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## Effects of good nutrition on children's behavior

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### Abstract

Good nutrition throughout life is essential to good health. Eating a healthy diet can help reduce the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, some cancers, obesity, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, osteoporosis and tooth decay.

Poor diet and nutrition is a major cause of ill-health and premature death in Scotland. After smoking, poor eating habits are the second major cause of poor health and chronic disease in Scotland. The two leading causes of death in Scotland are cancer and coronary heart disease (CHD). Having a healthy diet, alongside being physically active, is one of the most important ways of reducing the risk of many types of cancer. Increasing consumption of fruit and vegetables can significantly reduce the risk of many chronic diseases.

The influence of diet and nutrition on health and wellbeing begins pre-conception, with maternal diet being found to play a role in health in later life. In childhood and young adulthood, healthy eating is vital to brain and body development and the formation of eating habits in early years is important. There are growing concerns about poor nutrition and diet among children and young people, including increased consumption of foods high in saturated fats, added sugar, NMES (non-milk extrinsic sugar) and salt. An associated issue is the rising level of overweight and obesity among children and later as adults.

**Keywords:** Eating healthy affect your physical, mental & social health, importance of good nutrition for kids, conclusion

### Introduction

If you think your child behaves differently, for better or worse, after eating certain foods, you might be right. According to MayoClinic.com, ingredients in the food your child eats fuel many of the factors that affect her behavior. Kids who eat healthy are able to cope with stress and regulate their emotions better, says the American Psychological Association.

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### What is Good Nutrition

Good nutrition is necessary for healthy development and lifelong wellbeing for children, reports the APA. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 recommends that children age 2 and older follow a healthy eating plan that includes fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean

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proteins and fat-free and low-fat dairy products. The guidelines also recommend that children limit intake of saturated fats, trans fatty acids, cholesterol, sodium, added sugars and refined grains.

### **Behavior**

The Prevention Institute reports that good nutrition not only contributes to young children's physical development, but affects their cognitive development as well. Children who consume unhealthy foods can have trouble concentrating, become easily fatigued, listless or irritable and are likely to face difficulties in learning, which can lead to behavioral and social problems. Establishing healthy eating habits early in your child's life can lead to good behavior as they move into adulthood, according to APA.

### **ADHD**

The APA defines attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, as a developmental disorder that affects the behavior, attention and learning of children. A study published in the journal "Pediatrics" looked at the role of diet for treatment of children with ADHD. After comparing 70 studies on diet-based treatments for ADHD, the authors suggest healthy eating could help kids reduce their ADHD symptoms. "A greater attention to the education of parents and children in a healthy dietary pattern, omitting items shown to predispose to ADHD, is perhaps the most promising and practical complementary or alternative treatment of ADHD," said study authors.

### **Mood**

U.S. News and World Report Health reports that certain foods can affect mood. These foods can trigger chemical and physiological changes within the brain that alter your child's behavior. If your child does not eat regularly, get enough complex carbohydrates, get enough omega-3 fatty acids or consumes too much fat or not enough iron, she could experience mood swings causing her to become cranky, tired and depressed, which can influence her behavior.

### **Eating Healthy Affect Your Physical, Mental & Social Health**

A healthy diet can benefit your physical, mental and social well-being in powerful ways. While the specifics vary, such a diet tends to emphasize nutritious whole foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and fish. It also provides sufficient amounts of calories, without going overboard, and ideally brings you enjoyment as well. Keep in mind that nutritional steps should never replace needed medical treatment. Especially if you have a health condition, talk to your doctor before making significant changes to your eating plan.

### **Physical Health Benefits**

It's no surprise that eating well affects your body in positive ways. A study published in *Progress in Cardiovascular Diseases* in 2015 analyzed the effects of three diets: a Mediterranean diet supplemented with nuts, a Mediterranean diet supplemented with olive oil and a low-fat, calorie-restricted diet. The most health benefits emerged from the Mediterranean diets, which improved blood pressure levels, insulin sensitivity, inflammation and other markers of heart disease.

Upping your fruit and vegetable intake may help protect you from cancer, while supporting your immune system. Eating

enough overall calories per day – ideally as part of balanced meals and snacks at regular time intervals – can help keep you energized. Healthy foods can even improve your sleep, which plays an important role in weight control.

### **Mental Health Benefits**

A healthy diet can have beneficial effects on your psyche. Eating when you're hungry and stopping when you're satisfied can help keep your blood sugar and energy levels in check, which promotes positive moods and clear thinking. Foods especially helpful for blood sugar control are rich in protein, such as lean meats, quinoa and low-fat yogurt, or rich in fiber, such as lentils, oatmeal and raspberries.

Emerging research has linked a diet focused on improving gut bacteria levels with positive brain development, behavior and moods, according to a 2015 Psychiatry report. To potentially gain these perks, consume a variety of gut-beneficial foods and drinks, such as kefir, miso soup, cruciferous vegetables and berries.

### **Social Health Benefits**

Because eating well can help you feel better physically and emotionally, it can make you more likely to seek and enjoy social activities. A study conducted at the University of Pennsylvania in 2016 linked good nutrition with positive social development in children. Kids who ate healthier diets showed more friendliness and social play than kids who didn't.

If you're prone to social anxiety, limit caffeine, which can really fuel anxiety symptoms, and alcohol, which can also interfere. Instead, stick to an eating pattern rich in nutrients, staying hydrated with beverages such as water, low-fat milk and herbal tea.

### **Importance of Good Nutrition for Kids**

How your child eats today will have a striking impact on her health throughout adolescence and adulthood. Consuming nutritious foods helps children and teens grow, develop, do well academically and feel good about themselves. Good nutrition also helps prevent child and teen issues such as eating disorders, obesity, dental cavities and iron-deficiency anemia.

### **Childhood Obesity Prevention**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 25 percent of all children aged 2 to 18 years now meet the criteria for being overweight. Overweight and obese children are at greater risk for major health issues such as Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, joint pain, high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease. Teaching your child good nutrition habits from a young age can decrease the likelihood he will become overweight. Choosing nutrient-dense foods such as fresh fruit and vegetables over empty-calorie foods such as cookies and sodas can help prevent childhood obesity and provide your child a much higher quality of life.

### **Support Optimal Growth**

Children require a variety of nutrient-dense foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, meat, fish and adequate calories in order to grow and develop properly. It's crucial that your child is consuming the essential nutrients she needs to grow. Calcium is of particular importance for children. An adequate calcium intake promotes optimal bone density which will assist teen growth and reduce the risk of bone loss in later life. The way children eat influences their growth and health

during childhood, during adolescence and for the rest of their lives.

### **Importance of a Hearty Breakfast**

Studies show that children who eat breakfast perform better in school. According to reports from the American Dietetic Association students who eat breakfast have better problem-solving abilities, recall, memory, verbal fluency and creativity. They are also less likely to be absent. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that children who do not eat breakfast, or eat an insufficient breakfast, are more likely to have behavioral, emotional and academic problems at school.

### **Poor Nutrition Consequences**

A healthful diet and good nutrition are crucial in preventing some of the issues inadequate nutrition can cause such as short stature and delayed puberty, nutrient deficiencies and dehydration, menstrual irregularities, poor bone health, increased risk of injuries, poor academic performance and increased risk of eating disorders. Teaching children the importance of good nutrition throughout childhood will lay the foundation for a healthier more fulfilling life.

### **Conclusion**

Children's eating behaviors are susceptible to many external influences within their families, schools and communities. Currently, many of these influences promote dietary patterns that predispose to obesity. Fortunately, these influences can also act to promote healthy dietary practices. Incorporation of the current knowledge concerning the multifaceted influences on children's eating behaviors into evidence-based prevention and intervention efforts is needed to help improve the diet quality and eating behaviors of youth.

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