

## Striking a Balance with Fat in Children's Diets

**CHILDHOOD IS THE BEST TIME** to start healthy eating habits. However, for most children this does not mean following adult goals which restrict total fat, particularly for children younger than 2 years. Fat and cholesterol play important roles in brain and retina development, in fact two-thirds of a child's brain is made up of fat. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under 2 years of age get about half their calories from fat. This is why whole milk is recommended for children 12–24 months of age after weaning from breast milk or formula. After age 2 years, low-fat choices in dairy products is recommended.

All young children need fats, as it is essential for their rapid growth and development:

- fats help the body absorb fat soluble vitamins A, D, E and K
- fats are the building blocks of hormones
- fats insulate all nervous system tissues in the body



The body also uses fat as fuel; it helps supply the energy or “calories” that children need for growth and active play. Fats can add “satiety value” to help one feel full, so they’re less likely to overeat. However, if fats eaten aren’t burned as energy or used as building blocks, they’re stored by the body in fat cells and can cause health problems later in life.

### What High Fat Foods Are Children Eating?

For children, snack foods and desserts, including potato chips, chocolate, cakes, doughnuts, pastries and cookies are primary sources of fat intake. Unfortunately, these foods that are high in fat and calories are lacking in the nutrients that growing bodies require. Children also get

*(continued on page 2)*

### did you know...

- ▶ September is *Fruit and Veggies – More Matters Month*, *Whole Grains Month* and *National Food Safety Month*.
- ▶ In an effort to make food “low-fat,” many food manufacturers replace fat with added sugar.
- ▶ A typical adult has approximately 50 billion fat cells which means there are more fat cells in one human body than there are people on the earth.
- ▶ Approximately 2,200 children die each year from injuries in the home.
- ▶ One in 6 U.S. households didn't have enough money for food last year.

Sources: *Huffington Post*, *Healthline*, *Safe kids*, *SugarScience.org*, *weightlossresources.co.uk*

### Quotable Quotes

“Clean, tasty, real foods do not come processed in boxes or bags; they come from the earth, the sea, the field or the farm.”

– Suzanne Somers

### INSIDE:

- ◆ Home Safety Checklist
- ◆ Tails Activity

- ◆ Recipes
- ◆ Food Funny

# Striking a Balance with Fat in Children's Diets

— Continued from front page

fat from whole-milk products such as cheese, butter and creamy sauces, from highly processed meats, such as bacon, hot dogs and pepperoni and from fattier cuts of meat. In addition, fast-food meals are a daily event for many children and are usually high in fat.

## Types of Fats:

### The Healthy, The Less Healthy and The Ugly

#### 1) The Healthy – Unsaturated fats

These fats found in plant foods and fish, are seen as neutral or even beneficial to heart health, reducing problematic Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL) and raising heart protective High Density Lipoprotein (HDL). The types of unsaturated fats are:

- monounsaturated; found in avocados, nuts, olive, canola, sunflower and safflower oils
- omega-3 fatty acids; heart healthy fat found in oily fish like tuna and salmon and flax seed
- polyunsaturated; found in plant based foods and oils

The Mediterranean diet, rich in unsaturated fats, is thought of as one of the world's healthiest meal plans.

#### 2) The Less Healthy – Saturated fats

Found in meat and other animal products, such as butter, shortening, lard, cheese and whole milk. Saturated fats are also found in palm and coconut oils, often used in commercial baked goods. A few small studies have suggested that coconut oil may be less harmful than other saturated fats, however until this is proven, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute recommends that coconut oil should not replace healthier oils that have known health benefits such as olive oil and canola oil. There is ongoing controversy about the extent to which saturated fats contribute to heart disease, however available research suggests that there are health benefits to replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fat.

#### 3) The Ugly – Trans fats

Now recognized as the most harmful of all dietary fats, trans fats tend to raise the problematic (LDL) while reducing the heart protective (HDL). Trans fats are manufactured to extend the shelf life of processed, packaged foods. They

are found in margarines, commercial snack foods, baked and frozen foods such as cupcakes, cookies, chicken nuggets, fish sticks, French fries and in most fast foods.

In June of 2015, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) deemed that trans fats are not safe in food but the total removal of these fats will not occur until 2018. Until then it is important to read labels for “partially hydrogenated” oils, indicating the product contains trans fat.

## Serving Up Healthier Food Choices

Don't be fooled by the hundreds of packaged “low-fat” snack foods in which fat is replaced with sugar. Also consider portion sizes when assessing how much or how often a food should be eaten. Typical portions are usually far larger than the serving size on the label. For example, a bag of corn chips might list 12 chips as a serving size, but who stops at just twelve!

- Have plenty of naturally low-fat foods, like fruits and vegetables, available and ready to eat.
- Select lean meats, such as fish, skinless chicken and turkey, lean cuts of beef and pork.
- Emphasize healthy oils such as olive and canola oil.
- Choose low fat or fat free options when purchasing milk, cheese and yogurt.
- Use fat-free cooking methods such as baking, grilling or poaching for meat, poultry and fish.
- Limit visits to fast-food restaurants, pack meals for family outings and when dining out make healthy choices with baked, grilled or steamed dishes rather than fried foods.

The best way to teach children healthy eating habits is to be a good example yourself. Make nutritious food a priority in your life by eating a variety of whole foods and less processed foods and by teaching children how to select and prepare healthy meals and snacks. Moderation in all things is key.

— Donna Green R.D.

References: Healthy Children.org, SuperKids Nutrition, KidsHealth.org,

## KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

# Home Safety Checklist

## Keeping Kids Safe, Room by Room

### BATHROOM

#### Water Safety

- Give young children all of your attention when they are in and around water. Check the water temperature with your wrist or elbow before giving your baby a bath.

#### Medication Safety

- Keep all medicine and vitamins out of children's reach and sight, even medicine you take every day.
- Write clear instructions for other caregivers about what medicine to give children, when to give it and how much to give.



- Create and practice a home fire escape plan with your family. Know two ways out of every room in case of a fire.

#### Preventing Burns

- Cook on the back burners of the stove and keep pot handles turned away from the edge. Keep hot foods and liquids away from the edge of counters and tables.

Don't hold a child while cooking on the stove. It's better to put your child in a high chair where you can still see them.

### BEDROOM

#### Sleep Safety

- Make sure babies sleep on their backs and in their own crib. Room sharing is a safer option than having your baby sleep in bed with you.
- Choose a firm mattress and a fitted crib sheet for your baby's crib. Keep cribs clear of toys and soft bedding.

### STAIRS + WINDOWS

#### Preventing Falls

- Use approved safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs, and attach them to the wall, if possible.
- Properly install window guards or stops to help prevent falls from windows.

### KITCHEN

#### Fire and Carbon Monoxide Safety

- Make sure there is a working smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm on every level of your home. Test the batteries every month.

#### Poison Prevention

- Store all household cleaning products and chemicals in their original containers, out of children's reach and sight.
- Save the toll-free Poison Help number into your phone in case of emergency: 1-800-222-1222.

### LIVING ROOM

#### Preventing TV and Furniture Tip-overs

- Mount flat-panel TVs to the wall and place large, box-style TVs on a low, stable piece of furniture.
- Use brackets, braces or wall straps to secure unstable or top-heavy furniture to the wall.

#### Toy Safety

- When choosing a toy or game, read the instructions and warning labels. Make sure the toy is appropriate for your child's age and development.
- Sign up for product recalls at <http://www.safekids.org/product-recalls>.

#### Preventing Choking and Strangulation

- Keep small objects out of children's reach and sight. Look for and remove small items that are at your child's eye level.
- Keep cords and strings out of children's reach, including those attached to window blinds.

— Adapted from *Safety Kids Nationwide, Nationwide*

## Unfried Fish Sticks

Cod or halibut fillets .....	1 pound
Salt and pepper .....	to taste
Vegetable oil .....	2 Tbsp
Panko breadcrumbs .....	2 cups
Eggs, beaten .....	3
Lemon wedges	

1. Cut the fish into fingers about ¾ inch wide. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Rub the oil on a sheet tray and preheat it in a 450°F oven.
3. Have 2 shallow bowls set up, one with the panko crumbs and one with the eggs. First dip the fish in the panko crumbs, then in the egg and finally back in the panko to coat.
4. Arrange the fish on the preheated baking sheet. Bake for 5 minutes, then turn fish and continue baking 5 minutes more. Serve with lemon wedges.

Yield: 8 servings

Meets requirement for protein/meat alternate

— Adapted from *TheChew.com*

## Back-To-School Breakfast Burritos

Using a whole-grain, flour tortilla you can roll up a nutritious, tasty breakfast in a jiffy!

If the tortillas are large, roll them up and slice them in half for two meals in half the time.

Start with fresh, soft tortillas and add your favorite filling:

- Ham and cheese slices
- Peanut butter and banana
- Cream cheese and strawberries
- Scrambled eggs
- Ricotta cheese with apples and cinnamon
- Refried beans and cheese
- Turkey slices and avocado
- Hummus and tomatoes
- Tuna or egg salad

## Activity Corner

### TAILS ACTIVITY

This game will have you chasing after your own tail!



The activity is for 4 or more players and should be played in an open area but have defined boundaries that players need to stay within.

Give one sock to every player. Each player hangs her sock from her back pocket or waistband. (This is her “tail.”) On the word, “go,” each player tries to take the other players’ tails without letting anyone else get hers.

When a player’s tail is taken or falls off, she has to sit down. Even though she’s sitting, she’s not out. She can grab the tail off of anybody who runs by. If she gets somebody’s tail, she can hang it from her back pocket and start running around again. The last player standing wins.

— *Pbskids.org*

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**Food Funny** Q: What did the corn say when he got complimented?  
A: Aww, shucks!