

# Chicken... just a little?

Dietitian **Jaclyn Reutens** dispels half a dozen child-bound myths of food, glorious food.



GETTY IMAGES



**Children should not eat chicken everyday because the hormones injected into chickens are not good for them. MYTH OR FACT?**



**MYTH:** Hormones are not used in the raising of chickens. Antibiotics may be given to chickens to reduce the incidence of disease and increase feed efficiency. IF antibiotics are used, a withdrawal period is enforced by law before the bird can be slaughtered.

In Singapore, the AVA has strict controls at points of entry to ensure that poultry and poultry products are safe for consumption. Random sample testings are done to check antibiotic residues. So, it is **SAFE** to eat chicken in Singapore. To get a variety of foods in your diet, do not only eat chicken but choose lean meats and other protein sources.



**Lactose intolerant children should not drink milk at all. MYTH OR FACT?**





**MYTH:** Children who are lactose intolerant have trouble digesting lactose, a milk sugar. The enzyme, lactase, is produced in small amounts which may not be sufficient to handle the full load of lactose entering the body. This results in bloating, gas, cramping and diarrhoea.

However, if the bloating or cramping is not so serious, most children can handle small amounts of milk-based foods or dairy foods like milk, cheese and yoghurt. These provide high bio-availability calcium needed for growing bones. Maintain a food diary to see which food trigger symptoms. Soy milk, rice milk, reduced lactase milk and cheese and lactase pills are available in the market for those who have severe reactions.



**Dairy products, especially chocolate milk, are fattening and unhealthy.**

**MYTH OR FACT?**



**MYTH:** No food is fattening BUT eating too much oily, fried foods increases your risk of weight gain. Eating too much of a 'healthy' food can also increase your risk of weight gain!

The only trouble with dairy is that the fat is mainly saturated fat, which is the bad fat. So to solve this, consume low-fat and/or non-fat dairy products and watch the portions. Dairy foods like milk, cheese and yoghurt are nutritious foods; they are high in calcium and protein, two essential nutrients needed for growth and bone health.



**Fruit juice is a healthy and can be drunk in unlimited amounts. MYTH OR FACT?**



**MYTH:** Fruit juices may be a good source of vitamins and minerals but when fruit juice is extracted from the fruit, the healthiest part, the fibre, is thrown away. Drinking water, milk or eating a whole piece of fruit is much better. Limit intake of fruit juice to one cup a day.

Do you know it takes five oranges to make one small glass of freshly squeezed orange juice? The

juice is then concentrated with sugars a.k.a. calories. While fruit sugar is different from the sugar we add to tea or coffee, it is still sweet and can lead to problems like tooth decay. Plus, with too much, your child could be eating less at main meals.



**Every child should take a vitamin-mineral supplement. MYTH OR FACT?**



**MYTH:** The best sources of vitamins and minerals are from natural foods because they are in a form that is easier absorbed as compared to synthetic sources such as pills.

Depending on the age of your child, his appetite and if illness or allergy is present, a multivitamin may be advised. However, if they are healthy and eating well, a multivitamin is not necessary. If you really need to buy one, consult a dietitian to determine the dosage of vitamins and minerals to be taken.



**Fish is a brain food that helps make you smart. MYTH OR FACT?**



**FACT:** Because your brain is 60% fat, your brain cell membranes are filled with fat. Omega-3 fatty acids are known to keep these membranes healthy and aid communication within the brain cells. Fatty fish like salmon and canned tuna are excellent sources of Omega-3 fatty acids DHA and EPA, which are both highly essential for brain development and function.

Some research has also shown that people score better at mental skills tests and have sharper thinking when they consume more of these fatty acids.

However, do avoid fish with high mercury levels that can lead to developmental delays in walking and talking in children. These include shark, swordfish, sea perch, marlin and gemfish. These fish should be avoided by pregnant women, nursing mothers, and children up to six years old. Eat up to three fish meals a week for better brain development. **SC**

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