



Effects of Food Consumption in Children's Nutrition and their Health Outcomes

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DESCRIPTION

Childhood obesity is a serious health problem that affects millions of children around the world. One of the main factors that contributes to childhood obesity is the consumption of fast foods, which are high in calories, fat, sugar, and salt, but low in nutrients, fibre, and vitamins. Quick meals offer convenience, affordability, and widespread accessibility, making them attractive to both parents and children. However, eating fast foods regularly can have negative consequences for children's health and development. Fast foods are often served in large portions, which can exceed the recommended daily calorie intake for children. Moreover, fast foods are energy-dense, meaning they provide a lot of calories per gram of food, but not much satiety or fullness. This can lead to overeating and weight gain. Studies have shown that children who eat fast foods more than once a week are more likely to be obese or overweight than those who eat them less frequently. Fast foods are high in saturated and trans fats, which can raise the levels of bad cholesterol and lower the levels of good cholesterol in the blood. This can increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases, such as heart attack and stroke, later in life. Fast foods are also high in sodium, which can raise the blood pressure and cause hypertension. Furthermore, fast foods are high in sugar, which can spike the blood glucose and insulin levels, leading to insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes. These diseases are not only harmful for children's health, but also costly for the health care system and society.

Fast foods are low in essential nutrients, such as protein, calcium, iron, zinc, and vitamin A, which are vital for children's growth and development. Children who eat fast foods regularly may suffer from malnutrition, stunting, anemia, and poor immune function. Fast foods can also affect children's cognitive and behavioral development, as they can impair the brain

function, memory, attention, and learning abilities. Fast foods can also influence children's mood, emotions, and mental health, as they can cause depression, anxiety, and aggression. In addition to these strategies, parents and children can also take some simple steps to reduce their fast food consumption and improve their dietary choices.

- Planning ahead and preparing healthy meals and snacks at home, which can save time, money, and calories. Parents can involve their children in the cooking process and teach them about the nutritional value of different foods.
- Choosing healthier options when eating out, such as grilled, baked, or steamed dishes, salads, soups, or sandwiches, instead of fried, greasy, or cheesy foods, burgers, pizzas, or nuggets. Parents can also ask for smaller portions, share meals with their children, or take home leftovers.
- Reading the nutrition labels and menus carefully, and avoiding foods that are high in calories, fat, sugar, and salt, such as sauces, dressings, dips, desserts, or beverages. Parents can also educate their children on how to read and understand the nutrition information and make informed decisions.

CONCLUSION

Children should be encouraged to engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day, which can help them burn calories, strengthen their muscles and bones, and improve their cardiovascular and respiratory health. Physical activity can also enhance children's mental and emotional well-being, as it can reduce stress, boost mood, and increase self-esteem. Schools and communities should provide safe and accessible spaces and facilities for children to play and exercise, such as playgrounds, parks, sports fields, and bike lanes. Limiting the frequency and occasions of eating fast foods, and treating them as occasional treats, not as regular meals. Parents can also set a good example for their children by eating healthy foods themselves and avoiding fast foods.

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