

Why Do We Eat?

This month, your child will be learning about food and how our bodies use it. The lessons cover:

Lesson 1: Why Do We Eat?

Lesson 2: Food in Your Body

Lesson 3: What Is Healthy Food

Lesson 4: Which Food to Choose

The Lowdown on Fast Food

In an article published by the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* (August 2013), University of NC researchers found that calories eaten away from home (by children aged 2–18) increased from 23.4 percent to 33.9 percent between 1977 and 2006. Of the meals consumed at home, many were prepared outside of the home, making the fast food takeout trend a real concern in the fight against childhood obesity. Most fast foods are loaded with unhealthy amounts of fat, sugar, and salt, and are low in healthy nutrients. If you and your family opt for fast food, make healthier choices. Here are some tips to consider:

1. Avoid foods that are deep fried.
2. Choose sandwiches that can be loaded with vegetables instead of burgers and fries.
3. Limit the extras such as cheese, bacon, and mayonnaise.
4. Eat at places that offer a variety of salads, soups, and vegetables.
5. Go easy on salad dressing or bring your own fat free variety.
6. Watch portion sizes. Don't "Supersize."

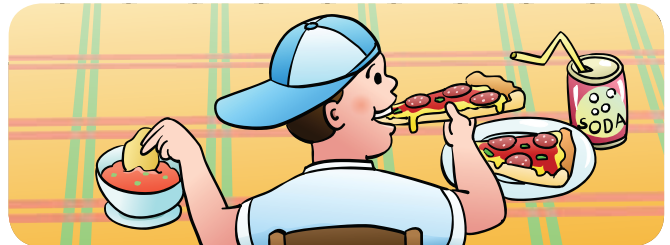


SALT: Most fast foods (and processed foods) contain a lot of salt. For example, a cheeseburger with bacon can have 1300–1900 milligrams (mg) of sodium. Even desserts, such as apple pie, are usually loaded with salt. The total daily sodium recommendation by the USDA is now about 1/2 teaspoon, which is much less than many fast foods.

FAT: Of all the calories you eat in one day, less than 30% should come from fat. That is, if you eat 2,000 calories in one day, you should have less than 600 “fat” calories. The special sauces, tartar sauce, salad dressings, and fried batters on fast food meals could use up those 600 calories in a single meal!

FIBER: Fiber helps you digest your food and can prevent certain kinds of cancer. Unfortunately, most fast-food restaurants offer little fiber-rich fruit, salad, whole grain breads, or beans. To set a good example for your children, finish off your meal with fruit from the grocery store. Pack carrot sticks, apples, and raisins for long car rides.

CALCIUM: Children need calcium daily. The USDA suggest 2–3 cups of milk products (preferably low-fat) a day. If you do stop at a fast-food restaurant, be sure your child has low-fat milk instead of soda.



Read All About It

Good Enough to Eat: A Kid's Guide to Food and Nutrition

by Lizzy Rockwell. HarperCollins, 2009

This picture book about healthy eating begins at the beginning: food is necessary for one's well-being and it tastes good, too. Six categories of nutrients are introduced: carbohydrates, protein, fat, water, vitamins, and minerals. Digestion is described, as is the Food Guide Pyramid. Five recipes are given at the end.