

## Feeding Children

# The Care and Feeding of Healthy Kids

The path of least resistance is such a temptation when it comes to caring for our children. We don't want to fight with them - to go to bed, to do their homework, to spend their time wisely, and to eat right. And yet doing battle is sometimes necessary - both with and for our children, until they learn how to make appropriate choices on their own. **Knowing that our children will one day be choosing our nursing home is reason enough to raise them well, but what about just getting them through the next school year?**

Nutrition is imperative for growing bodies. Children expend immense amounts of energy in their daily lives - keeping up with school demands, sporting events, chores, play and growing **and yet, by and large, the adults upon whom they rely are not supplying them with the nutritional resources they need to meet those demands.**

This article focuses on the why and the how of **fun and convenient ways to nourish our children.**

Nourishing ourselves can be summarized in two sentences:

1. **Consume: organic fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, vegetable protein sources such as legumes, and meats only if they are organic.**
2. **Avoid: processed foods (consequently avoiding [MSG, aspartame, tainted oils and other harmful substances](#), and limit sugary juices and treats.**

So those are the basics of HOW we do it. But why? And how do we make it easy to do that for our children?

It takes time and energy to prepare healthful food - to prepare something more than that which is poured out of a box and/or heated in the microwave. Why bother? Are the benefits really worth the extra effort?

There is growing evidence that links the intake of junk food to lack of concentration and even further connects to outright aggression. Armed with little more than theory, psychologists, school principals and people involved with criminal justice have been experimenting with the dietary effects on behavior. Two such studies were written up in September 2005 issue of Ode Magazine:

Steven Schoenthaler, a criminal justice professor at California State University, supervised a change in meals served at 803 schools in New York City. He observed that the number of students passing final exams went from 11% below the national average, to 5% above. When vending machines were removed from hallways and canned foods were replaced by fresh foods in the cafeteria in a

youth detention center, Schoenthaler noted that house-rule violations dropped by 37%.

Dr. Neil Ward, a chemist with the University of Surrey in England proved that 87% of a group of 357 hyperactive children reacted to synthetic preservatives in food with restlessness, aggression, asthma and eczema.

**The brain needs a variety of nutrients including vitamins, minerals, and essential fatty acids, to keep up with the demands put upon it.** Today's diets of refined convenience foods are seriously lacking in nutritional punch and we are paying the price individually and collectively. It is our belief that these harmful eating practices are major players in the decline of the mental and physical health in our country. You can make a difference - beginning in your own home.

**Here are some simple ways to bring wholesome eating back to your house:**

1. **Be an example to your kids.** Your children will eat as you eat. If you eat well, they will too.
2. **Let your children know that you eat a variety of foods.** Help them expand their options. Now is a great time to re-try some of those foods you refused to eat as a child.
3. **Show the kids where food comes from.** Till up a patch of ground in the back yard and plant a variety of vegetables and a few flowers, or plant some lettuce in a flower box, or visit a farm. Warm, fresh picked peas can win the taste buds of pickiest green-o-phobic.

## **Snack Ideas:**

- **Make healthy food the only choice in your house.** Don't give your kids the option of eating junk. Let them see healthy food everywhere they turn. When it's time for a special treat (like ice cream) make it a special occasion by going out to get it. If treats aren't kept in the house they can't badger you 'til you give in.
- **Keep a variety of cut veggies and some healthy dipping sauces within easy reach in the refrigerator.** Even the littlest tyke can reach a peeled carrot kept on the bottom shelf of the frig. Other options to include: cut up apples, sectioned oranges, cubed organic cheeses and for older kids, frozen grapes.
- For special treats make fruit smoothies with berries, protein powder, flax oil and a grain or nut milk and freeze in a make-your-own popsicle container. Great for summer!

## **Lunch Ideas:**

- Provide the ingredients for kids to assemble their own lunches. They will feel that they have more control over what they are eating and the food will be fresher. For

- packed lunches, put spreads such as tuna or egg salad in snap-tight containers and sliced bread or crackers in a plastic bag.
- Use cookie cutters to cut breads, sliced fruits and some veggies into special shapes.
  - Roll ups, wraps and mini homemade pizzas can hold a variety of wholesome ingredients. Make a spring roll by wrapping a variety of cut veggies in rice paper and providing a dipping sauce. Try thinly sliced carrots, cucumber, avocado, cilantro and other spices. Get creative.
  - If a little one may be homesick away at school, include a food item that you've made together in the lunch box.
  - For something a little different, wrap part of the lunch in the comics or a magazine article or something else the child might like to read while eating.
- Make eating an adventure.**

There is some very good research that shows that feeding the child with ADHD will go a long way toward eliminating symptoms and calming behaviors. ADHD or not, all children will benefit from eating well.

## **Here are some quick guidelines:**

Children need a **steady supply of energy** from a combination of protein, carbohydrates and good fats.

Processing strips foods of magnesium. **Add magnesium to the diet** by sneaking in dark, leafy greens into breads, casseroles and burgers. Make smoothies with green food powders. Seeds, nuts and their respective butters are good sources of magnesium. If possible sprout nuts first by soaking them overnight.

Two-thirds of the brain is made up of fat. **Add Essential Fatty Acids** such as omega-3 and omega-6's to the diet as well. Add a combination omega 3-6-9 oil to smoothies or make salmon burgers for dinner. Also add ground flax seed meal to baked goods.

And of course one of the most tried and proven ways to improve a child's attention is by **eliminating refined sugars**. We know that children benefit from 2 to 3 grams of sugar in their diets, usually provided by natural fruits, but the modern child's diet contains up to 200 grams of sugar!!

Making these dietary changes will go along way toward creating peace and proficiency for your child's school year.

## **Special Dietary Needs - maybe it's allergies:**

**If you have implemented the above healthy eating guidelines and your child still has trouble concentrating allergies may be the culprit.** About 1 in 6 children in the U.S. are allergic to at least one substance. Along with the usual histamine type reactions such

as congestion, watery and itchy eyes, and hives, other allergic symptoms can include vomiting, bedwetting, diarrhea, ear infections, acne, irritability and trouble concentrating. Food allergies can also cause intestinal inflammation causing disruption in the absorption of essential nutrients.

**The most common foods that cause allergic reactions in children are wheat, milk and other dairy products, eggs, fish and seafood, citrus fruits, chocolate, soy products, corn, nuts and berries.**

**One way to identify culprit foods is by an elimination diet.** Eliminate suspect foods one at a time and observe symptom changes. Eliminate foods in categories, i.e. all wheat products, then all dairy products, etc. until you see improvement. After the food has been eliminated from the diet for at least 2 weeks it can be introduced for observation of returning symptoms. Reintroduce only one suspect food at a time. When reintroducing a food give the food in the purest form possible (i.e. give the child cream of wheat instead of whole wheat bread which may contain other allergens). Wait at least 72 hours for any symptoms to show up. **Repeat this process until all allergens have been identified.** Once identified, avoid these substances. Be sure to look for these ingredients in all their forms in packaged foods. Ask for ingredients lists at restaurants.

The doctors at the Integrated HealthCare can also test your child for allergens and provide dietary recommendations. It may be that the allergy is caused by an underlying condition such as parasites or a yeast infection, which should be evaluated.

Most children's attention spans will improve with the simple dietary guidelines provided above, but we are here to help you with more complicated issues to help your child have a great school year.