

The Fatal Five: “Healthy” Foods that Make Kids Sick and Fat

by Michelle Matte

Lack of physical activity is often cited as the root cause of both pediatric and adult obesity. While being physically active is an important part of total health, nutrition plays an equal role, providing the essential nutrients we need to function at our optimal best. It is common knowledge that junk food and fast food should be consumed in extreme moderation, and nearly everyone can agree that consuming too much sugar can be harmful to health. But many of the foods that are marketed to us as “healthy” can contribute to obesity and poor health, especially in children.

1. Cereals and Grain-Based Snacks. Since the inception of television, breakfast cereal has been marketed to children. Loaded with sugar and refined grains, then doused with artificial synthetic vitamins to restore some nutritional value, starting your children’s day with high-glycemic cereal can put them on a roller coaster ride of sugar cravings and energy deficits. “Healthy” snacks like granola bars and crackers are likewise sugar-laden and full of empty calories. Type II Diabetes, once called Adult Onset Diabetes, is now prevalent in children as young as two years, thanks to deceptive marketing.

2. Fruit Juice and Canned and Packaged Fruit. Natural fruit is full of vitamins, fiber, live enzymes, water and naturally occurring sugar, in small doses. It is the ideal snack for active children, providing energy and promoting good digestive health. Often with good intentions, parents keep fruit cups, applesauce, fruit rolls and other fruit-like substances on hand as convenient snacks for children, thinking they are more healthful than chips or candy. However, processed fruits are low in fiber and devoid or divested of live enzymes and vitamins. They do not offer the same healthful properties as whole fruits. Organic fruit naturally occurs in a single serving size, such as a small apple or banana. On the other hand, one serving of processed fruit or juice often contains the equivalent of two or more fruits, adding to caloric consumption.

3. Hot Dogs and Processed Meats. In an effort to ensure children are consuming enough protein, parents often rely on inexpensive and convenient processed and cured meats such as hot dogs, bacon and deli meats. However, cured meats contain high amounts of salt, sugar and chemicals. In particular, the nitrates used to preserve processed meats can be deadly, and have been linked to leukemia in children. Better to make lunches containing home-baked chicken or beef, boiled eggs, or nut butters and hummus.

4. Infant Formula and Processed Baby Food. Infant formula is high in sugar and often contains genetically modified soy, artificial ingredients and chemicals. Formula cannot substitute for the antibodies and other healthful nutrients present in fresh human milk. Studies have shown that formula-fed infants are up to two and a half times more likely to become obese by age two. The practice of spoon-feeding processed and pureed baby foods has also been linked to childhood

obesity. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization recommend exclusively breastfeeding until six months, and then allowing children to self-sample non-pureed foods after six months.

5. Diet Drinks and Fluoridated Water. To avoid excess sugar consumption, many turn to diet soft drinks made with artificial sweeteners. However, numerous studies have linked diet drinks to obesity in children and adults. Fluoridated water is often touted as a preventative antidote to dental cavities. But new studies have shown that, while topically applied fluoride may have some effect on cavity reduction, ingesting fluoride in your water can have negative and critical effects. Of particular concern is evidence that ingestion of fluoride can have a negative and detrimental impact on children's neurological development, leading to lower IQ scores. Ingested fluoride has also been associated with weakened bones, tooth fluorosis, arthritis, and damage to the brain, kidneys, pineal and thyroid glands.

Many of the foods that are marketed as healthy may actually be contributing to the obesity and metabolic disease epidemics faced by Western nations. What Do You Think? Leave a comment, or ask a question!

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