

10 facts about nutrition that parents need to know

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1. Sugar is the enemy...

...and the unhealthiest sugar of all is fructose. Fructose is a sugar that is treated differently to most sugars by our body. Excess fructose is converted directly into fat and laid down around our internal organs. This is unhealthy and increases our risk for chronic disease in later life.

Fructose occurs in nature in quite high amounts in honey, some fruits (especially dried fruit) and to a much lesser extent in vegetables. It is because of the high level of fructose in fruit that healthy eating guidelines recommend eating only 2 pieces per day. High fructose drinks include soft drink, sports drinks and energy drinks. All these contain unhealthy amounts of fructose, lots of chemical additives and no actual nutrition!

2. Eat fruit, don't drink it.

Orange **juice** is very high in fructose and an unhealthy choice to start to the day! One **whole** orange contains vitamins, fibre, antioxidants and a smallish amount of fructose (3 g/100g). A 250ml **glass** of orange juice contains the juice of 5-6 oranges, no fibre and considerably more fructose (approximately 15-18 g/100g). If it is processed orange juice rather than freshly squeezed, it may also contain an unhealthy helping of E102 (tartrazine), a colouring strongly associated with **hyperactivity in children**.

Commercially prepared fruit juices and smoothies are a health trap many children and adolescents fall into. Without mentioning names, the sugar content of the "low fat smoothies" sold at a chain of well-known juice bars are surprising high. Their original sized smoothie containing blueberries (a well-known healthy berry), has in it 93 grams of sugar.

That is, 23 teaspoons of sugar!! ☹

The American Heart Association (AMA) recommends no more than 37.5 gms (9 teasp) of sugar for men and 25 gms (6 teasp) of sugar for women DAILY.

3. So that's why they give us bottomless cups of soft drink.

Fructose prevents the hormone Leptin from working properly (this hormone controls our appetite). This is one reason soft drink is 'given away' in fast food meal-deals. The fructose in soft drink stops our brains from realizing when our stomachs are full, so we keep eating. For food manufacturers in the business of selling more food this is good for business... but not for our health!

4. Protein is the building block of life and learning.

Most children do not eat enough protein. Those that are fussy about eating meat are particularly at risk. Protein is an essential building block required for growth and needs to be eaten at every meal and snack time. Good sources of protein are dairy, eggs, meat and fish, nuts and legumes. All vegetables contain small amounts of protein and green beans are the best. Eggs or yogurt for breakfast are MUCH healthier than sugary cereals. Not enough protein and too much sugar at breakfast, recess and lunch lead to energy slumps and poor concentration at school.

5. Growing brains need healthy fats every day.

The structure of our brain is more than 50% fat! This means we must eat healthy fats, especially as the brain grows and develops. 'Low fat' foods are unhealthy for everyone and especially so for children as they tend to be high in unhealthy sugars as well as being low in fat. Children need lots of **olive oil** (try homemade salad dressings) **omega 3 fat** (oily fish, avocado, walnuts, chia seeds) and **coconut oil**. Although canned tuna is convenient and seems healthy as it contains omega 3 fats, it also contains mercury which can reach toxic levels if tuna is eaten too often. For this reason, in NSW it is advised that pregnant women do not eat fish.

Virtually all food processing uses vegetable oils which are high in **omega 6 fat**. Too much of this fat is unhealthy, especially in the form of trans fat.

6. Butter is back!

Butter is SO MUCH better for you than margarine! Yes, really, it's ok to eat butter again (in moderation of course!) Try it on steamed veggies with a pinch of sea salt. The butter helps our bodies absorb the **essential** fat soluble vitamins A, D E and vitamin K from fresh vegetables. A pinch of sea salt provides iodine, another essential mineral for learning and normal development. Margarine is usually made from vegetable oil (not good) and contains a multitude of chemical additives. Bugs and microbes will not touch margarine but they love butter ... margarine is just not natural! For those still not convinced, the link between heart disease and saturated fat (butter) intake has been discredited in recent research.

7. Check the labels.

Check ALL processed food for additives and preservatives, these additives sneak into the most unexpected foods. A large, well respected study from the UK, published in 2007, demonstrated that 6 artificial colourings - 102 104 110 122 124 and 129 and the preservative sodium benzoate are **STRONGLY** associated with hyperactivity, tantrums, poor concentration and slow progress at school in the general population of 3 year olds and 8-9 year olds.

102 (tartrazine) is arguably the worst and many kids start the day with a glass of orange juice containing this chemical!

Preservative 282 is often found in breads and wraps and causes hyperactivity and learning problems in sensitive children. Its effects are often cumulative. **All canteens should avoid giving children this chemical** and parents may need to check this!

Flavour enhancer such as the glutamates 620 – 626 (MSG) have also been implicated in learning disorders, hyperactivity, sleep disturbance, irritability and depression.

8. Does lunch really matter?

Children really do need good quality food for recess and lunch. Food sent to school has a BIG impact on a child's ability to learn and ideally should always be; whole fresh food, not processed; preservative and additive free; low sugar (if it has to be in a packet pick something that has <5gms sugar/100 gms)

A WISH LIST ☺... Fund raising to buy a fridge for every classroom so children can store their fresh food would benefit the health and learning of every single child in the school.

9. Is organic really best?

Organic food is expensive, there is no denying it, BUT there are certain fruits and vegetables that are much higher in pesticide residues than others and avoiding these **is** worth the extra cost. Other fruits and vegetables are less contaminated and perfectly fine to eat non - organic.

Look up on the web; "the dirty dozen" and "the clean fifteen."

Apples, grapes, celery and strawberries are thought to be the most contaminated and onions, corn, avocado and pineapple the least.

10. The most common medical condition you and your GP have never heard of.

Nutrient deficiencies are relatively common in Australia but unfortunately doctors aren't generally trained to pick these up. Magnesium, iron and zinc deficiency can all occur due to not eating enough nutrient rich foods in the diet. For example, magnesium is most abundant in green leafy vegetables, while iron and zinc are most abundant in meat, which means vegetarians are highly at risk of deficiency.

However, deficiencies are sometimes present in people who eat well-balanced, nutritious food.

10% of the population is zinc and vitamin B6 deficient due to a genetic condition called Pyrrole Disorder. In this condition the body is unable to hold on to the zinc and vitamin B6 absorbed from food and these nutrients are lost in the urine, particularly at times of stress. This condition can increase an individual's risk of mental health problems such as anxiety, ADHD and other behavioural disorders. For more information check out

www.behaveability.com.au

www.walshinstitute.org

www.mensahmedical.com

www.biobalance.org.au