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A+ Student - Proper Nutrition For Children

Proper nutrition for children is very important for children from very early on in their lives. When it comes to the development of children's brains, proper nutrition is a very important facet. A child's brain works overtime when he is young as he is constantly learning new things.

If you want your child's brain to develop well, and if you want him to become an A+ student, then it is vital that he gets the following components in their required quantities.

1) Glucose- Glucose is a great source of energy for your child, and it affects the level of his blood sugar directly. It also functions in building your child's attention span.

Do not undermine the importance of a good breakfast and make sure that your child's breakfast has enough glucose to keep him going through a physically demanding day.

Do not allow your child to skip breakfasts as this could lead to him to have problems with remembering things he's been taught at school, and this would also affect his attention span adversely.

2) Vitamin A & B- Both of these play different roles in your child's growing up. Your child needs the required quantity of Vitamin A in his diet for the proper development of his brain.

Vitamin A can be found in most citrus fruits as well as in dark leafy vegetables.

He needs Vitamin B so that the energy that he derives from glucose can be utilized. If your child does not receive the required quantity of Vitamin B in his diet, he could end up getting aggressive or depressed.

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Since there are different forms of Vitamin B, one single source can hardly ever provide all forms together. However, different forms of essential Vitamin B forms can be found in most cereals.

3) Iron- Our blood requires iron in order to effectively transport oxygen to various parts of our body. If your child does not receive the required quantity of iron in his diet, he could develop anemia.

A lack of iron could also affect his attention span negatively, and there are chances that he would not be interested in taking part in activities which require ability, skill, or imagination.

Good sources of iron include legumes, broccoli, red meat, tuna, chicken, and tuna.

4) Folic Acid- Folic acid aids the production of white & red blood cells in your child's body. In case your child does not receive the required quantity of folic acid in his diet, he could complain of being lethargic, forgetful, and irritable.

Folic acid can be found in most fresh fruits & vegetables.

5) Zinc- The communication that takes place in the nervous system of your child depends on the amount of Zinc that he gets in his diet. If your child does not receive the required quantity of zinc in his diet, he could have a problem in solving simple academic questions. This is a condition, which in medical lingo, is called 'Cognitive Impairment'.

Your child's everyday diet should be a healthy mix of foods such as veggies, fruits, cereal, meat, and lots and lots of water. This is particularly important if you want him to perform like an A+ student. This does not require you to supervise every morsel of food that your child devours.

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If you have a schedule that leaves you with little time to plan your child's meals, then you, just like countless other busy parents, can turn to nutritional supplements. This way you can ensure that your child gets his daily requirements of different nutritional components met, everyday.

However, you should realize that getting your child to take these supplements can be a bit of a challenge. While an adult would not have a problem in taking these supplements (especially after knowing the benefits); a child might not take them as easily.

There is a possibility that your child simply does not like taking pills. In that case he could put nutritional supplements in the same bracket as well. The taste of these supplements could be enough of a deterrent for your child, the benefits notwithstanding. However, this is not the end of the road and you do have other options.

The first of these comes in the form of chewable nutritional supplements. These are generally nice tasting, and children don't usually have any apprehensions in taking these.

The second alternative you have is liquid nutritional supplements. These can be mixed in a variety of foodstuff, and kids don't mind mixing them with their juices and shakes.

Adults who do not like taking pills can also turn to taking nutritional supplements in the liquid form. One very good thing about taking nutritional supplements in this form is that the body can absorb them faster and more easily. Proper nutrition for children is quite easy to manage when you have a liquid supplement at hand.

It is essential that your child gets the required nutrients in their required quantities in his early years. Pregnant women should get the required quantity of folic acid, as well as Vitamin B in their diet for the proper brain development of the fetus.

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Lastly, while nutritional supplements aren't suggested for children who are very young, a child can actually be given nutritional supplements very early on in life (even when he is only 2).

Bear in mind that little separates the top performers in school from the average performers. Your child not receiving a well balanced nutritional diet could very well be what differentiates him from the A+ students.

Now that you have this information with you, it is important that you take some measures in bringing about some positive changes in your child's dietary pattern. You now have to ensure that he gets all the nutritional components that he requires, and in their required quantities. Proper nutrition for children will not only help your children, but you as well.

Anthony Kane, MD is a physician and international lecturer who has been helping parents of children with ADHD and [Oppositional Defiant Disorder](#) online since 2003. Get help with Oppositional Defiant Disorder child behavior help with [defiant teens](#) ADHD treatment and ADHD.

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Children's Nutrition Starts With Regular Mealtimes

Children will eat at different times of the day if we allow them to. But should we schedule meals throughout the day, or is it better to eat on demand?

The answer depends on the age of the child. Newborns don't have their time clock set in any direction yet. Their sleeping cycle is not established and their eating time is erratic. At this age it is important to feed on demand; with time the baby will be able to go a number of hours without food and feedings become more predictable by about 3 months of age. Some baby care books advise to offer food to newborns every 3 hours around-the-clock, but if the baby feels hungry before the 3 hour limit you will end up with a crying baby, and a crying mother.

During the newborn period my advice is to pay attention to feeding/hunger cues and offer breast milk or formula on demand. After a few months, the baby will develop a semi-schedule of feeding, and the time in between feedings will be approximately 3 hours.

When the baby starts getting some sense of circadian rhythm, that is, when he/she becomes aware of the difference between day and night, he may cluster-feed in the evening while he gets used to transitioning to the night. This is a normal occurrence and does not in any way signify that the baby is not learning; to the contrary, it means the newborn is now able to sense a change and his/her brain is ready to transition to the night.

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By about 3 months of age most babies eat every 3 hours during the day and they cluster feed in the evening, from about 5 PM to 9 PM. They then are capable of sleeping 10 to 12 hours with an early morning feeding between 6 AM and 8 AM. It all has to do with the process of brain development created by the exposure to sunlight and the absence of sunlight.

When babies become toddlers, they are capable of going without food for hours. At this point many of them learn to test the rules and manipulate them to their advantage. This too is part of a natural, healthy process of learning. It is very tempting to offer the child food without much of a schedule with the purpose of assuring enough calorie intake for the day. It is more tempting when you are dealing with a picky eater: parents spend their days chasing poor meals by offering food right afterwards in order to make up for it. This technique does work for the most part. At the end of the day parents feel as if they have done their best at trying to feed this picky eater. But when we look at the quality of the food ingested the results may not be so healthy.

By offering food without a schedule we end up giving too many snacks of poor nutritional quality. Since the snacks taste good, they reinforce the child's desire to avoid the regular meal in favor of the snack. Very soon the toddler ends up eating what he wants and never gets the opportunity to learn to eat good food.

We all learn to eat quality food when we are hungry and we don't have many choices. In order to make the child hungry, we must allow a number of hours in between meals and we must make sure we are not loading on crackers, gold fish and juice.

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My advice is to offer food 4 times per day: breakfast, lunch, after-school snack and dinner. If we place breakfast as close as possible to waking up and dinner as near as feasible to going to bed, we then can situate lunch at about noon and a snack after school - or after the afternoon nap, for younger children. We now have our 4 meals with enough time in between them to become hungry.

Our body is designed to function better this way. We know that the production of Growth Hormone is important for children's growth and development. This hormone is secreted by a gland inside the brain, the anterior pituitary. The secretion of Growth Hormone is not continuous but pulsatile; it does increase by certain stimuli. One of the stimuli for Growth Hormone secretion is a substance called Ghrelin, which is secreted by the stomach when we are hungry. So, we are programmed to be hungry at certain times and being hungry is not bad for us.

In our society we have learned to avoid the sensation of hunger at all cost. Food is readily available and, for the most part, it is socially acceptable to eat anywhere at any time.

Snacking too much creates another negative accomplishment: it gives us the opportunity to teach the child to associate food and emotions. At this is not a good association, especially in toddlers, who are emotional and ready to let us know when things don't go their way.

When a parent gets into the habit of carrying food with them and giving snacks to the child, they end up offering those snacks when the toddler is upset and about to throw a temper tantrum; the child then eats while going to the grocery store and when in the doctor's office. They eat while driving in the car and while going for a ride in their stroller... You get the picture.

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The association of food and emotions is not a good one to acquire. When these children become adults they are going to have a hard time staying away from food and this bad habit may contribute to the development of health problems.

As the mother of 3 children I learned my lesson early on. I have to say I had the advantage of having grown up in a society with very strict rules when it came to eating etiquette. Although looking back I find some of those rules a little too strict, they did help me do the right thing when my children were growing up.

Today's mothers are constantly receiving conflicting information about nutrition, as some of the food manufacturer's point out the benefits of vegetable puffs or vitamin-enhanced crackers. As a rule of thumb, if it doesn't look or taste like a vegetable or a fruit, it is not likely to be a vegetable or a fruit.

Another word that sells these days is "natural", and I do like this word. Let's go back to the "natural" way of eating: offer the real thing at mealtime only. You are going to end up ahead when it comes to assuring good nutrition for your children.

Pediatrician Dr. Marta Katalenas is on a crusade against childhood obesity. Children are not responsible for buying or preparing their own food, and Dr. Katalenas believes the cooperation of the entire family is essential in the fight against childhood obesity. She is available for public speaking engagements and is located in the Austin, Texas area. [Pediatric Center of Round Rock](#).

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