Nutrition

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Today we live a life of conveniences, children can stay inside all day playing video games or chatting with friends via computer or cellular phone. The average school age child often does not get the recommended sixty minutes of physical activity. Fast food value meals for the whole family is often as cheap if not cheaper than preparing a home cooked meal. In 2009 it was recorded that in 58.9 percent of two parent families, both the mother and father are employed. Also, in 2006, 12.9 million families in the U.S. were headed by a single-parent. With this much responsibility and only so much time in the day it is not surprising that families are cutting corners at home to save time. Unfortunately a lot of this time is cut from food preparation time.

I have seen too many parents who do not engage in physical activity with their child due to the adults lack of physical fitness. Without good physical activity and good nutrition at a young age, children are less likely to develop healthy habits for themselves. Remember, you as a parent are a huge role model to your children. Take a moment and look in the mirror, are you comfortable with your children growing up to look and act like you?

Nutrition directly before a competition and directly after a competition is the most crucial, the closer you get to beginning your workout your body needs large easily digestible amounts of glucose in the form of simple carbohydrates to keep your blood sugar and energy up during exertion. Post workout the body needs to recover, this is a great time for a small meal or drink that has a ratio of 60% carbohydrate, 40% protein and some added electrolytes. This will ensure your body can adequately recover what was lost on the field.

Now here are some simple recommendations ensure your child is receiving adequate nutrition. A perfect diet is a long debated topic which could span several articles but this will help you form a good basis for your child's diet.

1. Eat something upon awakening. Breakfast, is by far the most important meal of the day, include a protein source (eggs, yogurt, turkey bacon, turkey sausage). Protein will provide your child with the long lasting energy to keep them focused throughout the day and it is also the building blocks for formation of new tissues in the growing body.
2. Eat several small meals throughout the day. Eating too much at one time overloads your body with excess calories which it cannot use at that time and they are stored as fat. This also helps regulate blood glucose levels which can prevent mood changes related to a high blood sugar (hyperactive), or a low blood sugar(sluggish, light headed, moody).
3. Each meal should be balanced with a source of protein, carbohydrates, and healthy fats. Your body needs a mix of these three macronutrients to adequately function. These nutrients should come from whole foods, not processed.
4. Avoid "fake" foods. The longer the ingredient list and the harder the ingredients are to pronounce, most likely the worse the food is for you. Highly processed foods are packed with cheap calorie sources that are harder for your body to use adequately.
5. Each meal should include vegetables or fruits. These are high in fiber which slows the uptake of calories to the bloodstream. A slow continuous flow of calories to the bloodstream is much better than a sudden fast flow. The only time it is appropriate for a low fiber high energy food intake is after athletic competition or a long period of physical activity at which point the body needs to rapidly replace the nutrients and calories lost.
6. Generally the more colorful the food the better it is for you. (Except when these colors are artificially added. Red licorice and cheese curls are not that healthy!) Colorful fruits and vegetables receive their colors from phytochemicals, scientists are still discovering all the health benefits of these nutrients.
7. Eat a SMALL meal of protein and fat before bed. Hopefully your child is sleeping the recommended eight hours and during this period the child's body is busy repairing itself and of course growing. This requires a lot of fuel and a small meal of protein and fats will provide the slowly absorbed energy to aide the patient over this period.

8. Adequate fluid intake. It is hot out and our body's are hard at work attempting to remain cool. Heat is dissipated largely by excretion of fluids (sweat) from the body. To replace this your body needs to remain adequately hydrated. Clear fluids (water) are best. Caffeine in soft drinks, coffee, energy drinks and most teas will further dehydrate the body.

Inadequate amounts of energy, moodiness, age inappropriate growth, recurrent illnesses and slow healing injuries are common signs that the body is not getting adequate nutrition. If your child is suffering from any of these check to see if your child's diet follows the above guidelines. If you need further nutrition advice I implore you to visit one of our clinics where we can further consult with you concerning your child's nutrition.

About the author;

Callan Martin is currently a Trimester nine student at Logan College of Chiropractic. He interns at the Biofreeze Rehabilitation Center in Chesterfield and is a Senior Intern at Logan College's Bogey Hills Health Center off Zumbehl Rd. in St. Charles.

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