

GOOD EATING for Kids

food matters

with Consultant
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The research is mounting: children aren't eating according to dietary guidelines, predisposing them to obesity, heart disease, cancer and premature death as adults. In Australia, almost 25 per cent of children are currently overweight or obese!

food prescription for life

A child's fluid needs are best met by water. Milk or soymilk and fruit juice can contribute important nutrients to the diet. Large amounts of fruit juice displace other nutritious foods and promote weight gain. Soft drinks have minimal value and provide significant amounts of kilojoules. One study of physically active girls has linked cola drinks to bone fractures! High caffeine drinks—coffee and so-called energy drinks—also promote calcium loss from the body.

Fruits and vegetables contain hundred of protective phyto-chemicals to guard your child's long-term health.

It's recognised that chronic diseases start early and take years to develop. Teach your child to appreciate a variety of cooked and raw produce with multiple colours.

Snack foods and take-aways are loaded with fat, salt and/or sugar and lack the protective elements for good health. Work out a fair deal in advance and stay with it. Don't succumb to pester power. Takeaway family dinners are best limited to less than monthly.

TV viewing is strongly linked with weight gain and obesity in children. Establish house rules for acceptable viewing times and enforce them. Family meals should be eaten seated at the table with ample discussion and social interaction.

See **page 37** for an exciting, fun recipe.

Warning signs of unhealthy dietary patterns include:

- ▶ low water intake
- ▶ high intake of soft drinks
- ▶ low intake and poor variety of fruits and vegetables
- ▶ frequent and unrestricted intake of snack foods high in fat or kilojoules
- ▶ watching TV while eating meals
- ▶ family meals frequently comprising takeaway meals.