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Reach Out and Connect: Workshop # 34 Child Nutrition What to Know Part 1



We are excited to have Dr. Aneeqa Babar, a pediatric resident at Staten Island University Hospital. She is here with us to answer parents' top questions on child nutrition from her medical perspective.

Q: Why is eating healthy foods important, especially for young children under 5?

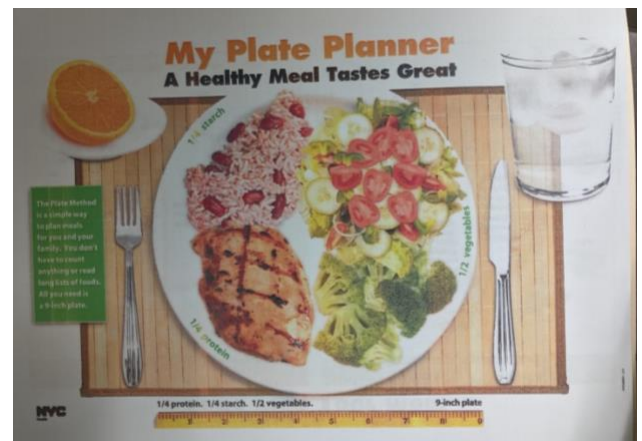
- Children from 1-4 years old need to eat well to establish good eating patterns, prevent childhood obesity, ensure they grow and develop appropriately, to protect their teeth and to ensure they arrive in school at a healthy body weight able to enjoy a variety of minimally processed foods.
- Start these health habit while your children are young so they grow up with the expectations that they will eat vegetables and a healthy balance of foods.

Q: How can parents encourage healthy eating?

- Set a good example by eating fruits and vegetables yourself. Your kids will pick up on your choices and follow your example. Also remember to show your child the importance of being active regularly by exercising – you and your child can exercise together!

Q: What healthy foods do you suggest? How much of our child's diet should be fruits and vegetables?

- Newborn babies are still breastfeeding or drinking formula. Check out this [newborn feeding guide](#).
- [For toddlers and preschoolers](#), generally a healthy plate of food looks like this; $\frac{1}{4}$ starch, $\frac{1}{4}$ protein, and $\frac{1}{2}$ vegetables. Good examples of starch are rice, potatoes, oatmeal, breads, or cereal. Examples of protein are beef, chicken, fish, or eggs. Examples of vegetables are broccoli, green beans, carrots, or lettuce.
- Sweet treats can have a place in your child's diet but limited and in moderation.



Q: Do you suggest special diets like vegetarian, vegan, or gluten-free diets?

- We recommend healthy eating and these diets can be healthy for children. However, these are not the only ways to be healthy. Eating meat and foods with gluten can also be healthy. As with everything it's important to have a diet with a variety of foods.
- If your child is following a vegetarian diet, make sure they are still getting enough protein from eggs and dairy products. If your child is on a gluten free diet, make sure they are still getting enough B vitamins, antioxidants, iron, selenium, and magnesium.
- If your child has celiac disease or an allergy to gluten, it is important to cut gluten from their diet.

Q: My child is a picky eater. How can I make eating healthy fun?

- **Stick to a meal routine:**
 - This helps your child know what to expect and helps them to keep from snacking constantly throughout the day.
- **Introduce new foods slowly and be patient**
 - Give them small portions to start and then slowly increase as they body gets used to it. Young children often touch or smell new foods and might even put tiny bits in their mouths and then take them back out again.
 - Encourage your child by talking about a food's color, shape, smell, and texture — not whether it tastes good. Serve new foods along with your child's favorite foods. Keep serving your child healthy choices until they become familiar and preferred.
- **Don't be a short order cook**
 - Preparing a separate meal for your child after he or she rejects the original meal might promote picky eating. Encourage your child to stay at the table for the designated mealtime — even if they do not eat.
- **Make it fun**
 - Serve broccoli and other veggies with a favorite dip or sauce. Cut foods into various shapes with cookie cutters. Offer breakfast foods for dinner. Serve a variety of brightly colored foods.
- **Recruit your child's help**
 - Make the kids a big part of mealtime. At the grocery store, ask your child to help you select fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods. At home, encourage your child to help you rinse veggies, stir batter, or set the table.



For questions about the information or if you have another workshop topic to suggest, email Kristen Rocha Aldrich at [krochaaldrich@reachoutandreadnyc.org](mailto: krochaaldrich@reachoutandreadnyc.org).