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Childhood & Adolescent Cholesterol and Weight Management

In the past few decades the lipid levels-low density lipoprotein(LDL), total cholesterol and triglycerides in the pediatric population has increased significantly according to the American Heart Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Institutes of Health. Children and adolescent weight has also increased the same. Overweight children and teens are at greater risk of developing diabetes and cancer.

Recommendations are as follows to help your child or adolescent eat fit and be fit.

- Consume an healthy diet rich in whole grains, vegetables, lean protein rich food and fruit
- Aim for a healthy body weight
- Aim for recommended levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, and triglycerides
- Be physically active preferably over 60 minutes per day

Back to School often means busy schedules. Here are some simple tips so that your children maintain a healthy diet.

- Encourage regular times to go sleep and **get 8 or more hours of sleep**. Often children who are overweight do not get enough rest and will overeat because they are tired.
- Encourage your child to **eat breakfast** and not overeat late at night. If they are not hungry when they awake they may have eaten too much, too late the night before or are too rushed before going to school.
- Allow for adequate meal times that are **not rushed**. Too often children are eating standing up or in cars. Eating meals too far apart or not having the right balance of nutrients causes low blood sugar and cravings for high sugar or high fat foods.
- Avoid foods containing artificial dyes on the ingredient list such as Gatorade, cheese puffs, candy.
- **Drink water** as the first beverage of choice. Minimize your intake of beverages and foods with added sugars.
- Choose foods prepared lower in fat. Baked, broiled, grilled, boiled or steamed.
- Try preparing more vegetarian meals to save money and reap the health benefits of lower fat, more phytonutrients (plant sources with over 1000 types and benefits).

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Simple dishes: Rice and Beans, Tofu, rice and vegetables, Tortilla and beans, pasta and beans, peanut butter sandwich, veggie wraps.

The benefits of a balanced diet rich in all nutrients is improved concentration and focus, reduced irritability, healthy weight and cholesterol management and blood sugar regulation. Meals should include at least three of the following food groups at each meal. **Organic often.**

Vegetables: Fresh, Frozen or Canned

Fruit: Fresh, Frozen or Canned

Protein: Beans, lentils, whole grain wheat (wheat berries), tofu, fish, 90 % lean poultry and meat.

Whole Grains and Starchy vegetables rich in natural fiber: Cereal, beans, bread, crackers, pasta, rice, oats, barley, sweet potatoes, acorn and winter squash, plantains and wheat berries.

Dairy or alternate: Fat free or 1% fat milk, yogurt or cheese, calcium & vitamin D fortified soy milk.

Monounsaturated Fats: Nuts, Seeds, canola or olive oil, avocado, ground flaxseed meal

Be sure each meal contains fiber and monounsaturated fats help keep a child nutritionally satisfied. Behavior and concentration improves and energy is sustained especially when physically active or involved in sports.

You can lower cholesterol up to 7% by choosing a daily intake of plant stanols and sterols.

Plant sterols and stanols are *phytosterols*, essential components of plant membranes that resemble the chemical structure of animal cholesterol and carry out similar cellular functions in plants. *Sterols* are present naturally in small quantities in many fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, cereals, legumes, vegetable oils, and other plant sources. *Stanols* occur in even smaller quantities in many of the same sources.

CHOOSE DAILY NATURAL SOURCES OF PLANT STEROLS and Stanols: Nuts, seeds, whole oats, barley, soy beans, all beans, fortified food products with plant stanols are not suggested unless you cannot meet your child's needs by natural diet modification. Consult your registered dietitian and pediatrician for the amount you need each day.

Because school lunch may offer more saturated fat than desired, brown bagging is recommended at least a few times a week if you notice the choices your child is making are less than desirable.

Conclusion: With a little planning, a routine of shopping to have healthy snacks and meals can be easy. Learning to maintain those choices no matter where you are is part of the lifestyle that needs to be created with you and your children and hopefully will create a lasting lifetime of health. If you need guidance or help seek the advise of a registered dietitian who specializes in pediatric weight management and dyslipidemia's.