



All They Really Need: Trusting the Wisdom of Nature to Raise Resilient Kids

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## NUTRITION VALUES

### It starts at conception

The nutritional well being of children begins *in utero*—specifically, with what the pregnant parent is eating. Making nutrition a priority before, during and after pregnancy, with attention to iron-rich foods, adequate vitamin D, a wide variety of bioflavonoids (from fruits and vegetables), and even a good-quality fish oil is crucial.

### Zero to four months

- If at all possible, breastfeed, breastfeed, breastfeed! We encourage you to seek support from a certified lactation consultant prior to giving birth and onward as needed.
- Nurse on demand.
- Ensure the nursing parent receives the emotional and physical support, nutrition and rest they need to ensure breastfeeding success.

### Four to twelve months

- Listen and respond to baby's hunger and satiety cues.
- When your baby shows signs of readiness, start introducing solid foods. Under close supervision, allow her to feed herself to help cultivate her autonomy and agency (despite the mess!).
- Make food at home from whole, local, seasonal, organic foods as much as possible. It's just as easy to mash a banana or cook a sweet potato for a baby as it is to buy one in a jar, and there's a whole lot less packaging and no additives.
- Include your baby in family meals to set the tone for happy, relaxed eating.
- Skip the sugar, salt, and additives. This is a time when babies are exploring food in its natural state and don't need to develop a "taste" for nutritionally bankrupt food.



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### Toddlers and preschoolers

- Now that they are more clearly expressing preferences, allow them to self-regulate their intake of food from a variety of healthy choices.
- It is the parent's job to decide what goes on the table (i.e., a variety of healthy options); it's the child's job to decide which of the options and how much to consume—and this may change a lot over time!
- Respect their likes and dislikes, but keep in mind that children often need to be exposed to a particular food several times before accepting it. Giving up on offering a particular food will only make it more likely your child will never like it.
- Feed them the same meals and snacks that the rest of the family eats, adjusting serving sizes according to appetite.
- Avoid force feeding or engaging in power struggles over food—it's just not worth the battle. Truly, children will eat when they're genuinely hungry, and evidence suggests that getting into a battle of wills is more likely to cause a disordered relationship with food than healthy self-regulation.
- Include them in shopping, planning and simple preparation of foods, in developmentally-appropriate ways.

### School-aged children and onward

- Try to avoid becoming a short-order cook. Kids can have two choices at mealtime—take it or leave it—but do include them in planning for meals.
- Provide increasing responsibility for meal planning and preparation. This promotes autonomy, awareness of the body, self-regulation, moderation, and knowledge of nutrition.
- Growth spurts in this age group will require a significant increase in calories. Talk to kids to ensure their choices are nutrient-dense, not just “empty” calories. Reinforce the concept of fuelling their bodies to become stronger, faster, smarter (or whichever attributes are important to them).