



Protecting Your Child's Health With Diet, Vitamins, Herbs & Homeopathy

Are you concerned about keeping your child healthy during the coming school year? Have you ever found it frustrating that traditional medicine doesn't offer ways to combat viruses like the flu and common cold? Giving your child the right foods and certain natural remedies formulated especially for children may provide you the peace of mind you need.

The Limits of Traditional Medicine

Have you ever taken your child to the doctor and found that he either misdiagnosed the problem? Or maybe he recommended multiple courses of antibiotics that couldn't combat your child's virus and caused other problems (including candidiasis, characterized by digestive ailments, mood swings/depression, rashes, and brain fog, among other symptoms)? Have you been frustrated when your pediatrician has been unable to recommend a healthy, immune-boosting diet? Of course, the traditional pediatrician plays a critical role in safeguarding a child's health, but it's not her fault that she may only have time to treat actual illness, and then only with the drugs in her tiny tool chest.

Fortunately, nutrition and natural medicine offer time-tested ways to boost a child's immune system, composed of white blood cells, proteins, tissues, and organs (spleen, bone marrow, and thymus gland) that defend the body against contagious infections and environmental toxins, which produce cell-damaging free radicals.

Start With: A Healthy Diet

While monitoring a school child's diet can be extremely challenging (if not impossible), this is the place to start protecting your child's health. In as fun a manner as possible, and without forcing

them on her, try introducing your child to vegetables (ideally, raw, with all their nutrients intact), whole fruits (vs. sugary fruit juices), complex carbohydrates, and healthy proteins, including: (1) Baby Carrots (delicious cooked or dipped in honey!): 10% of the antioxidant beta carotene in carrots converts to vitamin A as the body needs it, thus protecting against cancer (especially skin-related) and heart disease; (2) Broccoli (delicious lightly sautéed/steamed, salted, and vegetarian-alternative-buttered): contains cancer-fighting phytochemicals, vitamin C, and beta-carotene; (3) Berries: all are relatively low in sugar, and strawberries and blueberries are particularly high in antioxidants such as vitamins A and C and selenium; (4) Bell Peppers: these are high in vitamin C but lack the sugar in citrus fruits; (5) Whole Grains: introduce whole wheat vs. white/enriched white flour (if not celiac/allergic to gluten), sugar-free oatmeal, and quinoa (the only complete-protein grain; cooks like rice but faster); (6) Nuts (especially walnuts and almonds): great sources of minerals and essential fatty acids; (7) Beans: healthy sources of protein, complex carbohydrates, and iron; and (8) Fish, Turkey, Chicken, Eggs: low in inflammation-inducing saturated fat, these are valuable sources of protein and many other nutrients critical to growth.

Also, keep in mind that sugar compromises the immune system and is a key culprit in the widespread development of juvenile diabetes. According to Lendon Smith, M.D., a well-known pediatrician, sugar can also cause hyperactivity/ADHD by impacting the mid-brain, which controls emotions and the ability to focus. Instead of any kind of sugar, teach your child to love stevia, a sweet leaf that does not impact the blood sugar and has zero calories.

Add: A Nutritional Supplement Regimen

Giving your child nutritional supplements can help ensure that she is getting the right growth-promoting nutrients in the right amounts that she may not be getting from her diet. As you probably already know, if your child doesn't like it, she won't eat it, no matter how much better it may make her feel. So, when buying supplements, you might take her along for her opinion or a taste test. Also consider choosing gummy vitamins and other chewables sweetened with xylitol, a natural cavity fighter from strawberries.

Multivitamin

Although numerous multivitamins are available for children's various needs, a complete multivitamin will generally include age-appropriate amounts of antioxidants, minerals, whole vegetable and/or fruit concentrates, and probiotics. Children require ample doses of vitamin D (bone growth; immunity), iron (red blood cell health; organ oxygenation), B-complex (energy; nervous system health), and vitamins A and C (free radical protection; vitamin C is nature's antihistamine and may shorten the duration of a cold).

Probiotics

A strong immune system begins with a healthy digestive system, so don't overlook this critical component of your child's daily nutrition regimen (especially if she is on an antibiotic)! A child's digestive tract (stomach, small and large intestines) is fragile and its flora can be readily thrown off balance by antibiotics, stress (which yields cortisone), and prednisone (a drug form of cortisone), yielding an overgrowth of "bad" bacteria, mold, and yeast/candida with many complex symptoms, including those

noted above. When choosing the right child-formulated probiotic for your child, look for one that ideally: (1) is refrigerated (to preserve the live flora); (2) has multiple types of friendly bacteria strains (e.g., lactobacillus acidophilus, bifidobacterium bifidum/longum/infantis); (3) is enteric coated (to protect the flora from stomach acid, allowing them to be delivered alive to the intestines); (4) contains a pre-biotic that feeds the friendly/"good" bacteria (e.g., FOS, Inulin); (5) contains L-glutamine and NAG (to protect the intestinal mucosal lining); (6) is powdered and flavored; and (7) has at least 3 billion microorganisms. If your child is lactose or casein intolerant, choose a product that is dairy-free.

Cod Liver Oil (Orange or Mint Flavored)

Cod liver oil is a relatively safe source of vitamins A and D. It also provides anti-inflammatory omega-3 essential fatty acids, including DHA, which is critical to children's brain development. Pediatricians have long recommended one tablespoon per day for these purposes and to ensure strong bones.

If Your Child Is (Getting) Sick

Cold & Flu: In this writer's practice, cone-flower (echinacea purpurea/angustifolia) tincture and black elderberry (sambucus nigra) have proven tremendously effective in strengthening the body's defense mechanisms against cold and flu viruses. The herb goldenseal can help fight an actual infection. Also, Umcka® (pelargonium sidoides), a homeopathic combination remedy with no side effects or drug interactions, has been clinically proven to shorten the duration and reduce the severity of cold/flu symptoms and throat/sinus/ bronchial conditions, especially when taken at the onset of symptoms. Liquid vitamin C can also have this effect. Finally, chewable colostrum for children will increase the antibodies required to combat cold and flu.

Ear Aches: A glycerin-based ear drop tincture combination of mullein (also a demulcent, expectorant, and anti-inflammatory useful for upper respiratory illnesses) and garlic reduces and can eliminate middle- and outer-ear inflammation, pain, bacterial infection, and earwax buildup.

Digestive Problems: If your child has any type of mild digestive discomfort, try administering aloe juice, and/or chamomile or peppermint tea (soothe the stomach/intestines), magnesium (a natural laxative), and/or homeopathic belladonna (stops diarrhea). Also try eliminating dairy and gluten (in wheat, oats, rye, and barley) from her diet, consider getting her tested for food allergies, and reexamine her overall diet and supplements regimen in light of the above suggestions.

Conclusion

There's no need to worry! You can get a head start this fall, before your child dives into the germ pool of school and after-school activities. By being proactive, you can arm your child with the right foods and nutritional supplements that will keep her healthy, strong and, above all, happy.

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