

# Nutrition: Child Development & Learning

Parent/Guardian Monthly Newsletter

November & December 2014



The saying “You are what you eat!” is true!

Whole foods are extremely important because they provide your body with the essential vitamins and minerals it needs to stay healthy!

Whole foods include:  
Vegetables, Fruits, Whole Grains, Nuts, and Legumes

(WebMD, 2014)

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## What is Nutrition?

- Nutrition can be defined as “the process of providing or obtaining the food necessary for health and growth” or as “nourishment” for the body (Google, 2014).
- Another way to think about nutrition is to reflect upon and evaluate the kinds of foods we eat, the quantity consumed, and the caloric value of the food.
- Beneficial foods contain energy and specific building blocks, called micronutrients and macronutrients, which our body needs to survive.

## How Does Nutrition Relate to Child Development and Learning?

- The process of learning requires us to take in new information and store it in our memory to use again later — all of this takes place in the brain!
- The growth of the brain is central to child development and plays a huge role in the learning process.
- A consistent and healthy diet allows the brain to develop properly, which enhances the learning process.
- It is important for parents/guardians and educators to work together to ensure students are receiving adequate nutrition each day, both in and outside of school, so they are able to develop a healthy body and mind.

(The Role of Nutrition in Children’s Neurocognitive Development..., 2013)

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## What is Cognitive Development?

Cognition is the term used to describe a specific set of complex functions performed by the brain, which are sometimes referred to as “higher mental functions” and “includes attention, memory, thinking, learning, and perception” (Nyaradi, 2013).

Cognitive development is therefore the process by which these complex functions mature throughout a person’s life. Childhood and adolescence are important time periods of cognitive development.

## Why is Nutrition Important?

In order for cognitive development to occur, the brain requires specific nutrients for growth, which can be obtained by eating a variety of foods.

Nutrients are actually very small parts of food, which “provide energy, serve as building material, help maintain or repair body parts, and support growth” (Sizer & Whitney, 2006).

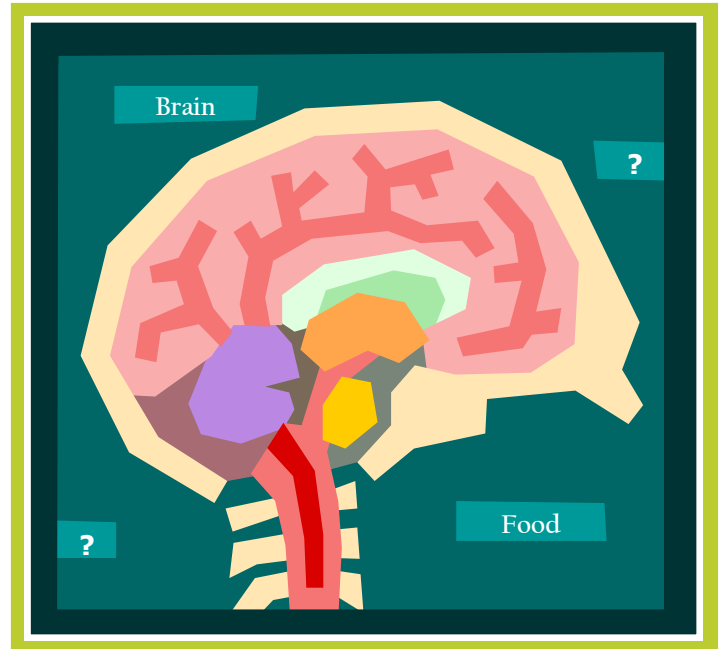
Nutrients include:

- Water
- Fats
- Carbohydrates
- Protein
- Vitamins
- Minerals

Nutrition plays a very important role in cognitive development in relationship to diet and eating habits. A nutritious or healthy diet consists of a variety of foods, which collectively provide a moderate portion — not too much, not too little — of nutrients required for proper growth and development.



(Photo Courtesy of: Integrative Clinical Resources, Inc.)



## Which Nutrients are Important for Cognitive Development & What Are Some Foods They Are Found In?

- **Fatty Acids:**
  - Grains
  - Leafy Vegetables
  - Seeds
  - Oils
  - Nuts
  - Fish
- **Vitamin B-12:**
  - Sirloin Steak
  - Cottage Cheese
  - Pork Roast (Lean)
  - Tuna (in water)
  - Swiss Cheese
- **Folate (Folic Acid):**
  - Lentils (Cooked)
  - Spinach (Raw)
  - Avocado
  - Enriched Cereal
  - Pinto Beans (Cooked)
  - Asparagus
  - Beets
- **Choline:**
  - Found in most foods
- **Zinc:**
  - Beef Steak (Lean)
  - Yogurt (Plain)
  - Enriched Cereal
  - Shrimp (Cooked)
  - Pork Chop
- **Iron:**
  - Beef Steak (Lean)
  - Navy Beans (Cooked)
  - Enriched Cereal
  - Spinach (Cooked)
  - Black Beans (Cooked)
- **Iodine:**
  - Iodized Salt
  - Fruits, Vegetables, & Legumes grown in United States
  - Seafood

(Nutrition: Concepts and Controversies, 2006)

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## “Let’s Get Cooking!!”



### Getting Students Engaged: Making Healthy Food Choices

- ◆ Children are more likely to understand the concept of a healthy diet, when they are involved in the process of food selection and preparation of healthy meals!
- ◆ Modelling healthy food choices for children will help them to identify and understand the foods which are more beneficial in regards to their overall health!
- ◆ Modelling healthy food choices for children also increases the likelihood that they will make healthy food choices for themselves in the future!



### What Are the Benefits of Teaching Children How to Cook?

- ◆ Cooking and meal preparation provide children with the opportunity to practice setting goals and executing a number of steps in a process to complete those goals!
- ◆ Learning to cook provides children with the opportunity to develop their social skills because it gives them time to interact with other children and adults.
- ◆ Cooking is a skill that children will be able to use their whole lives!
- ◆ “The nature and applicability of learning depend upon the student’s relationship to the subject matter.”

(Engaged Learning Across the Curriculum, 2006)



### Healthy Whole Foods ... ... for the Whole Body!!

- Vegetables:

Carrots	Broccoli
Romaine Lettuce	Mixed Greens
Cucumber	Red Skin Potatoes
Onions	Kale
- Fruits:

Bananas	Peaches
Strawberries	Blueberries
Blackberries	Watermelon
- Whole Grains:

Oatmeal	Quinoa
Rice	
- Nuts:

Almonds	Walnuts
Pecans	
- Legumes:

Peas	Lentils
Beans	Peanuts

(Nutrition: Concepts and Controversies, 2006)



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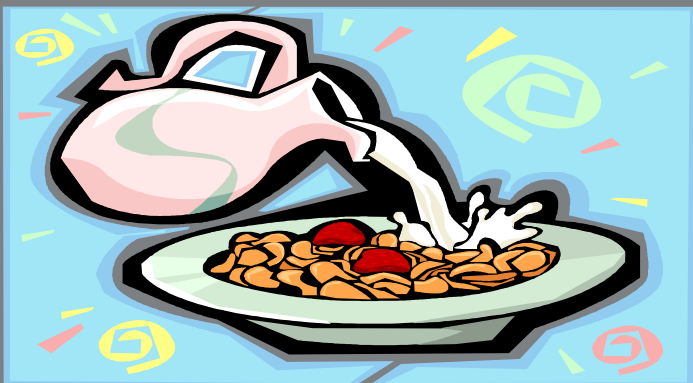
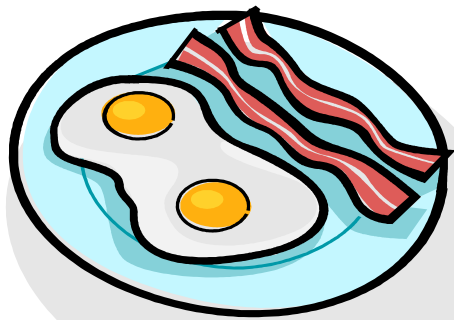
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## Breakfast: Recipe for Success!



- ◆ Research studies related to nutrition, child development, and learning have determined breakfast to be the most important meal of the day!
- ◆ When students are able to eat a healthy breakfast, full of carbohydrates and a limited amount of added sugars, they are providing their bodies and brains with the energy it needs to start the day off right!
- ◆ Eating breakfast in the morning actually enhances student performance and increases cognitive functioning, so they are able to learn more efficiently!
- ◆ Eating a full breakfast provides the energy and nutrients required for the brain to process newly acquired information, increase retention or ability to remember the material, and increase recall of the information later.
- ◆ Some studies have shown that eating breakfast can also increase the growth of the brain!
- ◆ Students who eat a healthy breakfast, full of carbohydrates and low in added sugars, have actually been shown to have larger brains in terms of volume, compared to students who do not eat a healthy breakfast or who skip breakfast entirely.
- ◆ Skipping breakfast can actually prevent the brain from developing properly, so it is really important to eat breakfast!



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## Fresh Fruit & Greek Yogurt Parfait

### Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup Greek Yogurt (Plain or Vanilla)
- 1/4 cup Fresh Sliced Strawberries
- 1/4 cup Fresh Blueberries

### Preparation:

Simply add the yogurt and the fresh fruit to a bowl and you're ready to go!

This quick and easy meal for breakfast will provide you and your child with a great source of carbohydrates and protein to start the day off the right way — full of energy, which will last throughout the morning and up to lunch!

### Remember:

Plain yogurt is a good source of Zinc, which is an important nutrient to have in the diet because it plays a role in cognitive development!

Fruit is also a great source of glucose, which is crucial for providing the brain with energy!



## Turkey & Cheese Omelette

### Ingredients:

- 1 Egg
- 1 Tablespoon Water
- 2 Thin slices of turkey breast (deli meat)
- 2 Slices of your favorite kind of cheese!

### Preparation:

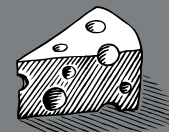
Mix the egg and tablespoon of water together in a bowl. (1 egg + 1 Tablespoon of water is what experts refer to as the recipe for a "perfect omelet!")

Add mixture to a fry pan, which has been greased lightly with a little bit of butter or cooking oil, then cook over medium heat.

Once the egg starts to firm up, lay the slices of turkey and cheese over one half of the egg mixture covering the bottom of the pan.

Using a spatula, flip the other half of the egg over the top of the meat and cheese, then let sit in the pan for a minute or two before flipping.

Now you're ready to eat a protein-filled breakfast that is tasty and healthy! Enjoy!



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## Resources

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