

Kids and Nutrition

Did you know that less than 1% of teenage boys meet USPA daily intake of fruits and vegetables? Did you also know that half the children ages 2-18 are consuming less than one serving of fruit per day? Kids need to be taught about nutrition because unhealthy eating hurts their bodies and teeth, can cause chronic diseases, and leads to unhealthy weight. I believe that it is important for kids to be taught about nutrition.

A girl my age needs these things: fruits -1 ½ cups per day, grains-5oz per day, vegetables-2 cups a day, protein-5oz per day, and last there is dairy-3 cups per day. Red fruits and vegetables keep your heart strong. Orange fruits and vegetables keep your eyes healthy. Yellow fruits and vegetables keep you from getting sick. Green fruits and vegetables make bones and teeth strong. Blue and purple fruits and vegetables help your memory. In fact, a well balanced diet will give kids the nutrition they need to stay healthy and strong.

However, you might be thinking, “Well what’s the big deal? Why can’t kids just eat what they want?” The problem with that is many kids do not realize how much sugar, oil, and salt are in foods that they eat every day. A typical hamburger has 5 grams of sugar, 5 teaspoons of salt, and 10 teaspoons of oil! Finally, just one slice of pizza can have 1 gram of sugar, 4 teaspoons of salt, and 6 teaspoons of oil, furthermore a regular donut has 5 grams of sugar, 1 teaspoon of salt, and 4 teaspoons of oil. Although these things are delicious, they should be eaten in moderation. Young children may not understand that their bodies need nourishing food and allowing them to make food choices may not be the best idea.

When kids don’t learn how to eat healthy it can affect their whole lives. For example, my Grandma Has Type 2 Diabetes and has to give herself shots every day. This could have been

prevented if she learned to make healthy choices when she was younger. This is where adults can be role models for their kids. According to Dr. Elana Pearl Ben-Joseph at Kids Health, “The best way for you to encourage healthy eating is to eat well yourself. Kids will follow the lead of the adults they see every day. By eating fruits and vegetables and not overindulging in the less nutritious stuff, you'll be sending the right message.” She also states that letting kids shop for food and make meals with you “can help prepare them to make good decisions on their own about the foods they want to eat. That's not to say they'll suddenly want a salad instead of french fries, but the mealtime habits you help create now can lead to a lifetime of healthier choices.”

So why should kids learn about nutrition? To improve their diet, help them maintain a healthy weight, and to prevent chronic diseases like diabetes. Next time instead of grabbing that small milkshake try making a healthy fruit smoothie instead. Learning to eat nutritious foods at home will help kids develop into healthy teenagers and adults. By teaching kids about nutrition, we can improve their lives and help them make the right choice to eat healthy.