy healthy and balanced meals? Teaching your child good nutrition now will help him or her develop healthy habits to carry into adulthood. Studies show that children with overweight or obese parents are more likely to be overweight and obese themselves, so teaching your child good nutrition and practicing it yourself is extremely important. The good news is that you can learn what your child's nutritional needs are and there are plenty of resources to help you and your child develop healthy eating habits.

Nutritional Needs

Your child needs a variety of nutrients in his or her diet to provide energy for physical growth and cognitive development. Calcium in your child's diet is essential for bone development. The amount of calcium your child needs varies by age: infants 0 to 6 months need 400 milligrams from formula or breast milk daily, infants 6 months to 1 year need 600 milligrams from formula or breast milk, children 1 to 3 years old need 800 milligrams, children 4 to 8 years old need 800 to 1,200 milligrams, and 9- to 18-year-olds need between 800 and 1,500 milligrams daily. If your child won't drink calcium-rich milk, try other sources of calcium such as yogurt, cheese, and low-fat ice cream. Vitamin D is another important mineral that plays a role in bone development, so make sure your child receives at least 15 minutes of sunlight daily, drinks vitamin-D fortified milk, or eats fatty fish such as tuna or salmon.

Fiber, found in whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, prevents constipation and helps to remove wastes from your child's gastrointestinal tract. How much fiber your child should be eating is easy to figure out - just add 5 to your child's years of age.

Is your child pumping iron? He or she might be too young to be hitting the weight room, but iron is still a necessary part of a healthy diet. Iron deficiency is common in infants, young children, children going through growth spurts, and menstruating teen girls. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 9% of toddlers and up to 11% of teens girls in the United States are iron deficient. Your infant should be consuming 6 to 10 milligrams of iron each day, your 1- to 9-year-old should consume 10 to 15 milligrams of iron each day, and children older than 10 should consume 15 milligrams of iron each day from sources such as fish, red meats, fortified cereals, beans, and leafy green vegetables.

How do you know the amount of nutrients in your child's food? All packaged foods in the United States must contain a "Nutrition Facts" label, which contains information about the calcium, iron, fiber, and other nutrients in the food. Use food labels and the Food Guide Pyramid to create a balanced diet for your child.



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Five Great Ideas for Family Exercise

Tone up with team sports. You don't have to have 10 kids to have a basketball team. Take traditional team sports and pare them down to fit your family roster. For example, you and your partner could team up against the kids in a game of soccer in the park, or you and your daughter could play a game of one-on-one basketball.

Get some action this vacation. Have you considered turning your annual vacation into a family fitness adventure? Try camping, kayaking, canoeing, and hiking.

Take your kid to gym class. Your gym class, that is. Many fitness centers and gyms allow children older than 13 to lift weights, use the pool and cardio machines, and participate in club sports. Find out your gym's requirements, and consider bringing your older child along for workouts.

Track your progress. If your local running track has a grass infield, take your children with you the next time you head out to do some sprints. Your kids can play on the infield, time your laps, and walk with you during your cool-downs.

After-dinner fitness. Turn off the TV after dinner, and instead ride bikes or walk around the neighborhood. You'll have better conversation and be doing something good for your body at the same time.

Food Guide Pyramid

The Food Guide Pyramid is a tool developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help parents steer kids toward balanced eating habits. By dividing food into groups, the pyramid includes the types of food children typically like to eat, and it gives parents guidelines on how much food their child should be eating for good health. The lower its placement on the pyramid, the more of that food group your child should be eating. Here's the breakdown of food groups:

- Grains, such as bagels, pasta, bread, crackers, tortillas, pancakes, rice, and cereals
- Vegetables, such as broccoli, tomatoes, carrots, leafy greens, potatoes, and peas
- Fruits, such as oranges, strawberries, apples, bananas, and fruit juice
- Meat and protein, such as fish, chicken, red meat, dry beans, peanut butter, and eggs
- Dairy products, such as milk, cheese, ice cream, yogurt, and pudding
- Fats and sweets, such as candy, chips, oils, butter, and soft drinks

The number of servings your child eats of each food depends on age. Two- to 6-year-olds should be eating approximately 6 servings of grains, 3 servings of vegetables, 2 servings of fruit, 2 servings of dairy products, and 2 servings of meat/protein. A 6- to 18-year-old should be eating 6 to 11 servings of grains, 3 to 5 servings of vegetables, 2 to 4 servings of fruits, 2 to 3 servings of dairy products, and 2 to 3 servings of meat/protein. Fats and sweets should be used sparingly by all age groups.

Food Safety

Preparing food safely is just as important as creating meals and snacks with nutritious ingredients. Food safety starts in the grocery store before you even get the food home. Buy nonperishable food first, and make frozen and fresh fish, meats, produce, and dairy products your last stop before the checkout line so they spend the least amount of time un-refrigerated. If you live more than a few minutes from the store, keep an ice-filled cooler in your car to keep foods cold on the ride home. Check that the expiration date on all meat, poultry, and fish hasn't passed, and place all meats, poultry, and fish in plastic bags so the juices don't leak onto your other groceries. Buy only fruits and vegetables with unbroken skin because bacteria can enter through the cracks. Avoid un-pasteurized juices because they may have bacteria in them that can cause food-borne illness. If you have an infant in your home, you'll also want to avoid feeding him or her honey, which can cause botulism in children under 1 year.

If you know you're not going to use meat, poultry, or fish within 2 days, store it in the freezer. Stay on the safe side and discard meat that has turned brown and fish that has developed a fishy smell. Cook all meat, fish, eggs, and poultry thoroughly. Invest in a meat thermometer for your kitchen, and follow the USDA guidelines for cooking meat:

Cook roasts, steaks, and chops of beef, veal, or lamb to an internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit for medium rare and 160 degrees Fahrenheit for medium.

- Cook fresh pork to 160 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Cook whole poultry to 180 degrees Fahrenheit, as measured in the thigh.

- Cook ground poultry to 165 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Cook hamburgers made of ground beef to 160 degrees Fahrenheit.

Before food preparation begins, wash your hands thoroughly and ensure that all cooking utensils and surfaces have been cleansed with hot, soapy water. If a utensil or dish has been used in the preparation or cooking of raw eggs or meat, do not let it contaminate cooked foods that will be consumed. Wash your hands again after handling raw foods, and clean all countertops thoroughly with hot, soapy and disinfect with a bleach solution.

Healthy Eating Tips

Eating healthy doesn't have to be a chore for you or your child. Try these tips:

If your child is a picky eater, involve him or her in the food preparation process. Kids who spend time creating their own meals are often more willing to try new foods.

Is your child tired of the same PB&J every day for lunch? Try crackers with string cheese, hummus and pita squares, carrot and celery sticks with ranch dressing dipping sauce, and pasta salad with kidney beans instead.

Don't be worried if all your young child seems to eat is one favorite food. Kids may go through phases where they eat the recommended amounts of minerals and vitamins over several days. Continue to offer you child a variety of fruits, vegetables, proteins, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products. If you are concerned about your child's eating habits, consult with a registered dietitian or your child's doctor.

Forcing your child to clean his or her plate at every meal isn't necessary. Serve your child smaller portions if you are worried about wasted food, but don't teach your child to eat past the point of fullness.

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