



TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT...



Nutrition

Getting Beyond Junk Food

A big problem facing today's parents is how to get their children to eat right. With so many high-fat and high-sugar products available from supermarkets and fast food outlets, your children may forget that there's such a thing as good nutrition. But eating right is especially important to growing bodies. Here are some ways to convince your youngsters that there's a better way to live than by junk food alone.

Use Your Kids' Natural Curiosity

If your children are elementary school age or younger, they probably won't be swayed by rational arguments about the benefits of carrots. But they probably are learning about nutrition at school. You can show them how to use the general ideas they're learning in your own home. For example, show them how to read labels so that they can judge the nutritional value of their favorite foods.

Appeals to Vanity

When a child reaches junior high or high school age, his attitude toward food is likely to change.

You can use your teenager's desire to look good as a means of encouraging proper nutrition. Point out that a healthy body is an attractive body. However, be on the lookout for eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa (self-starvation) and bulimia (bingeing and throwing up). Girls who pursue an unrealistically thin ideal are especially vulnerable to these disorders.

Appeals to Athletes

Coaches usually stress the importance of good nutrition in athletics. If your teenager is active in sports, back up the coach's advice by providing healthy snacks at home. Fresh fruits and vegetables, whole-grain breads, cereals, pasta and low-fat dairy products are good choices for post-practice eating.

Food Fads

Teenagers are affected by fads and food is no exception. It can be distressing when your daughter announces that she'll eat nothing but brown rice from now on, but try not to panic. If the fad diet is not obviously dangerous or unreasonably expensive, try to accommodate your teen's wishes within the framework of sound

nutrition. Also, remember that fads go as quickly as they come. Brown rice may be replaced by burgers before you know it.

Small Changes for Big Results

You can make good nutrition a family affair with a few subtle changes in your diet:

- Buy fresh fruits and vegetables instead of canned.
- Switch from whole to low-fat or nonfat milk.
- Limit high-fat meats such as pork and beef.
- Reduce the amount of sugary foods your family consumes.
- Replace animal fats, such as butter and lard, with margarine and vegetable or soybean oil.

Remember, when it comes to teaching your kids to eat right, actions speak louder than words.

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