The Importance of Your Child’s Nutrition
Why is your child’s nutrition a big deal?

One of the most important choices you can make in life is raising a healthy child. A healthy diet is one way of achieving this! Nutrition for children is extremely important because it affects their growth, mentally and physically. It is also important for preventing obesity and diseases that accompany it, such as diabetes. Obesity is becoming more prevalent among children in the world. Obesity worldwide has nearly doubled in the past 30 years and in many parts of the world, obesity kills more people than underweight. In many countries, it is common to see overweight and underweight children in the same household. Obesity is mainly seen in urban towns all over the world, especially in families of low-middle income. Unhealthy foods tend to be less expensive and easier to find, making it the “go to food” for many people across the world. Obesity is the 5th leading cause of death worldwide today and is a growing concern in many countries.

Your child’s nutritional habits can help conquer 2 of the international Millennium Development Goals, which are to reduce child mortality rates and combating HIV/Aids, Malaria, and other diseases. Having healthy eating habits is one way you can prevent your child from becoming obese and having stunted growth.
What do you as a parent need to know about your child’s nutrition?

You have more influence than you think on what your child consumes! In most places, mom is the one gathering and preparing the food for the family, although it’s not just about mom. Both parents influence their child’s health habits based on their own habits. Most children look up to their parents as role models when it comes to habits, including what you eat. There are ways that you as a parent can help your child have healthy eating habits. One way to do this is to have more fruits and vegetables instead of snack foods such as chips and candy around the house. If you as a parent are more excited to eat the fruits and vegetables, your child is likely to take after the way you feel! Another way to help establish healthy eating habits is to manage your child’s portions. In many cultures this is a huge issue when it comes to eating unhealthily. Knowing when to stop eating can help control weight and the amount of food your child is consuming. Many children are told to “clean their plate” without any concern of whether they are full or not. In many cases of cleaning the plate, the child is overeating instead of stopping when full. You can help monitor this by measuring out correct portions and not allowing your children to continue to eat and eat just because they want to. There have been many studies done to prove that parents play a huge role in role modeling healthy eating habits. In many studies they have found that how you as a parent treat your health will determine how your child treats their health. If you eat healthy and exercise, your child is likely to eat healthy and exercise! If your children see that you care about your health and eating habits, they will look at that as normal and will take after your habits. Setting a good example and monitoring your child’s habits could, in the long run, save their life!
Dietary Requirements
What types of food should your child be consuming?

Fruits and Vegetables
Fruits and vegetables are important for reducing the risk for heart disease and they are also low in calories! Children should consume one cup of fruit and one cup of vegetables a day. A good way to make sure your child is eating enough fruits and vegetables is to have a fruit or vegetable with every meal, making sure half of their plate is filled by fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are important for the overall health of your child and will give them many vitamins and nutrients they need to grow healthy and strong!

Grains and Dairy
Grains are important to consume because they also help reduce the risk of heart disease and can also help with weight management. They are a good source of fiber and other vitamins necessary for proper growth. Children should consume about 3 ounces a day and at least half should be whole grains. Dairy has many important health benefits but the main one is calcium, which promotes healthy bone development. Children should consume 2 cups per day, preferably in fat free or 1% form.

Protein and Oils
Protein is important for children’s health because it provides the body with B vitamins and iron, which help maintain healthy skin, blood, muscles, and bones. Children should consume 3 ounces a day to receive the benefits. Protein comes from things such as poultry, beans, nuts, fish, beef, soy products, and eggs! Oils are also known as fats that are at room temperature. Children should consume only 3 teaspoons of these essential fatty acids, but only this small amount because too much can be detrimental to health.
Easy Snack Ideas For Your Child!

Fruit and Cheese Kabobs

Fruit and Cheese Kabobs are a fun and easy way to get dairy and fruit in your child’s diet. This high-protein snack can be made by using cookie cutters to cut out cheese and fruit and then you can either stick them on pretzel sticks or kabob sticks! If you use kabobs sticks, make sure they are not sharp so your child is safe!

Ants on a Log

Ants on a Log is a great way to get protein and fiber into your child’s diet because peanut butter is a great source of both! This adorable snack is easy to make, all you need to do is put a little peanut butter on the chunk of celery and add a few raisins on top to make the ants! This is a great snack to get your child involved as well because they can add the ants themselves!

Trail Mix

Trail Mix is a great option for picky kids because you can tailor it to whatever foods your child likes! This can include things such as cheerios, Chex cereal, raisins, pretzels, nuts or seeds, goldfish, dried fruit, mini M&M’s, and anything else your child may want in it. This is easy to make for a road trip snack or school snack and will keep your child’s hunger satisfied.

Smoothies

Smoothies are a cold, delicious way to get fruits, dairy, and protein into your child’s diet. You can add any fruits your child may like, dairy such as yogurt, and protein such as peanut butter or protein powder. Smoothies can help keep your child full in the afternoon or you can also use them as a breakfast alternative to keep them full in school!
References

