

Encouraging healthy eating habits amongst children

There is perhaps not a single mum in the world who would agree that meal times aren't a battle zone and that they never had any difficulty feeding their offspring with healthy meals.

Peer pressure, commercials or even siblings at home, encourage children to take up junk food at the beginning, and then the battle from there to get them rolled back into a healthy lifestyle becomes an uphill struggle.

However, switching to a healthy diet can have an immense effect on a child's physical and psychological growth, helping them to maintain a healthy weight, stabilise their moods and even sharpen their minds.

Here we have spoken to few mothers to find out what they do on a regular basis to maintain a healthy lifestyle of their children.

Masuma Akhter, 32, an Executive Director at a local garments factory, and mother of two girls

I make sure that my girls drink milk every day. And since it is difficult to get farm to table milk on a daily basis in an urban city like Dhaka, I give my girls UHT milk, procured from the market. This milk is completely safe and full of nutrition, which is extremely necessary for bone build-up and growth. Sometimes, the girls don't want to have direct milk so on those days I feed them special concoctions like shakes, puddings, or even cakes.

And veggies are also a must; if they don't want to have boiled greens then I make a veggie recipe, which they would



appreciate, like a ginger-veggie soup or even a homemade veggie pizza with gluten free flour, homemade cheese toppings, and fresh greens.

Parvin Begum, 57, a homemaker, and mother of two teenagers

My secret is very straightforward; I make sure to involve my children in whatever I am making for the day. From shopping for groceries to lending a hand at setting the table, they are always involved. This has definitely helped my kids understand the value of a home-cooked meal and the time that is invested behind each meal. And perhaps, this is why both my children enjoy a meal at home rather than going to the restaurant.

My kids love fruit juice, but I'm always concerned about how safe the juice is when I buy it from the market. I now buy 100 percent juice as beverage for my children because of the nutrition and safety.

I do make sure to check the label to ensure that there are no preservatives. To me, sustainable packaging of food is as important as home-cooked meal. Because of this, I prefer buying carton packs instead of any other plastic packaging. Because, the carton that the juice comes in is paper-based and contributes relatively little to the carbon footprint; I personally believe every mother should be conscious on this aspect and teach their children about home-cooked meals and the importance of recyclability of waste products from every source, especially food.

So mums, what is your secret to ensuring good nutrition for your child?

Daily dose of milk is required for healthy bone construction and growth, while at least two servings of fruits and veggies keep your child's immune system strong and ensure gut-health. Whether it's hiding veggies in your child's favourite snack or converting UHT milk into a yummy

strawberry smoothie for the teenager who dislikes the taste of milk, every mother has her own tips and tricks to keep their children healthy and safe.

The most important thing to remember is to make sure that whatever your child consumes is clean, safe, full of nutrients, and free from chemicals. When buying fresh food from a farm or the open market, always make sure that you know of the origin of the product and clean it thoroughly before cooking to kill any bacteria etc. Better yet, choose packaged food as much as possible, but only one that assures you of good quality and safety, without relying on chemicals like preservatives.

Final words

All in all, what can be said is that there is no right or wrong method to raising a child or feeding the little ones with good, nutritious food. What may work for someone may not strike a chord on another. Since there's no final proven technique, every method that comes to mind must be tried and tested before making it permanent.

Healthy meal options instead of junk food

By speaking to few more mothers, we have discovered some alternatives for a healthy and happy lifestyle.

Rather than making...

French fries, ice cream, fried chicken, doughnuts or pastries

Try to make...

Grilled carrots, baked tomatoes, sautéed mushrooms, yoghurt with fruits, flavoured milk, baked or grilled chicken, homemade milkshakes with flavoured milk and fruits

**By Momma & Mumsy
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed**