

Pointers For Parents

Teaching Your Children Healthy Eating Habits

(NAPSA)—Today's working moms have less time to cook, they're bombarded by fast food ads and obesity is on the rise in America. In this challenging environment, how can parents ensure that children are well-nourished and they're learning healthy eating habits?

"Attitudes formed in childhood help establish lifelong health habits," says Barbara Anderson, Ed. D., vice president of education for KinderCare Learning Centers, which operates more than 1,250 early childhood education and child care centers nationwide. Anderson offers some suggestions to make good family nutrition easier for parents.

Children's basic nutrition needs are similar to those of other family members, although amounts differ because of age. As a rule of thumb, an appropriate serving size for children ages one to six is about a tablespoon of each type of food for every year of the child's age. Offer your child a variety of foods from the basic food groups. The new U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Guide Pyramid for Children is a good source of information at <http://www.usda.gov>.

While parents may be counting calories, children need fat in their diets to provide enough calories and nutrients. Don't restrict fat for children under age two.



Photo credit: KinderCare Learning Centers

Water is essential for children throughout the day. As a percentage of body weight, children have more water in their bodies than adults, so they can become dehydrated more quickly than adults.

Serve meals and snacks on a consistent schedule. It's hard for young children to eat enough in three meals to provide all the nutrients and calories they need.

Set a good example. It's important for your child to see you drinking water, eating healthy snacks and avoiding junk food.

Anderson reassures parents who may find it a little overwhelming. "Offer a variety of healthy foods and most children will eat what they need."