



Nutrition For Active Families



Kids Need “Growing” Food For Bodies, Brains And Behavior

(NAPSA)—Registered dietitian Tara DelloIacono-Thies says kids’ bodies aren’t the only things that need good food for healthy growth. Their brains are hungry for nutritious foods too.

Recent reports from the Journal of the American Dietetic Association express concerns that kids are not getting the nutrients they need for physical and cognitive development.

Kids’ bodies require a tremendous amount of energy to maintain a healthy growth rate. The best foods for growth include whole grains, fruit, beans, some meat and vegetables. All of these foods provide “growing” nutrients, such as folic acid, calcium, zinc, vitamin B6, vitamin B12, fiber, protein and carbohydrates.

Intellectual growth happens as kids’ brains develop with the help of powerful nutrients found in grains, dairy and fish. Nutrients important for their cognitive development include iron, omega-3s, vitamin D, protein and whole grain carbohydrates.

Finding “growing” foods is easiest while shopping the perimeter of the grocery store, where the fruits, vegetables, meats and dairy are located. Here are some important tips that all parents should know when making food choices for kids:

- **Iron:** Research at Penn State University found that a lack of iron can affect thinking. Low iron is associated with fatigue, depression, anxiety and decreased attention, responsiveness and memory. Foods rich in iron include lean red meat, dark leafy greens and fortified cereals.

- **Artificial colors and preservatives:** Kids are eating more foods filled with artificial ingredients and few nutrients, which contributes to increased rates of malnutrition. Read the ingredient label and avoid foods with artificial ingredients.

- **DHA/Omega-3:** A diet lacking in these healthy fatty acids can cause symptoms similar to iron deficiency. Foods rich in omega-3 include fish and fortified milk.

- **Calcium:** A calcium deficiency can stunt growth now and increase risk of osteoporosis later. Foods rich in calcium include cheese, yogurt, milk and fortified orange juice.

- **Trans Fat and High Fructose Corn Syrup:** Partially hydro-



“Growing” food can be found in packages. Look for packaged snack foods made with organic ingredients and the right mix of carbohydrates, protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals.

genated oil (*trans* fat is a by-product) and high fructose corn syrup are used in many popular kids foods and offer no nutritional value. Look for foods without *trans* fat and highly processed sugars.

As a general rule, developing healthy eating habits—such as eating breakfast each day and satisfying a sweet tooth with fruit—can have a major positive effect on a child’s physical growth and behavior. In addition, spreading foods out into three small meals and two small snacks through the day will give kids the energy to keep moods on a more even keel.

If fresh fruits and vegetables aren’t readily available, the nutrients needed for growth can be found in certain packaged, healthy snack foods. For example, CLIF Kid Organic ZBaRs are baked, whole grain snack bars offering a good source of healthy carbohydrates, protein and fiber to help curb hunger and stabilize energy levels. ZBaR is also fortified with vitamins and minerals that kids need, such as calcium, vitamin D and iron.

Parents should note that most packaged food labels are based on adult recommended daily allowances and a 2,000-calorie meal plan—often not correlated with a child’s needs. As the registered dietitian for CLIF Kid, DelloIacono-Thies offers a chart to help parents “digest” food labels to better meet their kids’ needs at www.clifbar.com/clifkidrda.