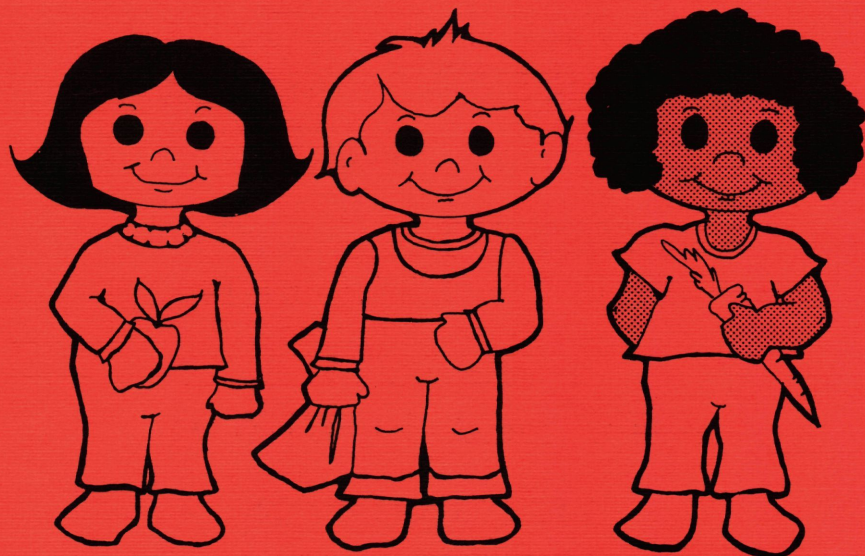


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# FOOD FOR THE PRESCHOOLER

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Volume III



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# **HIGHLIGHTS**

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**CAVITIES**

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**NUTRITION FACTOR  
IN TOOTH DECAY**

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**PREVENTION  
OF DENTAL DECAY**

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**OBESITY**

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**ADVERTISING - TAMING  
THE TV MONSTER**

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**SALT:  
WHY THE CONCERN?**

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**AN OUNCE OF  
PREVENTION**

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# DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE CAVITIES?

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Did you know that 40-55% of three to four year old children have some tooth decay? By age 12, this increases to 90%! In fact, tooth decay is the most common chronic disease in the United States.



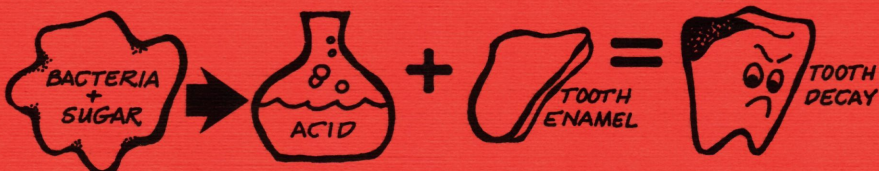
In 1976, almost nine billion dollars were spent to repair damaged teeth and gums. That's a lot of money to spend on something which is largely preventable!

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# DENTAL CARIES — THE NUTRITION FACTOR

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What causes tooth decay? Certain bacteria are always present in your mouth. These bacteria feed on various sugars and then produce acid, which slowly dissolves your tooth's surface causing tooth decay. (Table sugar is the bacteria's favorite food.)



Plaque, a sticky film which forms on teeth, allows the bacteria to stay close to the tooth's surface, usually near the gums. That's why removing plaque through daily brushing and flossing is important. Taking your child to the dentist before his or her third birthday is also important for starting good preventive dental health practices.

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## CAVITY PREVENTION!

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To minimize dental decay, limit the sugary foods your child eats to mealtime. **AVOID SWEETS BETWEEN MEALTIME!** Sound silly? The fact is

frequency of sugar eaten is more important than amount! The more **times** your child eats sugary foods during the day, the more acid bacteria produce. Remember, sweet foods also replace more nutritious foods!

Foods most likely to cause tooth decay are sticky, sweet foods that stick to teeth. Gummy or hard candies, honey, and dried fruits are all decay causing and should be avoided, especially for snacks.

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## **\*OBESITY** - or excess body fat -

is a major health hazard for adults that often has its roots in childhood. Many children learn eating and activity patterns that can lead to obesity later in life. Obesity can negatively affect a child's psychological and emotional well-being.

What contributes to obesity in childhood?

- inactivity
- poor food choices
- use of food as rewards or pacifiers
- force feeding or large portions

Inactivity is often a major contributor to obesity, as many obese children eat fewer calories than their normal weight friends!

The goal of weight management for children is **to limit further weight gain**. Children will grow slimmer as they “grow into their weight.” Actual **weight loss** is not recommended as children need adequate nutrients and calories for growth. Low fat, nutritious meals and snacks are central to a lean eating style (see Daily Food Guide, Volume I).

Preventing or controlling obesity in childhood requires **family** support.

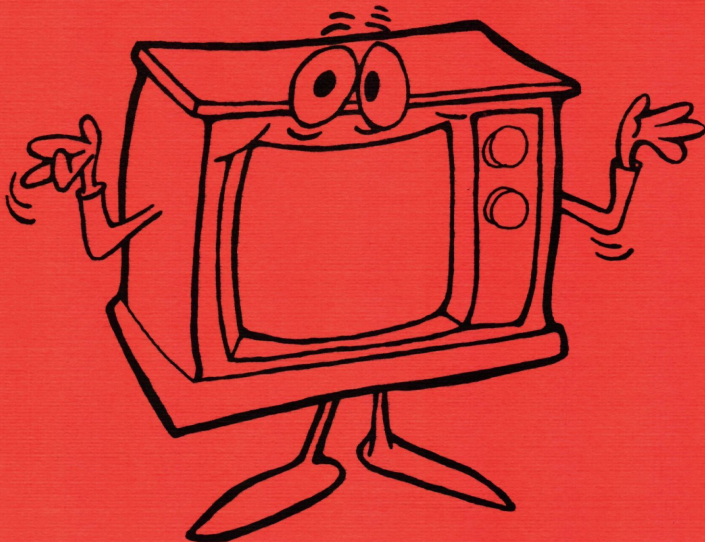
- Encourage your child to become physically active — not to sit and watch TV.
- Help your child learn to deal with emotions or stress without turning to food.
- Recognize and praise your child's success and desirable behaviors. Try hard to ignore the small failures, as children need to feel successful.
- Remember that your food habits and attitudes will strongly influence those of your child.

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# ADVERTISING — TAMING THE TV MONSTER

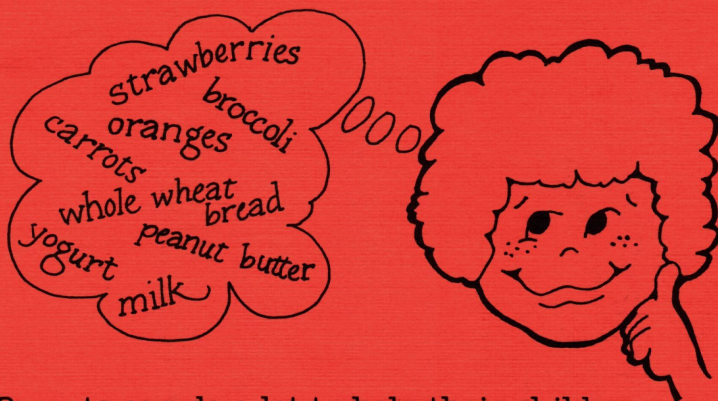
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Television advertising can have a strong influence on children's food habits. Foods of questionable nutrient value — highly processed foods which are loaded with sugar or salt and fat — are the foods most frequently advertised to children. The message is simple: Sweet foods (or salty "snack" foods) are good and fun to eat. Most parents know: advertising works!



Advertising will always be with us. Your child will not be as susceptible to advertising, however, if you teach him or her to view commercials realistically. Watch television together when possible. Ask your child if the foods, games, gimmicks, or toys shown on television are as good or exciting as they seem to be. Do the catchy jingles make sense or just sound good? Children need to learn that television presents a narrow view of the world.

Having them list foods they like that are not shown on television helps children realize television does not mirror the real world.



Parents can do a lot to help their children become more intelligent television viewers. Parents can also encourage healthy alternatives to television, such as outdoor play, hobbies, and reading, which help to establish interests and patterns of physical activity that will benefit your child throughout life.



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# **SALT: WHY THE CONCERN?**

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High salt diets have been implicated in the development of high blood pressure, especially in people with a family background of hypertension (high blood pressure). Salt intake during the early years is especially important.

Eliminating the salt shaker from the table, reducing salt used in cooking, and limiting the amount of salty foods (pickles, canned soups, snack foods, salty crackers and nuts) are very important steps in reducing salt intakes. Since any preference for salty foods is learned, it can be changed. Soon you and your child won't even miss the salt!

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## **AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION**

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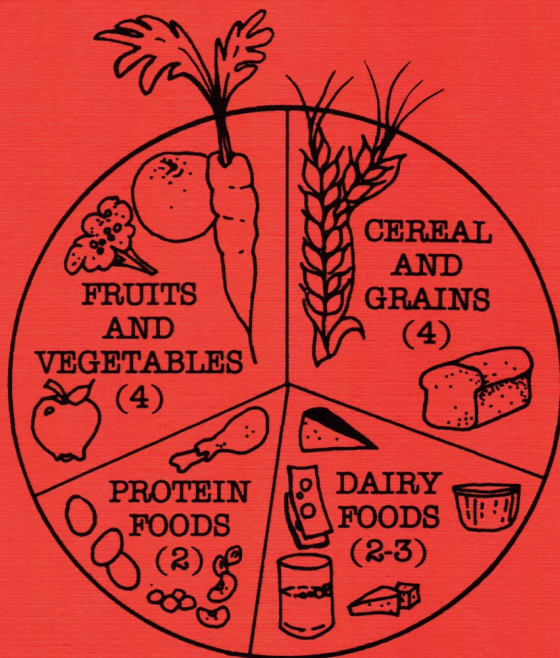
Dietary habits are established early in life. The dietary habits your child learns during the preschool years will affect his or her future health. Diet has been associated with the development of many of the major chronic diseases in this country: heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, some forms of cancer,

diabetes, and tooth decay.

The United States Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services have published seven general dietary guidelines intended to promote the health of Americans. These guidelines are:

1. Eat a variety of foods.
2. Maintain ideal weight.
3. Avoid too much fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.
  - Choose lean meat, fish, poultry, and dry beans and peas as your protein sources.
  - Limit your intake of butter, cream, hydrogenated margarines, shortenings and coconut oil, and foods made from such products.
  - Trim excess fat off meats — broil, bake, or boil, rather than fry.
4. Eat foods with adequate starch and fiber.
  - Substitute starches for fats and sugars.
  - Select foods which are good sources of fiber and starch, such as whole grain breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables, beans, peas, and nuts.
5. Avoid too much sugar.
6. Avoid too much sodium (salt).
7. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.

Learning to eat wisely and moderately is an investment in the future. Small, gradual changes can lead to major changes in your family's eating style — healthier changes which will be satisfying for both you and your family.



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