

Nutrition News And Notes

What Parents Should Know About Their Child's Nutrition

(NAPSA)—The more parents learn about the effects of food on children's behavior and health, the better equipped they may be to give their children the food they need to grow strong and healthy.

The first thing many parents need to do is sort out some of the misconceptions that people currently have about some foods.

For example, concerns about kids and sugar consumption are out of sync with current findings. The prevailing reaction of "blame sugar first" is based more on myth than sound medical science. Here are a few myths you may have heard about sugar and the truth about these claims.

Myth #1: Sugar causes hyperactivity

After an enthusiastic chorus of the "Happy Birthday" song and the opening of presents, young party guests shift into high gear.

Some moms believe that "Cake and sugary treats made the kids hyperactive." It's a belief that has been around for decades, but it doesn't stem from scientific evidence.

A 1995 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* confirmed that sugar does not cause hyperactivity. Referring to kids' party-time rowdiness as "hyperactivity" is not an accurate description of the behavior. Kids who are truly hyperactive have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, a diagnosable disorder that's recognized by experts.

When the kids get rowdy at a birthday party or around Halloween, blame the excitement, not the cake and treats.



Parents can relax. Scientific studies prove that many myths about sugar and kids just aren't true. Sugar can be a part of a healthy, balanced diet.

Myth #2: Sugar causes obesity

Maybe you compare your child's weight to a growth chart of ideal weights. Or maybe you've calculated your child's BMI, or Body Mass Index—a calculation that gauges body fat.

No matter how you assess your kids' weight, there's one thing you need to know: Eating sugar doesn't cause obesity.

When the National Academy of Sciences completed a review of scientific literature in 2003, it concluded "there is not a clear and consistent association between increased intakes of added sugars and BMI."

Myth #3: Sugar causes cavities

Folklore points to sugar as the worst thing for kids' teeth. But science says bacteria in the mouth break down all carbohydrates—both starches and sugars. This normal process forms acids that can leach minerals from tooth enamel. Sticky snacks like raisins and other dried fruits, and starchy foods like

breadsticks, cereals and potato chips, linger on teeth and prolong acid production even more than most candies.

Dentists advise reducing between-meal snacks and limiting sweet or sticky foods to meal-times. Regular brushing and flossing, using fluoride toothpaste and mouthwash, and regular dentist visits are the smart foundations for controlling cavities.

The best advice: Eat a balanced diet and exercise regularly.

Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and other fiber-rich foods—plus calcium-rich dairy products—are important centerpieces of your child's diet.

Sugar makes many of those healthy foods palatable. A bowl of fresh berries or homemade oatmeal tastes yummy with a sprinkling of brown sugar.

Foods and beverages that contribute calories but few vitamins and minerals should be considered treat foods.

But just because a food contains sugar does not make it a food to be avoided.

All-natural sugar, with just 15 calories a teaspoon, can certainly be part of a child's active and healthy lifestyle.

Maybe grandma had it right when she said, "Eat a little of everything on your plate and then go out and play."

For more information on the real facts about sugar, visit www.sugar.org.

For a copy of "Should you be concerned about your child eating sugar?" send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Children and Sugar, The Sugar Association, 1101 15th Street, NW, Ste. 600, Washington, DC 20005.