

Multiply the Options

A Child's World of Food

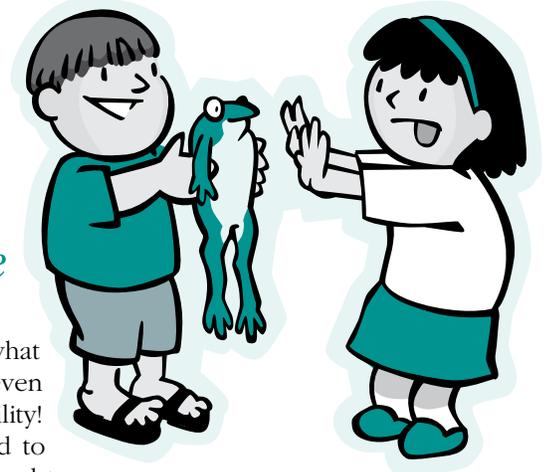
by Margy Squires

What are little boys made of?

Snips & snails & puppy dog tails

What are little girls made of?

Sugar & spice & everything nice



While the above verse is charming, we all know that we are what we eat. During a child's early years, good nutrition is even more important. Being a parent is an awesome responsibility! A mom-to-be is well aware that anything she is exposed to is ultimately passed on to the little one inside who is linked to her for survival. Outside the womb, nourishment continues to set the stage for baby to thrive, grow and learn. The brain and nervous system continue to develop in the first three years of life. A baby demands food, attention and center stage. The greatest overall growth occurs from infancy to seven years. As little Johnny and Jane switch from bottles to high chairs, they prefer the taste of sweet foods and open up for applesauce rather than creamed peas and carrots. They depend on parents to make sure that they get what's good for them as well as what tastes good. This is easier said than done. From ages two through seven, children learn to sit, crawl, stand and walk independently of mommy and daddy and a battle of wills begins. In their quest to be a "little me", food is no exception.

Think of it. Everything is new to a child. Little ones explore and learn about food in the same way as they do the rest of their world, through their five senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing and seeing. If food smells or looks funny, it's more than likely to be left on the plate. Even sound and texture, the way it crunches or feels in their mouths, provoke a reaction. Little Johnny and Jane enjoy playing with their food, giving new meaning to the expression "finger foods". Little sectioned dishes are popular as they want mashed potato separate and not touching the carrots. Plus, little tummies are no bigger than the size of their fists and hold much less food. Smaller portions and a healthy snacking keeps them supplied with that endless child energy to keep going and growing.

What is your child eating?

A wonderful trait of children is that they are natural mimics, doing what mommy and daddy do. When parents lead by example in the food category, too, children follow. So you provide a wide food variety, three square meals and keep the fruit bowl full. But what is your child really eating?

Pesticide sprayed fruits and veggies, meats pumped with hormones, mercury in fish, genetically modified foods and even irradiation packs more of a chemical feast than a healthy fare, and is a challenge to the immune system. In studies comparing produce with that of 50 years ago, the vitamin and mineral content today is up to 50% less. Adults take a multiple to cover not only nutritional gaps in diet but to lower the risk of age related diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. Based on foods Johnny and Jane may be eating, what does their health future look like?

Historically, children suffered 3-5 colds per year; that number has increased to 9-10. Low A, C, E, zinc and essential omega fatty acids have resulted in an increased incidence of ear infections. Childhood asthma and allergies are also on the rise. Statistical studies report a growing epidemic of overweight children who are facing high cholesterol and pre-diabetes in their teens. One theory is that the appetite switch doesn't turn off if the body is in need of missing nutrients. Low amino acid levels create learning, neurological and attention disorders, such as ADD

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and ADHD. Celiac, cystic fibrosis, diabetes and autism are associated with low vitamin D. Suddenly giving a daily multiple isn't such a strange idea. Skipped breakfasts impact school productivity and learning. Finicky eating compromises nutrient intake as well. And the media hype of mcfast foods with colorful Disney characters doesn't help teach Johnny and Jane their vitamin A-B-C's.

Hydration & sleep

Nutrition isn't the only thing missing in young lives. Hydration is essential. Since the sweat glands have not fully developed, children overheat easily. Clean, pure water in small amounts through the day will help keep them hydrated and their body temperature regulated. Plus, the entire transport system for nutrients and oxygen travel via the bloodstream which is 98% water. Too little water also causes fatigue. A growing child needs sleep, often 10-12 hours during which human growth hormone is busy at work repairing and building new cells, tissues and bones. The brain also "reboots" with rest. Tired children are not hard to spot; they are the ones that are crabby, cry easily and not having much fun.



Summary

Even the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) acknowledges that as long as you don't exceed the known recommended daily allowances for your child's age, a multiple won't hurt. The nutritional needs of a growing child are vitally important during their early years. Normal skeletal structures, brain function, internal organs and overall health depend on getting a daily balance of vitamins and minerals essential for life. So while you buy your children's foods selectively, organic when possible, and wash those fruits and veggies, choose their multiple with equal care. Look for one without fillers, artificial flavors and dyes and low in sugar. Pick one balanced in B-complex vitamins, necessary for breakdown of fats, carbohydrates and sugar for energy. Choose chelated minerals for optimum absorption for building strong bones and teeth. Children can overdose on iron so keep multiples out of their reach if you choose one with iron (for healthy red blood cells). Make sure it contains the fat soluble vitamins A, D and E which have dual roles as antioxidants and important growth factors. A good diet is important. A good multiple offers assurance that Johnny and Jane meet their daily nutritional needs so they'll grow up strong, smart and healthy.

Teach Your Children Well

- ◆ **Have a designated mealtime.** Even with food they like, children eat better and are more willing to try new foods when it's a family affair.
- ◆ **Make it colorful.** Especially red, which children associate with sweetness. Introduce red peppers before green, red berries before blue.
- ◆ **Keep food simple, close to its natural state, given in small portions.** Children naturally adjust how much they eat to how much room is left in their tummies. Snacks do count!
- ◆ **Tell them a new food tastes great!** Children don't care if it's good for them. Only 23% of 2-10 year olds like to try new stuff. Even cheese makes food look different!
- ◆ **Let food be its own reward.** Children naturally assume a food tastes bad if you bribe them to eat it. Likewise, sending them to their room for not eating associates food with punishment.
- ◆ **Involve children in mealtime.** If they're part of the process, they're more likely to eat willingly.
- ◆ **Take a quality multiple with meals.** Cover nutritional gaps and boost immunity. It can make a difference.
- ◆ **Finally, let food be fun!** Healthy food can be happy food, too!

Resources

www.aap.org
www.kidhealth.org
www.ers.usda.gov/publications
www.ewg.org



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