

Nurturing

Healthy

Food Habits
in Your
Children

Includes 40+
suggestions
for tasty,
healthful
snacks!



Anuradha Palnitkar



You CAN influence healthy eating patterns in your children. Helping your children make good food choices is important for their normal growth and development. Nutritional studies have shown that healthy eating habits developed in early childhood lead to healthy eating habits in adulthood. By encouraging your children to eat healthy you are helping them to reduce the risk of nutrition-related diseases now and in the future.

The nutritional needs of children and adolescents are different from those of adults because children are constantly growing. They need sufficient quantities of nutritious foods to ensure they develop normally. *Children must eat healthy food so they can:*

- ✓ Grow and develop at a normal rate
- ✓ Keep their bodies fit
- ✓ Maintain a healthy weight



If children eat more calories than their bodies burn, they will gradually gain weight. Conversely, if they eat less calories than their bodies burn they will lose weight. Therefore, the key to helping overweight children achieve their proper weight is to encourage them to be active and to eat smaller amounts of food. *Your positive reinforcement and your assistance in this step-by-step life change will help your children lose weight in a healthy way.*

Health Problems in Kids Today

Nowadays, kids have the freedom to make their own food choices and, therefore, they eat out more. They visit fast-food restaurants and often they get their lunch from vending machines. These fast-food habits can result in rapid weight gain and other nutrition-related problems.

About 25% to 30% of American school age children are overweight putting them at risk for health problems such as:

- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- High Blood Pressure
- Breathing Problems
- Stroke
- Cancer



Obese children now have diseases like Type 2 diabetes. This disease used to occur only in adults. If one parent is obese, there is a 50% chance that their children will be obese. If both parents are obese, there is an 80% chance that their children will be obese. Obesity frequently becomes a lifelong issue.

The reason most children and adolescents gain back their lost pounds is that after they have reached their goals, they go back to their old habits. Obesity in childhood and adolescence can be related to:

- Poor eating habits
- Overeating and bingeing
- Lack of exercise
- Stressful family events, such as separation or divorce
- Family and peer problems
- Low self esteem, depression or other emotional problems



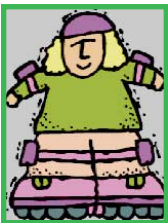
All these childhood challenges lead to the main culprit—eating too much and moving around too little. Children DO need enough food for proper growth. However, too many calories and too little physical activity lead to overweight children! The types of foods children select is an important factor as well. They should be

encouraged to eat plenty of vegetables, legumes, fruits, pasta, bread (preferably whole grain), milk and milk products.

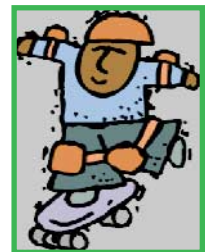
Promote Healthy Eating Habits

Many day-to-day factors influence what children eat. As children grow and become more independent, they begin to make their own food choices. However, they still look to their parents and other adults around them for direction. If they don't get this direction, they are influenced by the media and their peers. **Therefore, it's critical that parents, schools and communities work together to create the type of supportive environment that makes it easier for kids to make healthy choices.**

To keep kids healthy and to manage obesity in children and adolescents, you can encourage them to:

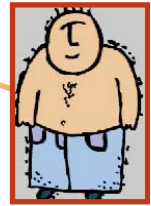


- Increase physical activity
- Eat more slowly and develop a mealtime routine
- Control food portions and consume less calories
- Eat less fatty foods
- Avoid junk food and fast food
- Avoid cola and carbonated beverages



Exercise and diet patterns during childhood and adolescence spell the difference between health and risk of disease in later years. Different stages of the life cycle have different nutritional needs. Kids should be guided to choose:

- A variety of foods based on good nutritional content
- Diets low in fats, especially saturated fats
- Diets with less sugar and salt
- Diets that have plenty of grains, vegetables and fruits
- Diets that provide enough calcium and iron to meet the requirements of their growing bodies



Nutritious Snacks: Munch Your Way to Health

Children usually need three main meals plus snacks between meals. During growth spurts, children often have an increased appetite. Appetite sometimes decreases when they are tired or excited. The best approach is to keep mealtime quiet. As much as possible, incorporate balanced food in all their meals.

However, it may be difficult to provide the required growth nutrients in three meals per

day. Therefore, well-chosen snacks between meals can help supply nutrients and energy throughout the day. At least 2-3 nutritious snacks between meals are recommended. Plan snacks so that your children get plenty of vitamins and minerals. Young children have small stomachs. Therefore, they need to eat frequently. Older children need the added calories to fuel their development and to maintain their activity level.

Nearly one fourth of their daily energy intake often comes from snacks between meals. Therefore choosing a good snack is very important. A good snack should:

- Be nutritious and not have empty calories
- Look good and taste good
- Be child-size so that children can hold it easily
- Be enough food but not too much
- Be changed occasionally to avoid monotony
- Be something children like and is fun to eat

- Be low in fat (especially hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated fats found in cookies and chips)
- Have enough fiber (at least 2 grams per serving)
- Be made (preferably) from whole, unprocessed foods

The following snack items are nutritious, healthy and are favorites with kids. Be creative! Try your own variations.



- Milk, Soya milk
- 100% fresh fruit juice in boxes or pouches
- Applesauce
- Jello snacks
- Low fat puddings
- Granola type cereal bars with oatmeal
- Whole grain cereals like Cheerios, Honey Nut or Shredded Wheat
- Low fat cheese and crackers
- Light microwave popcorn or air popped popcorn (not salted or buttered)
- Plain yogurt



- Yogurt mixed with fresh fruit puree or berries on top
- Cheese (Cubes, Sticks and Slices)
- Mini muffins (bran, banana or blueberry)
- Trail mix (in limited quantities)



- Pretzels, preferably lightly-salted
- Whole grain bagels and breads
- Baked vegetable chips (not fried)



- Fruits such as apple, apricot, banana, grapefruit, orange, peach, pear, pineapple, plum, tangerine, kiwi, watermelon, cherries or berries
- Vegetables such as carrot, celery, cucumber, grape tomato, green pepper or red pepper strips, broccoli florets or cauliflower florets with low fat dressing



- Peach or pear “cups” filled with frozen yogurt
- Frozen juice bars
- Rice cakes (small or large) with peanut butter or cheese
- Popcorn cakes (caramel or cheddar cheese)

- Peanut butter and jelly (PBJ) sandwiches
- Celery with one tablespoon peanut butter



- Graham crackers with milk
- Scone, buns or fruit cake
- Soy nuts, chopped dates or dried nuts such as raisins, walnuts, almonds

Nutrition and Taste: An Important Combination

Nutritious snacks should also be tasty. **Kids will not eat boring recipes!** Here are some delicious snack recipes that provide your children with nutritious ingredients.



Tortillas stuffed with fillings such as:

Cream cheese with
grated or shredded vegetables

A little melted cheese (Fold the tortilla
over the cheese, cut into wedges and dip
them in salsa.)

Low fat dressing and vegetables

Peanut butter and sliced banana or
fruit of your choice

Homemade mango chutney

Cheese and fruit slices

Any filling of your own choice

Pita bread stuffed with fillings such as:

- Low fat dressing and shredded vegetables
- Greek salad, panzanella salad or any salad of your choice

Whole grain bread sandwiches with fillings such as:

- Hummus with tomato and cucumber
- Vegetable sandwich chutney
- Cream cheese and carrots
- Cheese and cucumber

Homemade pizzas with toasted bread, muffins, bagels or crackers as a base and toppings of vegetables and cheese. You can also make cold pizzas with salad dressing, fresh vegetables and parmesan cheese.

Be a Role Model

There are so many wonderful ideas to get your kids to eat healthy. All you have to do is use your imagination and provide kids with what they like to eat rather than giving them boring food! Here are a few points to keep in mind as you encourage your children to eat healthy.

- ✓ Have regular family meals
- ✓ Be a role model
- ✓ Serve a variety of healthy foods & snacks

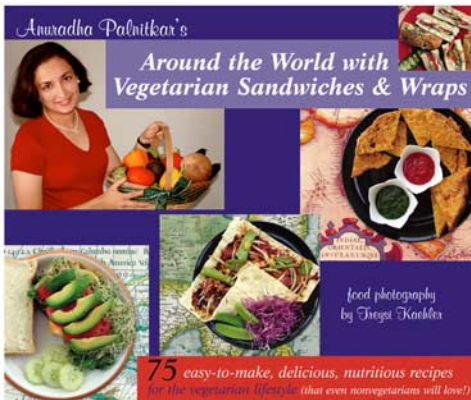
- ✓ Choose whole grain breads and cereals
- ✓ Limit fat intake by avoiding fried foods
- ✓ Limit sugary drinks
- ✓ Incorporate fruits and vegetables and aim for 5 servings a day

Proper nutrition in childhood will reinforce life-long healthy eating habits. Your guidance will contribute to your kids' overall well-being and will help them lead a healthy life.

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Anuradha Palnitkar is an expert on vegetarian cooking and is the author of **Around the World with Vegetarian Sandwiches and Wraps**. The taste-tempting, easy-to-make recipes in this collection are based on her fifteen years experience cooking ethnic foods from all over the globe including Italian, Thai, Chinese, Middle Eastern, Greek, Indian, Persian, Mexican and American delicacies.

A vegetarian from birth, Anuradha has a passion for creating vegetarian recipes that delight the palate and are healthy to eat. She has traveled to 16 countries outside the United States, including Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Kenya, Seychelles, Australia, India, England, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, France, Mexico and Canada. During her travels, she has studied the local cooking styles and has adapted those styles for vegetarian cooking.

Anuradha holds a B.S. in Nutritional Science from the University of Delhi, India and an M.S. in Nutritional Science from San Jose State University in Silicon Valley, California. You can reach Ms. Palnitkar at anu@vegetariansandwiches.com.

www.vegetariansandwiches.com



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