



Children's Health and Nutrition

A HEALTHY DIET – GUIDELINES & TIPS

Encouraging children to eat a nutritious, balanced diet is important for optimal growth and overall health and well-being.

Ensuring your child gets the right vitamins and minerals in their diet helps them look and feel good, and maintain a healthy weight. This lays the foundation for a positive relationship with food and reduces their risk of heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers in adulthood.

This month we take a closer look at the importance of healthy eating in childhood, and how you can ensure your child develops healthy eating habits and benefits from a balanced nutritious diet.

A Balanced Diet for Children



A high proportion of bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods



A high proportion of fruit and vegetables



Some milk, cheese and yoghurt



Some meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein



Very little fats and oils



Limit foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt



Did you know?

Children who eat a healthy breakfast every day have better memories, more stable moods and energy, and score higher on tests.



The basics of a healthy diet

Protein

01

Proteins are essential for a number of important functions including growth, brain development and healthy bones.

Animal proteins such as lean meat, fish, eggs, milk, yogurt and cheese contain the 9 essential amino acids considered vital for growth. Plant proteins such as beans and pulses are incomplete proteins and need to be combined to achieve the full spectrum of amino acids.



Did you know?

The recommended sugar intake for children is 3 teaspoons a day. A 330ml can of soda can contain up to 9 teaspoons of added sugar.



Fruit & veg

02

Encourage your child to eat a variety of fresh, canned, frozen or dried fruits and vegetables – aiming for five portions per day.

Portion size will depend on the child's age, size and physical activity. An approximate portion of fruit or veg is the amount that fits in the palm of your child's hand.



TIP: Choose different colours of fruit and vegetables to consume a wider range of vitamins.

Aim to limit your child's calories from:

Added sugar

Soft drinks, sweets, biscuits and desserts are high in added sugars.



Saturated and trans fats

While children need some fat to grow and develop, too much is not recommended. Try to limit saturated fats, which mainly come from animal sources of food, such as red meat, poultry and full-fat dairy products.



Grains

03

Children should have a source of carbohydrate with every meal. Choose whole grain varieties such as whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, quinoa or brown rice, as these provide more fibre.

They also provide slow energy release which will keep children fuller and more energised for longer.



TIP: Try to avoid refined (white) grains and opt for whole (brown) grains instead.

Added salt

Eighty percent of the salt we eat is hidden in processed foods. Read the labels on food packaging and choose low-salt options. Do not add salt to children's meals during cooking or at the table.



Dairy

04

Children gain a lot of nourishment from milk, yogurt and cheese. These foods provide the body with easily absorbed calcium as well as vitamins A and B12, protein and other vitamins and minerals.



TIP: Children's yogurts are often high in sugar. Choose natural yogurt and add your own natural flavourings with fruit.

If you have questions about your child's nutrition or concerns about their diet, talk to your child's doctor or a registered dietitian.

Encourage healthy eating habits

Children develop a natural preference for the foods they enjoy the most, so the challenge is to make healthy choices appealing. Focus on overall diet rather than specific foods and opt for whole, minimally processed food.



5 Strategies to improve nutrition and encourage smart eating habits:

One

Have regular family meals Family meals are a chance for parents to control what foods their children consume and introduce them to new foods.

Two

Serve a variety of healthy foods and snacks Children eat what's available at home. Make it easy for them to choose healthy snacks by keeping fruits and vegetables on hand and ready to eat.

Three

Be a role model by eating healthy yourself To encourage healthy eating, eat well yourself. By eating healthy foods and appropriate portion sizes you'll be sending the right message.

Four

Avoid battles over food Food can become a source of conflict in many families. Conflict can be avoided by giving children some control over the foods they eat, but to also limit the kind of foods available at home.

Five

Involve kids in the process Get children involved in shopping for groceries and preparing meals. Teach them about different food types and healthy options.

Portion Sizes

Monitoring portion sizes is a very effective way of ensuring your child gets a good balance in their diet. Don't insist your child cleans the plate, and never use food as a reward or bribe.

Tips to control portion sizes:

- Use a small plate
- Fill a third of your child's dinner plate with vegetables or salad
- Don't let your child eat from a packet, serve a single portion into a bowl
- Avoid second helpings of high calorie treats
- Don't let children eat while watching TV as it's easy to overeat when distracted
- If eating out, ensure you order a half or child's size portion for children



Did you know?

Eating an extra 100 calories a day can lead to weight gain of 4.5kg (10lb) a year.

kcal

Dealing with fussy eaters

Many children go through stages where they may be considered fussy eaters, this is a normal childhood developmental stage. It takes most children 8-10 times trying a new food before children will openly accept it.

Tips for dealing with fussy eaters:

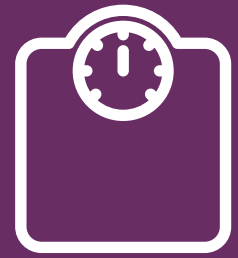
- Limit access to unhealthy sweets and salty snacks between meals
- Offer a new food only when your child is hungry
- Present only one new food at a time
- Serve new foods with favourite foods to increase acceptance
- Disguise vegetables in other foods. Add shredded or blended veg to stews and sauces
- Let your child help prepare meals, they'll be more willing to eat something they helped to make
- Limit drinks and snacks, to avoid filling up between mealtimes



Did you know?

A diet high in fried food, sweet desserts, sugary snacks, refined flour and cereals can increase the risk for anxiety and depression in children.

Most cases of childhood obesity are caused by eating too much and exercising too little. Children need enough food to support healthy growth and development. But when they take in more calories than they burn throughout the day, the result is weight gain.



Dealing with weight problems in children

Overweight and obesity in children is a growing problem. Although the issue should never be ignored by parents, it must be dealt with sensitively to avoid causing upset or creating other emotional issues for your child.

Carrying extra body weight can put children at increased risk for developing serious health problems, including diabetes, heart disease, and asthma.

Recognising and treating weight problems and obesity in children, may reduce the risk of developing serious medical conditions as they get older.

Childhood obesity also takes an emotional toll. It is important for children to develop high self-esteem, feeling good about themselves can affect their mental health and behaviour.

In many cases self-esteem can be closely linked to body image and weight. Overweight and obese children often have trouble keeping up with other children and joining in sports and activities. Other children may tease and exclude them, leading to low self-esteem and negative body image.

Addressing weight problems in children requires a combination of physical activity and healthy nutrition.

Tips for dealing with weight problems in children:

- Get the whole family involved
- Encourage healthy eating habits
- Lead by example
- Limit snacks
- Monitor portion sizes
- Reduce screen time
- Get your child moving – Increase daily exercise and activity



Don't ignore weight problems – let your child know that you love them and that all you want to do is help them be healthy and happy.

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"To us in Allianz Worldwide Care your children become our children and their health becomes our priority. Please take advantage of our preventative check up benefits for your children to help them stay healthy and above all, happy!"

Dr Ulrike Sucher, Medical Director, Allianz Worldwide Care.

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