

## Healthy Kids

### What your child needs to grow well:

- Lots of love and attention
- Enough healthy foods
- Enough sleep

### What keeps a child from growing well?

- Not feeling loved or important
- Sickness
- Not eating enough healthy foods

### Ask Yourself These Questions:

- Does my child often eat candy, chips, cookies, and soft drinks?
- Am I giving my child a wide variety of foods?
- Is my child getting enough milk every day?
- Does my child get healthy foods for snacks?
- Am I making meal time as pleasant as possible?

### Things to consider:

- Always feed your child breakfast. Sometimes children eat best at breakfast.
  - Breakfast can make a difference in how much your child learns, how well your child plays, and how good your child feels
  - Breakfast can be anything from a bowl of cereal to a sandwich; the important thing is to make it a habit.
  - No time for breakfast? How about getting everything ready the night before? Or take along a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.
- For lunch and dinner, give one or more foods from each food group
  - Milk, yogurt, and cheese group
  - Meat, poultry, Fish, Dry beans, Eggs, and Nuts Group
  - Vegetable Group
  - Fruit Group
  - Bread, cereal, rice, and pasta group

## How to Cope With Your Picky Eater

A picky eater will eat just a few foods and does not want to try new foods. Almost every child goes through a stage like this. It is not easy for the parents.

### What Makes A Child Picky?

Every child is different. Some like the extra attention they get by being picky. Others are going through an independent stage, around 2 years old. Some really do hate the taste of certain foods.

### Will Your Child Outgrow This?

Yes, your child will probably eat just about everything soon. So try to relax about this.

- Do **your** job of providing healthy foods at regular meals and snack times.
- Let your child do his/her job - eating – without too much pressure.

### What Can You Do?

- **Expect** that your child will use food to try to get some control over his/her world. Expect some battles. Try not to be too strict or too easy.
- **Expect** children to eat small amounts of food. Are they growing well? That is the real test.
- **Expect** children to want candy, chips and sweet drinks instead of healthy food and milk. You must set limits and make rules. It's part of your job.
- **Expect** your child to be almost too busy to eat from about 2 to 4 years old. Do things to slow them down before meals. Try a story or quiet time.
- Let your child see a new food a few times. Then see if you can get them to taste it, even if they don't swallow it.
- Serve a very small amount of a new food next to a favorite food.

### What Not To Do

- Don't make eating into a battle.
- Don't beg your child to eat.
- Don't threaten your child if he or she doesn't eat.
- Don't bribe your child to eat.
- Don't jump up and cook something else to get your child to eat.

### Iron for Your Child

So your child is low in iron. What does this really mean? It means that your child is not eating enough foods with iron in them to keep his/her blood healthy. It usually takes months of eating a diet low in iron before it shows up as a low iron level in the blood.

### Why Does A Child Get Low In Iron?

Sometimes it is because they are picky eaters. Sometimes they get too much junk food. Other kids don't like to eat meat or just want to drink instead of eating. Some do not get healthy foods at regular meals. Other children are on the bottle too long.

### What Can You Do?

- You can talk with the dietitian or nurse about any kind of feeding problem your child is having.
- You can take a look at how your child is eating to see what needs to be changed.
  - Should your child be off the bottle?
  - Is your child eating a lot of junk food?
  - Are snacks too close to meals?
  - Is your child drinking too much milk or juice?
- You can make sure your child is getting regular meals that include some foods high in iron.

### Foods That Are High In Iron

Most healthy foods have small amounts of iron that add up. So eating foods from all the food groups is important.

Some foods are especially high in iron. These are foods from the Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans and Egg Group. Give your child 2 or 3 servings a day from this group.

Also, iron gets used by the body more easily when foods high in iron are eaten with foods high in Vitamin C. So be sure to give fruits and vegetables with meals.

### Foods Highest In Iron:

Liver, pork, beef, fish, chicken and liver sausage are high in iron.

### Other Foods With A Good Amount Of Iron:

- cooked dry beans or peas and pork and beans
- iron-fortified cereals, dry infant cereal
- peanut butter, broccoli
- dried fruits like raisins and apricots

### Foods High In Vitamin C:

- oranges, orange juice, grapefruit
- tomatoes, potatoes, broccoli
- green peppers
- juices with Vitamin C added
- watermelon, cantaloupe and strawberries

**It takes time for a low iron level to come up. But when it does, your child will feel better, and so will you!**

### Calcium for Your Child

You already know that calcium is an important building block for your child's bones and teeth. It also helps the blood clot and does many other things. Children need a lot of calcium. They get it in what they eat and drink every day.

Many foods have some calcium in them. But the very best foods for calcium are the foods in the milk, yogurt and cheese group. Young children should get 4 servings a day from this group. A serving of milk is 1/2 cup each. Or, give a slice of cheese or ½ cup of yogurt or 1 cup of cottage cheese, ice cream or frozen yogurt.

**If Your Child Does Not Like Milk, Try These Ideas:**

- Is your child going through “a stage”? Give water with meals, not a sweet drink. Wait for this stage to pass.
- Give milk drinks with snacks. Cocoa, lowfat chocolate milk, and milk shakes are fun to drink.
- Cheese is high in calcium. Give it for snacks, on sandwiches or as part of meals.
- Make soup with milk. Let your child drink it from a cup. It is easier to eat that way.

**If Your Child Cannot Digest Milk . . .**

- Most children can drink small amounts of milk without any problems. Give small amounts of milk with a meal or snack. Also try cheddar cheese and yogurt. Your child may have no problem with them.
- Make sure your child is eating a lot of different foods from all of the food groups. Many foods have some calcium in them, and they do add up.

**Here are some other foods high in calcium:**

- calcium fortified juices and foods
- dried beans of all kinds
- tofu
- salmon with bones
- sardines with bones
- chili with beans
- broccoli, brussels sprouts, collards and other greens

## Help Your Child Grow Up Healthy

Children are **not** little adults! They should not be put on diets to **lose** weight.

Children are growing. This means they should gain weight. However, overweight children could gain weight more slowly. This way they can slim down as they get taller.

**Your child needs to feel good about who they are.**

Try not to make weight a big issue. Make your child feel important and loved. Weight is only a **small** part of who we are. Don't talk about your child's weight all the time, and don't make him/her feel bad about their weight.

**Learn to control what your child eats, not how much your child eats.**

If you are trying to control how much of everything your child eats, loosen up. That's your child's job. Control other things like what foods are in the house and how they are fixed.

**More things you can do....**

- **Plan snacks** so that they are healthy and so that your child is not starved by mealtime. Don't let your child snack all day long. A snack in the morning and one in the afternoon are enough.
- **Keep junk foods out of the house!** Buy more fruits, yogurt and healthy sandwich makings.
- **Make a good supper.** Let your child eat until he/ she is full. Then "close the kitchen" for the night.
- Stop snacking while watching TV.
- **Don't give your child money to spend at the store.** It will probably go for candy and soft drinks.
- **Cut down on how much TV your child watches.** Your child needs physical activity. Send your child outside to play. Buy a bike instead of a video game. Take walks together and make it fun!
- **Deal with family problems.** Is there a problem in your family that is making your child feel unhappy or nervous? Reach out for help with that problem. Your child may be using food to cope with stress.
- **Be a good example.** It is never too late to change some of your own eating and physical activity habits! But just change one thing at a time. Get in new habits gradually.

**For more ideas, ask to talk with a dietitian or nurse.**

**Sources for the information above are:**

- *Louisiana WIC Program, nutrition education materials*
- *Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health and the Wisconsin WIC Program*