



NUTRITIONALLY SPEAKING Helping children eat right

Dear Dr. Meinig:

We believe following good diet practice is a must for our children, but find it more and more difficult to combat all the junk foods they are subjected to. Most parents don't seem to care, even buy the stuff every day. Any words for parents about how to cope with this problem?

R.B.

Dear R.B.:

You are to be complimented for seeing that optimum health for your children is an important parental responsibility. The "I don't care parent" would deny your accusation but our homes, schools and businesses are full of parents, teachers, principals, and executives who refuse to accept their responsibilities. Too many today shirk their duty, hoping someone else will take over.

Youngsters need direction and caring disciplinary action if they are to develop and learn how to judge right from wrong. Children's battles with authority should be recognized as a part of their growing up. Within it, they hunger for backing, support, and guidance. Discipline can be taught without using physical punishment.

Over the years I have been privileged to give many nutrition lectures to school children. They have always shown an interest and desire to improve their eating habits. In most cases the effort has failed because mom and dad make light of the information they bring home and continue to push upon them sugary desserts, sweet snacks, and soft drinks.

For those who believe the diet of the average child is adequate, let's look at what is happening to children's health because of sub-optimal nutrition. Poor diets result in degenerative breakdowns of various body systems, including that of our immune defense. Between 1962 and 1967, the incidence of chronic disease in 17 to 24 year olds climbed from 37 percent to 44.6 percent and has been growing ever since. Even worse, cancer kills more children aged 3 to 14 than any other disease. In addition, startling numbers of our young suffer from arthritis, poor eyesight, heart disease, skin trouble, frequent colds, and a whole

variety of other disorders.

Poor nutrition during childhood is responsible for many of the severe degenerative diseases that occur later in life. When the building blocks that make up our organs, glands, and other tissues have been inadequately nurtured, adulthood can be doomed to serious problems. It is time for us to realize that a good proportion of the 43 million who have heart disease, and another 200,000 who experience fractures because of weak bones, suffer these illnesses because of the groceries they consumed or failed to consume as youngsters. Over 400,000 will die of cancer this year. Until recently the American Cancer Association has been derelict in devoting funds for nutrition preventing projects. Quite surprisingly they now admit that 33 percent of all cancers are related to diet.

From time to time I have written about the various studies that link antisocial and criminal behavior to the fact that mental function is dependent on brain cells being well-fed. Alex Schaus, Ph.D., did research that led to his book, "Diet, Crime and Delinquency." His work has sparked many studies in criminal institutions by reputable scientists, and has resulted in his appointment to the United Nations World Health Committee. For more details on antisocial behavior in children, drop a line requesting my Jan. 18, 1984 article, "Crime and Junk Food May Be Related."

Many of our foods have undergone refinement. Sugar, grains, and cereals are subjected to fabrication that has resulted in severe, detrimental changes in the product.

People have heard this castigation of food refinement for over 75 years but the sales of white bread, rolls, sweets and boxed cereals keep increasing year by year. The word "refinement" indicates improvement and signifies goodness. The refining of food, however, has not resulted in betterment; in fact, just the opposite, in view of the fantastic loss of its nutrients. The milling of grains that results in our white flour and boxed cereal products causes a loss of 60 percent of its calcium. Manganese (essential to our sanity) is down a whopping 85 percent. Can it be that anemia is so common because refining of grain causes a destruction of 75 percent of its iron content and 67 percent of its copper? These are just a few of the mineral losses. The total depletion amounts to a disappearance of two-thirds of the original elements that the grains originally contained and the loss of vitamins is also extensive.

Sugar is our most highly processed food. The cane or beets from which it is derived contain minerals, vitamins and other important nutrients, but the white product in your sugar bowl is 99.9 percent pure. It has nothing left in it except calories. The sweet taste has proved so appealing that food conglomerates have added sugar to

most of the foods they process. It is present in ketchup, pickle salt, cereals, and often represents the greatest percentage of all the other ingredients. For example, Corn Flakes is 7 percent sugar, Puffed Rice and Krispies 10 percent, Sugar Smacks 68 percent, and Trix 4 percent.

From time to time, publishers print articles and books by doctors and other persons of reputed stature in the professional world that say anyone making statements such as those above are scare mongers; that there is no truth or proof in such claims; that our food is excellent and our people are the healthiest in the world.

Who to believe? It's easy to think the government wouldn't allow our food to be so bad. Do keep in mind that most of the individuals and doctors who rave about the state of our food supply are, for most part, employees of food conglomerates or obtain research grants from them. The three million dollar Harvard University Nutritional Building came from money put up by the cereal and soft drink industry. Any time you read complimentary reports, an investigation of the writer's background will usually reveal he or she has a serious conflict of interest involving food fabricators and their products. Industry has a way of getting government approval or its lack of action when big money is involved.

Part of the confusion that enables so many to disregard good eating habits is because our bodies are so well designed that they are able to function at much less than optimum, and can do so for long periods of time. The typical American is overfed and undernourished. It is common for many to consume 18 percent of their calories from refined sugar and another 18 percent from refined white flour products. These have been shown to be deficient in twenty-eight essential nutrients, particularly B6 and other vitamins. This means that over one-third of the diet is deficient but, at the same time, is over-supplied with calories. These sub-optimal junk food junkets do take their toll. They result in gradual starvation of cells for the nutrients needed to function normally.

We all look down upon parents who physically or mentally abuse their children. Dr. James Braly suggests that parents ought to made to realize that serving their children Twinkies, TV dinners and sugar coated cereals is giving their sons and daughters a nutritional beating...a subtle form of child abuse.

You are on the right track. Don't let the many negative problems that exist influence your resolve for your family's welfare. Our country needs people like you. By your example, changes for the better take place.

Everyone has a question about nutrition. Send yours to Dr. George E. Meinig, C/O Ojai Valley News, Box 277, Ojai CA 93023.