

The fact about fat is that...

A little of it goes a long way, says dietitian **Jaclyn Reutens**.



How much fat is okay?
Check out these
weighty pointers! ►►

“Do not deprive your children of certain foods. Teach them about portion sizes and exercising regularly to keep their weight and health in check.

When snacking IS good for your child

Snacks play a very important role in your child's diet.

It can provide up to 40% of their overall calorie intake for the day, therefore wise choices have to be made.

Snacks have to be timed correctly so that their main meals are not affected and they have a constant supply of energy throughout the day. For picky eaters, snacks can be a sure way of them getting their essential nutrients. Parents have to know how to categorise snacks. A nutritious snack should be low in sugar, fat and salt. It's a bonus if they also contain lean protein and calcium. An unhealthy snack tends to be the complete opposite.

Some examples of healthy snacks that appeal to kids are:

- Chopped fresh fruit with a drizzle of yoghurt
- Bite-sized low sugar, high fibre cereals- eg. crunchy corn bran, raisin bran flakes, oatmeal squares
- Cheese slices cut up into fun shapes
- Cheese cubes
- Rice crackers with peanut butter or nutella
- Small tubs of yoghurt (soy based or milk based)
- Jam rolls (made with one slice of bread with spread of jam, rolled up and sliced)

Snacks that should be offered only occasionally (e.g. only at parties) would be those such as chips, chocolates, fries, cakes, candies, sweets, pastries, cookies and creamy snacks. These snacks are high in salt and fat and have little nutritional value.



Low-fat diet is better for children above four years old.

Children below the age of two should not have their fat intake restricted as this is a crucial time for brain development. The older they get, their fat intake should be restricted to prevent excess fat intake and becoming overweight.

For children between the ages of two to three, their calorie intake from fat should be between 30-35%. For those between the ages of four to 18, it should be 25-30%. The sources of fat should be predominantly from polyunsaturated fatty acids and monounsaturated fatty acids. These are mostly found in fish, poultry without skin, lean meats, nuts and vegetable oils.

Parents ought to set an example themselves by establishing healthy eating habits. Do not deprive your children of certain foods. Instead, teach them about portion sizes and exercising regularly to keep their weight and health in check.

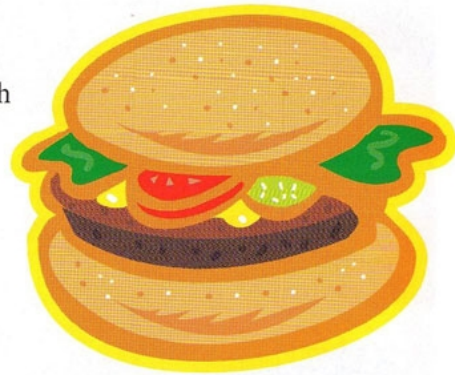
Fast foods are generally unhealthy but they can be eaten occasionally.

Fast food can be easily described as food that have been prepared and served quickly. Mention fast food and children will usually think of burgers, nuggets, fries and soft drinks. All which are high in sugar, fat and salt.

Using the children's definition, it should only be eaten once in a while. These can vary within families as much as once a week or even once in six months. Limit it as much as possible. The immediate health impact in your child's life is little but in the long term it becomes the food of norm which can make it a hard habit to break, potentially leading to health problems later on in life.

In Singapore, there are plenty of family friendly cafés and restaurants that offer a wide price range. Do not limit yourselves: explore new places which carry more healthy food choices.

It can always be a new experience for your family.



Overweight children become overweight adults.

Globally, the number of overweight children is increasing. This can be attributed to poor food choices, a more sedentary life sitting at the computer or television and parents not setting good examples.

An overweight child suffers social stigma as they become more likely to be teased by their peers. As a child, losing weight is hard because they cannot fully understand how the whole process works. In the end, they suffer in silence and unless they have the right help, their problem grows. This leads to health problems when they are adults.

In Australia, 80% of obese adolescents become obese adults. Parents who have children who are overweight should see a doctor or dietitian to address the problem early. **SC**

JACLYN REUTENS is a dietitian with Aptima Nutrition and Sports Consultants, at Gleneagles Medical Centre. For more details, visit www.aptima-nsc.com.