

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES FOR KIDS: PARENTS AND CHILDREN FAQ's

CHILDRENS FAQ's

Everyone keeps telling me what I should eat or not eat to stay healthy, but I am never sick, so my diet must be OK – isn't that right ?

It is important to eat a wide range of, nutrients - protein, carbohydrates, fats, as well as vitamins and minerals. This is important for your health, appearance and energy now and in the future.

Just as there are a wide variety of essential nutrients, there are lots of different food and daily diet options to ensure you are getting adequate amounts of these nutrients, variety is the key. You can take guidance from the food pyramid on this website (click on <http://www.afic.org/Food%20Pyramid.htm>). The pyramid illustrates that the daily diet for children and adults should include plenty of complex carbohydrate foods, and generous proportions of fruit and vegetables. Aim also to include every day, smaller quantities of protein foods such as fish, lean meats, nuts, beans and pulses, eggs, soya foods, high calcium foods such as calcium-enriched soy milk and



tofu, and/or dairy products. Small portions of high fat foods and high sugar foods are OK occasionally, but aim to eat these foods only 2 or 4 times a week.

I am 13 and play a lot of sport at school and keep being told to drink plenty. What is the best drink to have?

It is wonderful to here you are very interested in sport at school. Teachers and parents are right about the importance of getting enough fluids. Water is a good choice to keep you hydrated, but other drinks are OK too, especially if you are exercising heavily and need to replace electrolytes as well as water lost in perspiration. In this instance also consider fruit juices and sports drinks.



Remember not to wait until you are thirsty before you drink, because thirst indicates the body is already dehydrated which is not good for health, exercise endurance or sporting performance. Particularly in hot weather, it is imperative you keep drinking plenty of fluids and every fifteen minutes is a good guideline to work by.

My friend drinks a lot of fizzy drinks, is this bad for you?

As a general rule, its better to consumer a variety of food and drinks, rather than rely heavily on any one type of food or beverage. Depending on height and weight, we should all aim to drink at least six glasses of fluid per day and more if you are exercising and/

or the weather is hot. Water is a good choice, but for those who find it difficult to drink the recommend volumes a variety of flavours and drinks might help to achieve recommended daily intakes.



There is no reason why your friend should not enjoy fizzy drinks occasionally. However, regular soft drinks and fruit juices are quite high in calories (150-170 kcalories per serving), so if your friend is overweight, this is a good reason to switch to low-calorie or lite drinks, and water which has no calories. Other options are tea (iced or hot), coffee, smoothies, and cordials (sweetened with sugar or low-calorie sweeteners), and dairy or soy milk (flavoured or plain). It's a very

good idea to continue drinking dairy or high-calcium soya milk through childhood, teenage years and adulthood, as the calcium in these drinks will build strong bones and teeth, so do encourage your friend to replace some of the fizzy drinks with high-calcium ones instead.



I always get up late and never have time for breakfast, what should I do?

Breakfast is especially important to children. Children (and adults) who eat breakfast are more likely to have better concentration, problem solving skills and eye

hand co-ordination. Those who eat breakfast are also less likely to miss school days due to sickness, which can only be good!

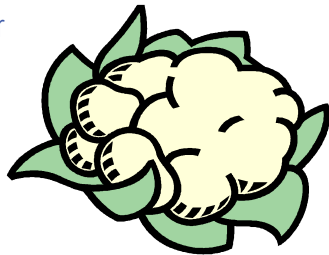
Breakfast need not be time consuming to prepare- cold breakfast

such as cereal and milk, or fruit and crackers are a great start to the day. If you find it difficult to eat breakfast before you leave home, then why not grab something you can eat on the way for example carton of dairy or soy milk and muesli bar, or sandwich and fruit juice?



I have decided to be a vegan, but my mom doesn't think it's healthy, can you explain?

A vegan is a person who does not eat any foods that contain animal products. This means no beef, chicken, fish, pork or veal; no milk, cheese, butter or eggs, relying instead on plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains and legumes for all their nutritional needs.

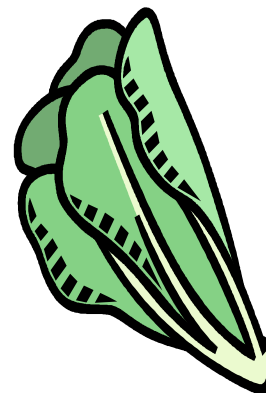
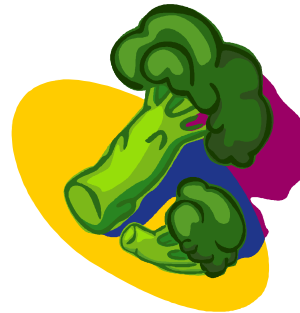


Some vegetarians avoid meat, but may include fish, eggs and/or milk.

It is possible to maintain a healthy balanced diet, as a vegan or as a vegetarian, but it takes lots of careful planning and some quite detailed knowledge about

nutrition. Nutritional needs of children and young people who are still growing are quite high, and those who avoid animal products much take especial care to be sure they are getting enough calcium, iron, zinc and some vitamins such as B12 as these can be quite low in diets based on only plant foods. It may be wise to make an appointment to see a qualified dietician for a professional assessment of the nutritional quality of your diet, and for advice on how to ensure it is balanced.

Suggest you talk to your mum about why you want to avoid certain foods; discuss how your diet preferences can fit in with the rest of the family's meals, and what steps you can both take to ensure that your diet contains all the essential nutrients needed.

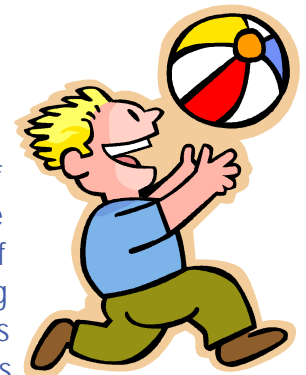


How much physical activity should I be doing?

For good health, children and young people need at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity most days of the week but ideally, every day. This total

can include a variety of activities such as participating in sports, disco dancing or martial arts such as tae kwondo, biking, running, swimming, walking and even "active chores" such as raking leaves, vacuuming and dusting. In addition, for healthy muscles and bones, kids should participate in strengthening exercises twice each week. These activities include push-ups, pull-ups, gymnastics - and they needn't be in a gym at home, in the playground is fine.

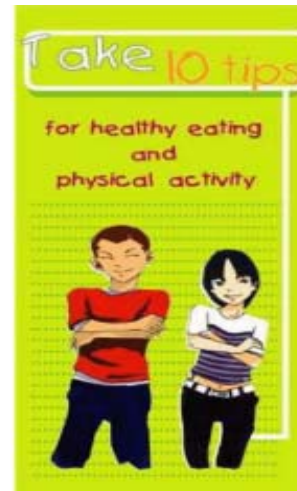
The 60 minutes a day doesn't have to be in long session to enjoy the benefit. Shorter chunks such as 30 minutes of walking, 10 minutes of bike riding and 20 minutes of active play such as jumping rope or playing tag works just as well. These activities are more fun with others so



be sure to get your friends and family involved as well.

Why is it important for kids to be physically active?

There are lots of reasons why children and young people need plenty of physical activity every day. Being active promotes healthy bones, muscles and joints, builds endurance and muscle strength, makes it easier to maintain a healthy weight and even helps you to feel good about yourself. In addition, regular physical activity will massively increase your chances of a healthy life as an adult.



P.S. AFIC's Take 10 Tips for healthy eating and physical activity leaflet has more ideas on healthy lifestyles, and can be viewed and downloaded by clicking on <http://www.afic.org/emp/Children%20%20Healthy%20Tips.pdf>



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