

Nutritional Requirements for Children

As parents, it is very important to us that our children are healthy and happy. It is difficult, however, to find the time to acquire the knowledge about **what** our children should be eating, particularly with conflicting commercial information, and to **find the time** to apply what we know into nutritional meals for the family. According to Michael Pollan and other experts, we and our children need to "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants." (*In Defense of Food*). This means that we EAT healthy, raw food, not that we buy processed food because it says it has a nutrient (like B-6) in it. Examples of healthy foods would be green, leafy vegetables (preferably organic), broccoli, wild fish (not farm raised, like wild salmon) beans and fruit. In reality, as Americans, even if we do KNOW what to feed our children, buy those groceries, and cook healthy meals, it is still likely that our children require supplements to develop healthy AND happy (yes; what we eat affects our mood). This document is designed to help and draws research from various nutritional doctors and experts. These supplements are available at local health food stores and at Happy Brain Counseling, L.L.C., for a reduced cost.

Create a consistent wake time.

Children should awaken each weekday at a consistent time with enough time to get ready for school and eat breakfast without feeling rushed or harried. A negative environment in the morning can set a bad mood for the entire day and inhibit learning.

Breakfast should include protein and supplements with minimal processed sugar.

Good sources of protein are eggs or Greek yogurt. Protein helps with impulse control and promotes a balanced production of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine. A lack of protein (tyrosine and/or tryptophan) can cause symptoms of anxiety, depression and ADHD. Protein supplements may be taken (500mg tyrosine or 50mg 5-HTP for children) at bedtime. Milk and eggs should be organic to reduce hormone and chemical consumption. Fruit, such as bananas or blueberries, should also be included in a healthy breakfast.



Morning supplements:

B-50 Complex, 1 tablet

500 mg of Omega 3

These two supplements should be taken with breakfast. These supplements give the body and the brain energy to develop and learn. Fish oil (Omega 3) is the most important nutrient and is the first line treatment for ADD or ADHD and other disorders. The quality of Omega 3 is important for it to be effective and not harmful. Omega 3 should have 500 mg of EPA and DHA and go through molecular distillation to be free of mercury and pesticide. Once open it should be refrigerated. Liquid Omega 3 can be added to juice or milk for those children who do not like to take pills.

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Exercise every day.

Children should exercise daily, preferably outside, weather permitting. Exercise helps with mood balance, mental focus, overall health and promotes social skills. Daily sunlight is very important for healthy bones and mood.

Lunch and dinner should consist of plants and protein.

What we eat, our daily diet, is very important as we grow and to develop a healthy mind and body. Habits of healthy eating begin the last two months of pregnancy and during childhood. Children need nutrient rich foods, such as green vegetables (e.g. broccoli, fresh spinach), beans, fish, legumes, nuts (such as almonds), whole grains (barley, oats) and fruit (e.g. bananas or berries). A lack of these foods in the day-to-day diet will cause deficiencies. For instance, a lack of green vegetables, beans and nuts can cause magnesium deficiencies which can cause high blood pressure, constipation, muscle tension (e.g. headaches, migraines, fibromyalgia). Magnesium supplements can be taken (300 mg daily for children and 150 mg if magnesium citrate is used). Milk should be a regular part of a children's diet (preferably organic) for adequate vitamin D and calcium. Vitamin D is often deficient and 5000 IUs (of D3 with K2) should be taken to supplement. Low levels of vitamin D is associated with depression, bone/joint weakness, poor immune system, and poor cardiovascular health. Calcium is acquired through dairy, tofu, leafy greens, broccoli and supplements (including Tums). It is important to note that no more than 1,200 mg per day of calcium should be consumed so supplements are not recommended. Excess calcium can cause imbalance of other nutrients like reduced magnesium and zinc and can lead to hardening of the arteries.



Consistent bedtime routine.

Children need 10 hours of sleep each night and should have a consistent bedtime routine. Happy Brain recommends the following:

7:30 pm - Bath time. Read a book (or have a parent read to you) in the bath or once in bed.

No electronics after bath time.

Expected hygiene requirements: brush teeth and hair.

Get organized for the next morning (school bag, clothes for the next day, attend to documents that need to be signed by a parent, etc.).

8:30 pm - Bed time. During childhood a natural circadian rhythm should be established from a consistent bedtime and waking time. Bed time needs to be peaceful, relaxing.

Candles and/or white noise (running water, a fan, iPhone app) can be used to encourage restfulness and relaxation. If children or teenagers have a difficult time falling to sleep, 1 mg of melatonin may be taken to encourage this natural restful state. To learn more about the circadian rhythm. See:

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/sleep-topics/sleep-drive-and-your-body-clock>.