

Starting Healthy Eating Habits

How is your nutrition IQ? Are these statements true or false?

- *A fat baby is a healthy baby.*
- *Young children need vitamin pills to make sure they get all the proper nutrients.*
- *Snacking is bad for children.*

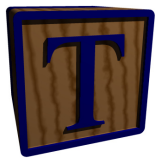
(All of these are false.)

Children outgrow many things. As they grow up, they cast aside old toys and clothes. They give up diapers and baby talk. A few things, though, they will carry with them into adulthood. These include the eating habits and attitudes toward food they learn from you.

Children develop tastes for certain foods at an early age. They learn to like what you give them to eat. If you offer them lots of fruit and vegetables, they will still enjoy those foods when they are older. If they get used to soda pop and lollipops, they probably won't be able to resist the lure of sweet foods later on.

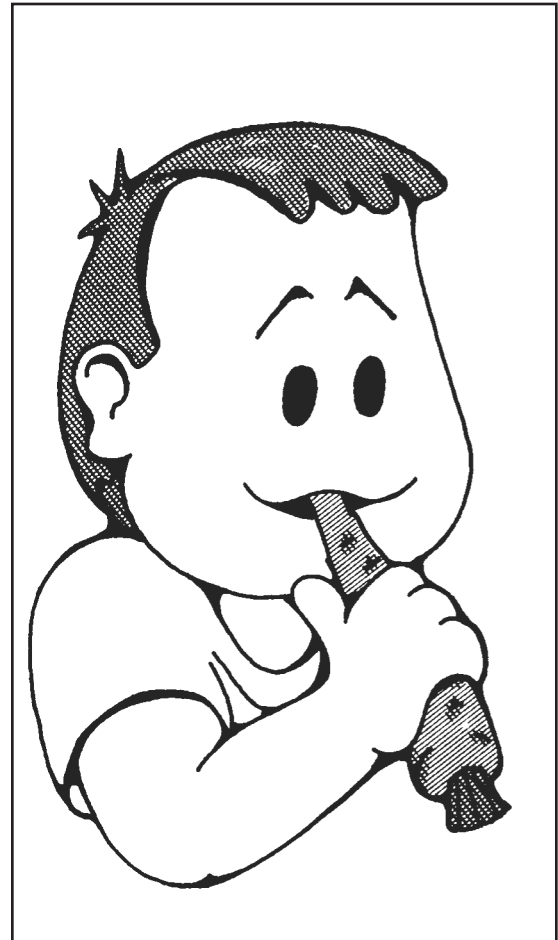
The eating habits and attitudes your children pick up through your example are apt to last a lifetime. For this reason, you will want to become familiar with basic nutritional concepts. Fortunately, sound nutritional information isn't hard to find, but you can also find false information. Separating fact from fiction is the first step toward nutritional awareness.

Substitutions allowed



There is no single right way to good nutrition. The proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals we need are found in a wide variety of foods. Ethnic foods, vegetarian diets, and other common menus can all supply these nutrients.

Because there are so many different nutritious foods, you don't have to worry if your children won't eat certain things. It's easy to find other foods with the nutrients they need. If your child does not like potatoes, he or she can get carbohydrates from bread and rice. Forcing children to eat foods they don't like is never a good idea.



Food is its own reward



Making children eat when they aren't hungry isn't wise, either. Different children need different amounts of food. Even the same child will need different amounts of food at different times. Poor eating habits are begun rather than ended when parents become anxious about their children's appetites.

Using food as a reward or punishment is another bad idea. Giving dessert as a reward may teach a child that dessert is the most important part of the meal. Such tactics encourage children to see eating as an emotional issue rather than as an enjoyable way to stay healthy and strong.

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H E L P I N G • C H I L D R E N • G R O W

Recipes for good habits

Once you have basic nutritional information, you will find many ways to help your children develop good eating habits. Some of the things you can do are:

- Serve a variety of foods.
- Let your children help prepare meals.
- Make mealtime a pleasant experience.

Mealtimes can be fun. They provide an opportunity to discuss the day's events, plan outings, and get to know one another better. If mealtimes are relaxed and happy, your children will begin to associate the nutritious foods you serve with good feelings.

Making meals fun



balancing a diet does not have to mean meat and potatoes at every meal. As your nutritional awareness increases, you'll probably come up with many creative and interesting food experiences for your family. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

Breakfast. Breakfast doesn't have to be the traditional bacon and eggs and toast. Try preparing one of these "breakfast surprises":

- Toasted cheese sandwich, a glass of milk, and apple slices.
- Peanut butter on toast, and milk shake made with milk and fruit.
- Cereal sundae made with dry cereal or granola sprinkled on fruit or yogurt.

Snacks. Snacking has become a way of life for most Americans. Snacktime does not have to mean candy. It can be another opportunity for good nutrition. Here are some ideas for nutritious snacks:

- Mix together dried fruit, nuts, and seeds. Put the mixture into small plastic bags so children can carry the bags while they play.
- Freeze unsweetened juices in your freezer tray. When almost frozen, put a wooden stick in each cube. Serve frozen fruit juice on a stick.
- Cut up vegetables in sticks, chunks, and circles. Then mix yogurt or sour cream with herbs and spices or onion soup mix and have a "dunking party."
- Use cookie cutters to cut cheese, meat, and bread into interesting shapes.

A healthy diet

Young children need a variety of foods in their diet. Include these every day:

- six servings of breads and cereals,
- three servings of vegetables,
- two servings of fruits,
- two servings of milk and milk products, and
- two servings of meat and meat alternates.

Standard servings for children

	<i>Serving size</i>	
	<i>for 2-3 years</i>	<i>for 4-5 years</i>
Breads & cereals		
bread	$\frac{1}{2}$ slice	$\frac{1}{2}$ -1 slice
cooked cereal, rice, or pasta		
ready to eat	$\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$ cup	$\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Vegetables & fruits		
raw	$\frac{1}{2}$ med.	$\frac{1}{2}$ -1 med.
cooked	2-3 Tbsp	4-5 Tbsp
juice	$\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Milk & milk products		
milk, yogurt, custard, milk	$\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ cup	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup
pudding	4-6 Tbsp	6 Tbsp
cheese (1 oz = 1" cube)	$\frac{2}{3}$ -1 oz	1 oz
Meat & meat alternates		
meat, poultry, fish	2-3 Tbsp (1 oz)	4 Tbsp (2 oz)
eggs	1	1
peanut butter	1-2 Tbsp	2-3 Tbsp
cooked dried beans or peas	$\frac{1}{3}$ cup	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup

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