



NUTRITION 101: Providing good nutrition for your child

Why does nutrition matter? Providing your child's body with good nutrition will help their **immune system** work well. This means shorter duration of illness, less frequent illnesses, less allergies, and protection against diseases such as cancer. Good nutrition **improves children's behavior** (less moody, less tantrums). Good nutrition **improves learning** at school and home. Good nutrition **prevents medical problems** such as diabetes, obesity, heart attacks.

What is healthy food? The easiest way to explain healthy nutritious food is that they are **whole foods, non-processed, and not packaged**. Although most parents and grandparents grew up eating many processed foods this is not the best for you or your children. Many people think that drinking fruit juice and eating chicken nuggets or Mac and Cheese is part of a normal healthy childhood diet, unfortunately this is NOT true. Whole foods are foods that are as close to their natural form as possible. Meats, vegetables, fruits, grains, beans/legumes are whole food groups. Although some consider dairy a whole food I consider this as processed. The pasteurization process (boiling to kill bacteria) makes the nutrition in milk very difficult to absorb. Natural cheese and yogurt go through a fermentation process which improves the availability of nutrition. Most yogurt, unfortunately, has some form of added sugar, even plain yogurt!

What does a whole food diet look like? It looks different to different people. What whole foods do you love and are already familiar cooking with? Start there! Breakfast: Eggs with rice, miso soup with veggies, laulau with poi, or cooked oatmeal with fresh berries. Lunch: Poke bowl, musubi with egg or chicken, or green salad with added veggies and nuts. Dinner: Baked chicken with broccoli and rice, beef stew, chili (with or without meat), or pork and peas.

What should I avoid feeding my child? Avoid feeding them processed food and processed drinks! Examples are fruit juices, soda, sport's drinks, pizza, chips, cookies, chicken nuggets, gold fish, etc. Basically, anything in a package is likely to be processed. The problem of processed food/drink boils down to added sugar, preservatives, and hydrogenated oils/fats. These ingredients may taste good, but they cause constant damage to your body. They don't provide the best vitamins for absorption. They can cause constipation. They weaken your immune system.

How much added sugar is ok? Ideally, most days your children should have NO added sugar. Currently the American Heart Association recommends less than 25g of added sugar per day for children ages 2-18. They are currently the only "expert" panel making a recommendation regarding added sugar. Although it's helpful as a starting point, I disagree that a 2 year old and

an 18 year old should consume the same amount of daily added sugar. An example of 25g of added sugar is a 1/2 cup orange juice and 1 small package of fruit snacks. As you can imagine the average child is eating much more than 25g of added sugar every day!

- Ideas to help your family move away from added sugar:**
- Understand why added sugar is a problem and teach it to your children.
 - Think of new ways to celebrate WITHOUT added sugar.
 - Learn to make healthy treats using whole foods.
 - Don't buy food/drink for your house with added sugar.
 - Try a completely sugar free period (7-21 days) to stop cravings and change how healthy foods taste to you
 - Take small steps: start off eliminating juice and soda. Next try eating a whole food breakfast every day, then start to change snack foods and treats.

How do I get my child to eat healthy food? Like everything else, the best way to teach children to eat healthy is to model the behavior yourself. When parents and grandparents eat

