

2nd part

Nutrition for kids

1. Does a vegetarian kid need supplements to grow up healthy?

There is no straight forward answer to this... if the child is following a balanced vegetarian diet including a variety of foods including dairy foods and eggs, additional supplements are not usually required.

2. What about a vegan one?

Children following a vegan diet, or avoiding certain important nutrients such as dairy foods, may require supplements. Such children should be advised individually by a paediatric dietitian.

3. Is there any connection between nutrition and allergies?

Yes, some allergies are directly related to food, for example allergies to milk, eggs, wheat and nuts. In most cases the symptoms result from a reaction to the ingestion of a particular food. However some allergies are due to other non-food items such as house dust mite. If you suspect your child is allergic to a certain food, it is best to consult with a specialist medical doctor to diagnose and advise regarding appropriate management.

4. Should we force our kids to eat? (What and when)

No, parents should not force-feed or use food as a reward or punishment. It is normal for young children to have 'off' days when they are not keen to eat certain meals or foods. If they are otherwise healthy and growing well this is no cause for concern. Sometimes some simple tips may help, for example:

- Offer regular meals and snack, as this is better than letting your child 'pick' throughout the day. Young children generally need 3 meals and 2-3 nutritious snacks.
- Sit together at the table and try to eat at the same time as your child as he/she will learn from watching what you do. Mealtimes should be a social occasion.
- Use brightly coloured plates and cups. Present food in fun and attractive ways.
- Make mealtimes a time of enjoyment and learning. Let your baby play with food to get familiar with it.
- Try to eat in a calm relaxed area. Some talk and play can keep your baby interested at mealtimes, but avoid other distractions, such as television.
- Try not to rush meals, your child may be slow to eat, yet try not to let meals drag on for too long.
- As your baby gets older, give him/her his/her own spoon to hold while you feed him/her. This helps encourage self-feeding. Also, offer finger foods to help develop hand skills.
- Give small portions at meal times – if these are finished praise your child and offer more. Avoid offering alternatives if a food is refused.
- Offer new foods with known favourites.
- Avoid fizzy drinks, squash and milk, as well as snacks such as biscuits and cakes, between meals; also avoid giving snacks close to meal times as these can fill your child up and reduce their appetite at meal times.
- Milk is a nutritious drink but should not be used as a substitute for meals. After the age of 1 year, milk is best offered as a drink after meals.

If children regularly refuse important foods or if it is affecting the child's growth extra advice should be sought. Try not to show that you are worried or annoyed but do show your child that you

are pleased when they do eat.

5. Do we know what they should eat or do they know better?

Its a balance between both... children do need some guidance from parents to ensure their diet is balanced with a variety of foods. Children often have a preference for sweet or salty foods and so may choose to eat a less appropriate diet themselves. If your child is generally eating and growing well, they usually regulate their appetite appropriately, and so if they insist they have had enough at a meal time, it is probable ok to accept this.

6. Is sugar and chocolate any good in kids?

I would not be concerned about occasional small amounts of these foods once the rest of the diet is healthy and balanced. Children are growing at a fast rate and so they do require rich sources of calories. I do not restrict sugar intake when it is contained within normal foods but adding extra sugar to foods is not recommended. Also chocolate is not essential so parents don't need to feel they should give it to their children. Healthier alternatives such as dried fruit as snacks would be preferable. If children do include sugary foods good dental care is especially important and in particular it is imporant that they avoid frequent exposure of teeth to sugar and sugary foods.

7. Is it important to consume ecological products with babies and kids?

Not so sure...the main priority for me is that children are following a healthy balanced diet with a mix of foods from each food group

- Meat/fish/eggs/pulses
- Milk/cheese/yoghurt
- Vegetables/fruit
- Potatoes/rice/pasta/bread

Link to the Spanish version of the interview:

<http://www.babog.org/2010/03/23/entrevista-a-la-experta-en-nutricion-roberta-mccarthy-ii-nutricion-en-ninos>