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NUTRITION

Nutrition care for your children in the

Fast food age

Anyone can bet on this fact, that most of the adults dread being weighed. Since many people are overweight, getting weighed means being embarrassed, defensive or listening to a lecture from friends, family, and doctor, among others !

Similarly, it is not surprising for a child who is overweight to feel embarrassed to top it up with the teasing that comes from other children. National statistics show that 17% of children are overweight, some of these are obese.

The commonest scenario is, a child who returns from school and plunks himself in front of the television, faithfully accompanied by a bowl of wafers and a can of cola. Children suddenly seem to have stepped into a world of fast foods and vending machines, totally unaware of the havoc they are creating for themselves.



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Recommended Dietary Allowance for Children

Milk Recommended		3 cup equivalent
Fish, Poultry and Pulses		5.5 oz equivalent
Vegetables		2.5 cup equivalent
Fruits		2 cup equivalent
Grains		6 oz equivalent

Some people believe that rounder children are healthier children. Remember, round children frequently become round adults and are at a high risk for developing diabetes and heart disease. Studies have shown that fat starts depositing in the walls of the arteries during childhood and adolescence.

To prevent health problems in the future parents should emphasize the importance of daily exercise and healthy eating to children at a very early age. Also, young girls aim at looking slim and trim like models, deprive themselves from eating food which in turn affects their nutritional status. Poor nutrition and lack of physical activity contribute to behavioural and cognitive problems.

Health Risks of Being Overweight

If you are overweight or obese on a body mass index (BMI) chart, you may be at risk for:

- ~ Type 2 diabetes
- ~ Heart disease and stroke
- ~ Cancer
- ~ Fatty liver disease
- ~ Sleep apnea
- ~ Osteoarthritis
- ~ Gallbladder disease

Your first step as a parent is to be a role model for your child.



HEALTHY OPTIONS

Healthy food makes a child's body and mind healthier.

1. As children have higher energy needs, it is important that their energy requirements are met by feeding adequate amounts of food that are rich in carbohydrates such as rice, bread (preferably whole wheat, multigrain), chappatis, dal parantha, stuffed parantha, upma rawa/broken wheat, porridge, idli, dosa, khichdi, pulao, durum wheat pasta with good amount of vegetables etc.
2. Avoid excessive consumption of sugar, sweets, chocolates, soft drinks, ice creams, ghee, butter, cooking oil and fried foods. Use fruit pulp or dry fruit purees to cut down on the amount of sugar in desserts while making them. Give children dates or chikki, dates after meals instead of sweets or chocolates and see that they rinse their mouth.
3. Proteins are needed for growth, fluid balance, blood clotting, hormone & enzyme production, and immune function, hence it is very important to see that the child's diet contains adequate amount of protein-rich

foods such as pulses, legumes, dals, sprouts, roasted nuts, mushrooms, milk and milk products, egg, chicken, fish etc., Children have a higher need for all vitamins and minerals and this can be easily obtained by eating adequate amounts of fresh fruits, dry fruits, vegetables and sprouts instead of using multivitamin-mineral capsules.

BREAKFAST

Everyone is aware of the fact that Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Children who skip breakfast are poor learners at school as they cannot concentrate properly and think fast.

1. A wholesome breakfast comprises of a wholegrain cereal-like chapattis, brown bread, porridge, muselli, oats (they are rich in fiber, vitamin, minerals and disease fighting photochemical), a serving of protein food like sprouted pulses, cheese, egg, meat, chicken, nuts, a seasonal fruit or vegetable & a beverage such as a glass of milk.
2. Protein Powders like proteinex, acti-grow, pediasure etc, can be added to milk for children who do not eat enough quantity of food. However, these should be used as a supplement and not as a substitute to a balanced diet.

LIKES AND DISLIKES

Every child has certain likes and dislikes.

1. For such children, it is best to change the form in which the food is served rather than totally avoiding it.

Eg: Milk is a rich source of calcium. If the child dislikes drinking milk, give in the form of kheer, custard, homemade ice cream, porridge, cheese, paneer, curd, shrikhand, sandesh, buttermilk, fruit lassi.

2. Parents should also be careful not to express their likes and dislikes in front of their children; they should eat a variety of foods, thereby setting an example for their children to follow. They should also make it a habit to eat at least one meal with the children.

REGULARITY

Regularity in meal timings must be maintained

1. An ideal meal schedule is a five meal pattern that consists of three main healthy meals and two mini nutritious meals. By providing children with this meal pattern they are not only recharged with energy but are also discouraged from eating junk foods.

2. It is very important to cultivate the habit of eating an early dinner to allow proper digestion of food before bedtime.

AT THE MEAL TABLE

1. Gradually substitute whole milk with skim milk/Cow's milk for children who are overweight and obese.

2. Try new recipes every time, this will reduce the boredom of having the same old dishes. If the child seems to enjoy only junk food, prepare it in a nutritious way by selecting proper foods and healthy cooking methods.

- Make burgers, cutlets or samosa fillings using mixed vegetables and soya granules and bake them instead of frying them. Serve these along with multi grain bread, whole wheat bread.
- Soda is high in calories and not nutritious right from young age, encourage your kids to quench their thirst with water or milk, buttermilk.
- Skip the fries; consider substituting them with a fruit cup or dippers.

3. Force-feeding the children should be avoided. A child may not be hungry or want to eat at that time, they will automatically eat when hungry.

4. Never call children fussy eaters in front of others or make an issue about meal times. If children become aware that their parents, particularly their mothers, become anxious when they don't eat, they may use it as an attention-seeking tactic.

5. Do not give too much of liquid foods such as soups, fruit juices, milk before the meals as it reduces the appetite and a child does not feel hungry.

6. Discourage the habit of topping foods with ketchup or other sauces. Serve these as an accompaniment to a few select dishes.

7. Avoid Preserved foods as they are deficient in nutrients. MSG (monosodium glutamate) is a type of flavoring added to some pre-packaged foods, such as soups, canned vegetables, and processed meats. Eating foods containing MSG may trigger a hypersensitive reaction or allergic-type reactions in some sensitive children.

Eat wisely and be Healthy. Sound Mind dwells in a Sound Body!

