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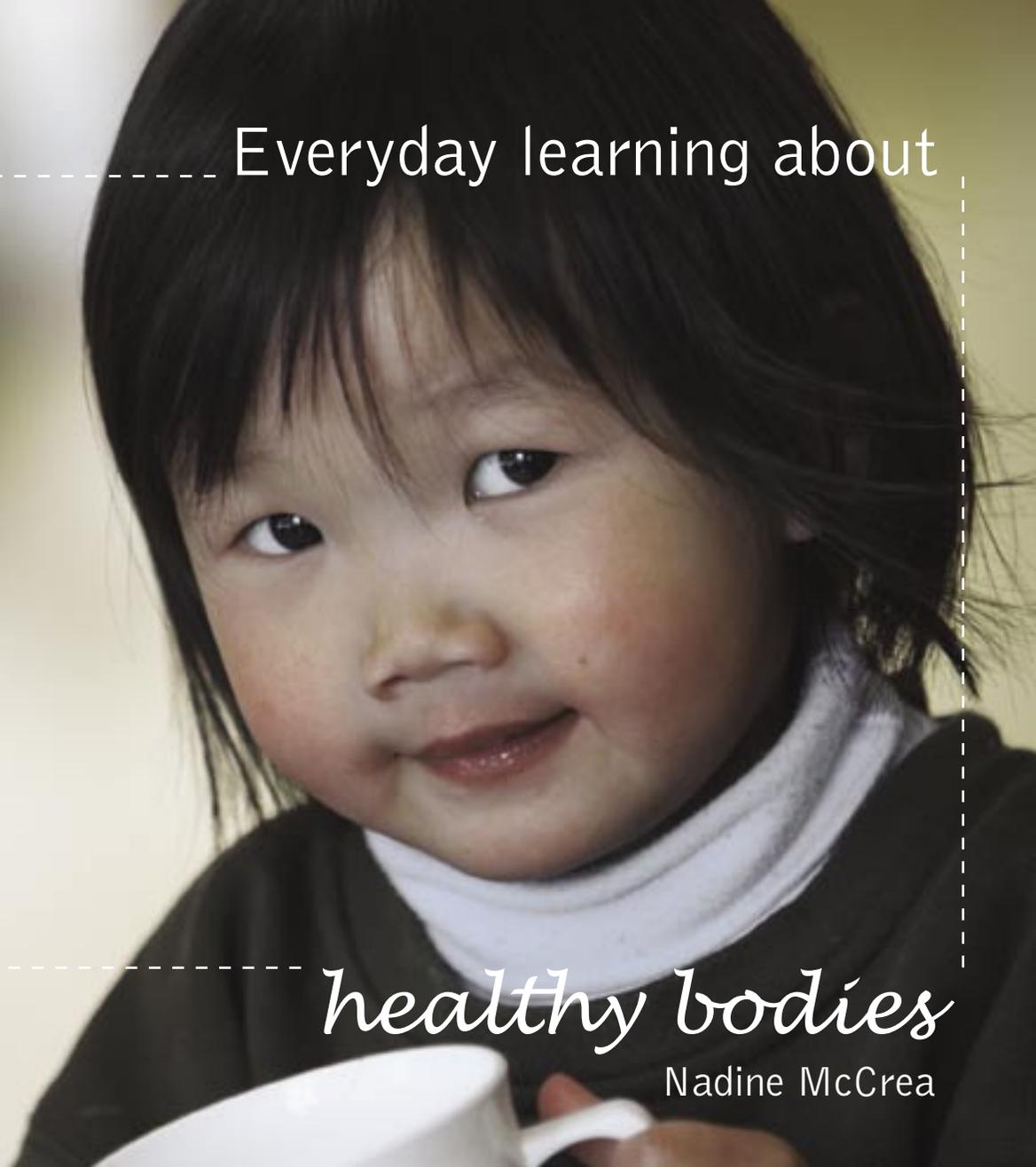
For babies
toddlers and
preschoolers



Everyday learning about

healthy bodies

Nadine McCrea





About the author

Nadine McCrea

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The most important early learning happens through day-to-day life experiences and the *Everyday Learning* books are about how parents and carers can make the most of these experiences. What an exciting responsibility it is to be helping build the foundations for the future of young children!

- › The first years of life are the foundation for all later growth, development and learning.
- › Every experience counts! Babies and young children are learning all the time, with most learning taking place in relationships.
- › Research shows that what happens in these years is the key to:
 - being able to relate confidently and effectively with others;
 - mental and emotional health; and
 - educational success.

Babies and young children are learning all the time.

What do babies and young children need, to get the best start for living and learning?

To learn best they need parents and carers (their first teachers) who:

- › are warm and caring;

- › know each baby or child very well and appreciate what is special about them;
- › take time to understand the child's messages (cues) and to respond to them with encouragement, praise, comfort, independence and rest as needed; and
- › are able to see, share and celebrate the big and small joys and achievements of the children in their care.

Adults provide:

- › responsive and sensitive care; and
- › a safe and interesting place to be.

They follow children's lead by supporting their exploration and the things they like to do.

There is no set list of things to teach babies and young children.

Living is learning and children learn through living. All children and babies have their own abilities and interests. Follow the child's lead.

Watch and listen; provide opportunities; give support; build on each child's strengths. Babies and children also come from family and cultural backgrounds that are part of the way they are and need to be included in their experiences. These books will help you to provide the best start for the children in your care.

Introduction

Learning about our bodies and lifestyles

From birth, children begin taking an interest in their bodies. They explore faces with their eyes, suck their fingers and, later on, reach for their toes. From these early explorations, the next logical step is ongoing learning about healthy bodies, which involves the development of everyday healthy habits and routines.

Families and early educators play a key role in helping young children with their everyday learning about healthy bodies, from infancy into early primary school. Such everyday learning is really about everyday living. It is about the daily lifestyle of children and their families and it extends to the lifestyles that educators create in early childhood settings. This 'everyday early-lifestyle' idea is about children's total body awareness and different kinds of physical activity, as well as their appetites and eating habits.



'Such everyday learning is really about everyday living.'





Changing lifestyles mean changing bodies

Learning about one's body and the family's lifestyle is vital today, as many young children and adults have less-active bodies but more-active stomachs! There are a number of reasons for this:

- › children are generally staying inside and being inactive for longer periods of time, sitting while playing or watching television rather than being up and moving;
- › children tend to have fewer household chores or real work experiences that involve using their bodies actively and burning up energy from their meals;
- › many children are eating more often and/or bigger servings; so therefore they are consuming more food than their body-activity levels require; and
- › children often eat fatty, salty, highly-processed foods rather than those that contain an array of essential vitamins and minerals—raw vegetables and fruits, wholegrain products and cooked natural (not highly processed) foods.

In combination, these things make for unhealthy bodies in the short term and make it harder to have healthy bodies in the future.

How to develop healthy bodies

Because in Australia there is now enough observational and health evidence, as well as family concerns about children's lack of activity and increased over-eating, 'obesity' has become important in political, government and educational circles. However; plans coming from such political discussion often relate to just fitness or just diet. We need to think about children's overall healthy bodies and their healthy eating together. Plans that involve

extra tasks for families and additional programs for children are often difficult to manage in everyday life. We need to encourage parents, carers, grandparents and educators to come back to the basics of helping children understand more about their bodies and our everyday lifestyle patterns and habits.

Helping children have healthier bodies is a responsibility of families and also of the whole community. The community needs to take some responsibility as well as families because many of the things that affect children's lifestyles are outside the family.

What children eat, whether at home or in early childhood settings, is a major contributor to their body fitness. And, children's levels of body activity or passiveness (not being active) are linked with their eating habits.

Initially establishing children's everyday body habits and their learning about lifestyle is a continuous process, which means:

- › supporting children to make wiser choices;
- › guiding children towards healthier options and decisions; and
- › helping children to take part in physical activities and to continue them.

This kind of everyday learning and teaching is much more effective and positive than having to make later lifestyle changes that involve intervention and un-learning.





Babies

Developing—healthy bodies and healthy eating

Healthy bodies

Although they cannot walk or run around, there are other very important ways in which a baby's body is active:

- › during the first months of a baby's life, she is growing physically every day (body growth and development is from the head downwards and from the centre of the chest outwards);
- › early on, this makes the infant quite top-heavy because her head makes up about a quarter of her total body length;
- › she will sleep a lot, but needs many opportunities to move when she is awake e.g. supervised time on her tummy on a rug on the floor;
- › her first clothes need to fit but also have room for moving, as she will want to wave her arms, wiggle her toes and kick her feet; and
- › she will reach out for people and begin to grasp things around her.

All this activity and rapid growth means that she needs lots of energy from what she eats. Teeth are also developing inside her gums and some will erupt before her first birthday.

Healthy eating

Sensible eating habits begin with mum's breast milk or a formula-milk if breastfeeding is not possible. A baby will cry when hungry, and at other times too. Later on, it is important that the first solid foods are carefully introduced. Because babies grow very quickly, at around six months they start to need more than milk. It is suggested that solids are first offered when babies make chewing movements rather than just sucking or pushing the tongue forward. Introducing solids to the infant diet will give baby essential vitamins and minerals for staying healthy and keeping her body growing but she still needs milk. This is a balancing time for liquid and solid foods—offer as much as the baby wants of healthy foods. For baby's first solids, try individual foods one by one, with no added salt, sugar, fats or spices. (see 'Starting solids' topic at www.cyh.com)

Establishing early, sensible eating patterns supports the baby's brain and intellectual activity. Sensible eating means the stomach and intestines digest meals effectively and this helps avoid constipation.

An infant develops a sense of trust with those closest to her and is dependent on them for nourishment. If you buy commercial baby foods, you need to read the labels so you know what is in them; otherwise, cook at home—simply steam or poach vegetables and fruits or grill small pieces of meat. Later, gradually add tastes of a varying range of simple, plain family-table foods.

Learning and doing—healthy bodies and healthy eating

Healthy bodies

In terms of their whole bodies, babies are very active:

- › they wiggle a lot;

'An infant develops a sense of trust with those closest to her and is dependent on them for nourishment.'





'Babies' senses of seeing, hearing and feeling support their total body awareness and their learning.'

- › as they grow they roll over, crawl and pull themselves around;
- › they hold onto people or furniture to pull themselves up; and
- › they also take that important first step.

All this activity strengthens growing muscles and bones and uses up body energy gained from eating.

Infants also learn to control body parts, such as:

- › whole-hand grasping of mum or dad's finger; and
- › then learning the pincer grasp (thumb and forefinger).

From early in life, infants can practise these finger and hand movements at home, and in family day care or other early childhood settings, as they help feed themselves some of the first solid foods such as soft, steamed broccoli trees.

Babies can practise holding a small spoon, trying to find their mouths and actually getting the spoon inside. Babies' senses of seeing, hearing and feeling support their total body awareness and their learning.

Healthy eating

Breast milk is highly recommended around the world as the best first food for infants. A few years ago there was a campaign for 'breast is best' (see Lucy Burney's book in the resource list). However, breastfeeding may be challenging for some babies and mothers. And so decisions lie with parents about whether to feed newborns breast milk or formula-milk. Where breastfeeding is not possible, baby formulas are made to be as close to breast milk as possible.

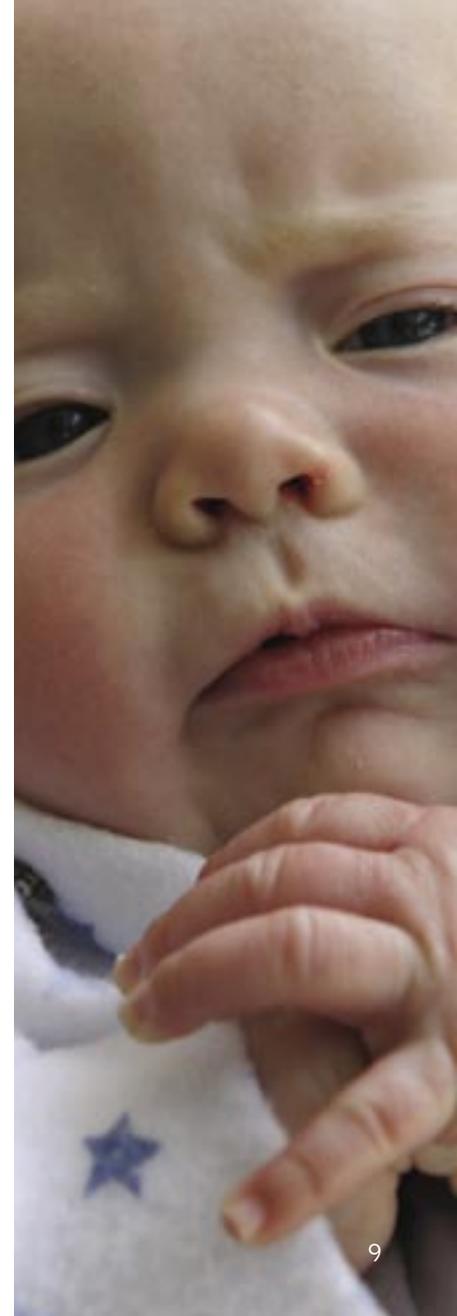


Milk gives infants their first opportunity to smell and taste a food. Sucking and swallowing liquids—human milk, formula or boiled water—is different from chewing solids. Learning to chew foods means using new front teeth and exercising the tongue and throat. These mouth movements also support early language learning.

For older infants, their senses are vital for experiencing different solid foods as they are introduced to their diets. Smell and taste, along with sight, play an important role as infants learn to recognise and appreciate small servings of each new solid food. Presenting each food separately rather than combined helps learning about tastes and smells. Being part of meals and trying to feed themselves are important parts of family life for older babies, although they can't wait too long for meals or sit at the table for too long.

Babies doing healthy things ...

- looking at her face and body parts as she sits, crawls and rolls over in front of a large mirror fixed low along a wall
- kicking a small stuffed animal placed by her feet while lying on her back on the floor
- sitting up with support on the floor and facing mum or dad, she can reach left and right across her midline to take and return a favourite toy
- lying on her tummy on the floor, she creeps and crawls for a ball placed just out of reach
- playing 'I've got your nose', she can learn about body parts as grandma or grandpa touches her body parts (nose, fingers, knees, hand, cheek, tummy, toes, etc.) and says 'I've got your ...'
- reaching for and moving a hanging mobile that you have made from pictures of body parts and family foods.



'Toddlers recognise familiar family foods—some like to try new foods and tastes while others like to stick to what they know. This is a time for setting good foundations for his lifelong eating habits.'



Toddlers

Developing—healthy bodies and healthy eating

Healthy bodies

From the time a toddler can walk steadily, he needs more and more daily opportunities to move all of his body in safe indoor and outdoor spaces. When he is really steady on his feet, he can try jumping in one place or running around in a circle. He can actively explore throwing and catching a big ball or rolling it on the ground; this will strengthen his arms and legs.

He wants to play actively as he becomes more and more agile. He might make music with the kitchen pots and pans and a wooden spoon and even march around the kitchen. He can bend, stretch and twist to exercise his arms and legs but also his body. This activity will stretch his chest and waist muscles and it will increase his fitness by supplying oxygen to the heart and lungs. He wants to be active with these kinds of body movements every day in play ways.

Healthy eating

Toddlers recognise familiar family foods—some like to try new foods and tastes while others like to stick to what they know. This is a time for setting good foundations for his lifelong eating habits. The toddler doesn't grow as rapidly now and he may have an erratic appetite at times. If weaning is a gradual process, toddlers adjust more easily (see Burney, 2004). Also, be aware that he does want to explore the surrounding world, but his attention span varies and so he may not sit through a long family meal.

Because his finger and hand control is better now, he will want to feed himself and may play with some food to learn more about it, or even refuse some foods. He has a better understanding of when he is hungry and what

he likes to eat; he will probably be forming a favourite food 'list'. So, this is a wise time—for both diet diversity and health reasons—for introducing a range of wholesome foods and a balance across various food groups. Offer many simple, natural foods in small serving sizes, but don't make a fuss if he doesn't want them. Just try again later.

Establishing family mealtime patterns will help him see food as part of the family social life. Healthy nibbles between main family meals are essential, because young children's stomachs are small and they do best with small amounts. Being anaemic (developing a blood disorder due to lack of iron) may be linked to drinking too much milk and eating too few iron-rich foods during toddlerhood (Berman & Fromer, 1991, p. 34), so be sure to include foods like lean meat and fish, plus wholegrain, plain cereals and rich vitamin C sources—citrus fruits or green vegetables.

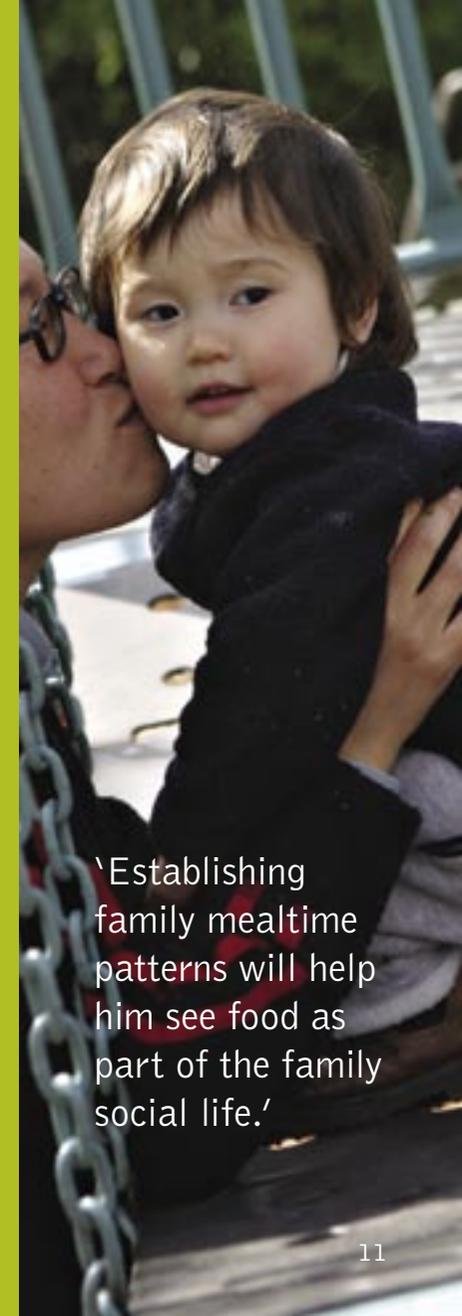
Learning and doing—healthy bodies and healthy eating

Healthy bodies

Starting with mouths, parents will assist toddlers with brushing their teeth. Toddlers are learning about this daily habit—when and why teeth are cleaned. Often, general learning about the dentist happens during toddlerhood, with a first visit to a dentist's office.

Toddlers' five senses are the main ways they learn about their bodies and ever-changing body positions in space. Toddlers are always:

- › looking at all the things around them;
- › listening to environmental sounds; and
- › touching what is within reach.



'Establishing family mealtime patterns will help him see food as part of the family social life.'



'In fact, an unhurried, healthy breakfast is a sound activity for family members of all ages; this can set the day's mood for toddlers.'

These senses lead to all kinds of body movements and uses, for example:

- › climbing stairs is a wonderful pastime that pulls different leg muscles and needs body balance; and
- › practising how to soap and wash one's hands and then dry them begins a daily healthy habit.

Healthy eating

Beginning each day in a peaceful breakfast setting helps toddlers learn to eat in calm, non-rushed ways and start the day well. This is important learning for toddlers to practise in our loud, fast-moving world. In fact, an unhurried, healthy breakfast is a sound activity for family members of all ages; this can set the day's mood for toddlers. In addition to sharing a start-the-day breakfast so that everyone has sustaining energy for the day, sustaining foods provide longer-lasting digestion and dense, slower-release energy. They are filled with healthful vitamins, minerals and often fibre. Eating the healthiest foods most often means that children's daily diets are rich in nutrients, with fewer highly-processed items.

Offer a variety of healthy foods each day. The following is a rough guide to the amounts and types to offer toddlers, but don't worry if your child doesn't actually eat all of these every day.

- Vegetables - two to four serves
- Fruit - one to two serves
- Dairy foods (milk, cheese, yoghurt) - three serves
- Meat, eggs, fish, lentils etc - one to two small serves
- Breads, cereals, rice and pasta - three to five serves

(See 'Feeding toddlers' topic at www.cyh.com)

Because toddlers want to be more and more independent and are trying to establish some control over their lives, they will say 'NO' at times. This is part of their growing and learning. This refusing behaviour often centres around family foods, with even a toddler's favourite foods being rejected some days. Adults can support and guide toddlers' choices from a wide variety of healthy foods. Make sure there is always something that you know they like. At this toddler stage, adults can acknowledge desirable table behaviours and ignore undesirable ones; however, food as a basic need should never be the source of praise or punishment. Rather, food represents caring and sharing among family and friends.

Establishing family patterns for meals during toddlerhood will mean fewer hassles for everyone later. Learning about eating in moderation and serving sizes will support toddlers' future healthy eating habits. It is wise to avoid treats and desserts being 'rewards' for eating the rest of the meal. Healthy desserts can be just another part of the whole meal. New foods can be offered in matter-of-fact ways along with familiar ones.

All these food-learnings happen every day; so toddlers gradually build up patterns of regular, relevant habits within the home or wherever they are. For example, many children from the toddler age begin drinking lots of fruit juices and/or soft drinks in place of their main infant food—milk. These liquid foods can become part of toddlers' daily eating habits; but they have less nutrient value than fruit itself and no fibre. They can easily fill up a small stomach and thus compete with a wider variety of wholesome foods from various food groups. Thus, encouraging children to drink plain water throughout the day is helpful, healthy learning. Involving toddlers in learning to pour their own water can help with this habit. Start practising outside during warmer days and summer, when spills won't matter and children are more likely to be thirsty. Milk and other dairy products are still essential sources of calcium for growing bones.

'... food as a basic need should never be the source of praise or punishment.'





This is a learning time for:

- › trying more fruits and vegetables;
- › learning about eating out with the family;
- › reconsidering family food qualities, food times and eating places (always ensure children eat sitting down); and
- › making healthy-choice changes to family eating patterns that reflect what you have discovered from the points above.

Also, toddlers can begin learning about table manners as well as food safety and health, such as:

- › a full mouth means time to chew food rather than talk;
- › eating happens with a closed mouth; and
- › chewing food results in swallowing small bits rather than big pieces (this process mixes saliva with food particles to aid digestion).



Toddlers doing healthy things ...

- helping with simple food preparations by using recipes in picture format (for example see the 'celery boat' in Appleton, McCrea & Patterson, pp. 88-89);
- touching body parts as a parent or early childhood educator calls out 'head, tummy, toes' (this helps toddlers learn about body parts and other concepts such as up, down, low and high);
- tiptoeing around barefoot both indoors and outdoors (with and without music). This develops body balance control and is a weight-bearing movement for strong bones;
- taking tiny steps and giant steps along a hallway or on a footpath (write down foot sizes and see how they grow on a chart);
- pretending to be various animals and moving like them (horse—gallop; rabbit—hop; kangaroo—jump; snake—slither, etc.);
- following a leader (child or adult) alternately using moving skills (walk, run, tiptoe, jump, etc.) and skills while being still (stretching, bending, twisting, etc.); and
- listening to changes in each other's heartbeat while lying flat, sitting quietly, and after moving around (use a real or toy stethoscope).



Young children (two–five years)

Developing—healthy bodies and healthy eating

Healthy bodies

Young children need many opportunities to be physically active but it is important not to push them into things they don't want to do. This means a child needs a balanced activity level to maintain a healthy body, not too little nor too much. She also needs various times and spaces to be appropriately active.

During these early years, she will practise her ever-growing body skills:

- › using her hands and arms and her legs in many ways that she couldn't before;
- › expanding her lungs and exercising her heart by jumping from rock to rock or jumping a rope—but she wouldn't do this for very long or every day;
- › stretching lots of body parts by moving to different kinds of music; and
- › walking or crawling through obstacle courses with a friend, giving their arms and legs a solid workout.

Healthy eating

By now, the young child's desire for foods may be influenced by other children and well-liked relatives or educators. These important people can help strengthen her healthy eating habits and shared eating experiences; but they may also encourage her into less-healthy food habits. The media is influential too, so be media-wise and avoid programs and advertisements that promote unhealthy foods (use mute; change channels).





Rather than drinking lots of fruit or vegetable juices, provide grated apple or carrot, an orange or a stick of celery. Particularly in summer; offer frozen fruits: strawberries, grapes, pieces of banana and watermelon. These foods exercise her jaw and help avoid tooth decay.

From about age two, maybe two-and-a-half, the young child will probably have all twenty of her baby teeth, so she can chew almost any family food. Even so, she may at times still be a finicky eater or dawdle at the table. By the age of four or five, children will usually eat like adults and even be good company during meals; this is of course, if they have learned to eat with the family and share table conversations.

Learning and doing—healthy bodies and healthy eating

Healthy bodies

Adults play a vital role in encouraging lots of physical activity so that young children learn about keeping their bodies fit. For example, at least once a week in spring and summer, parents and carers can set limits on television watching and being inside by:

- › substituting a family bike-and-trike ride around the neighbourhood;
- › going for a walk to a local park, where children can spend time hopping, skipping and jumping in an open space or exercising the dog; and
- › if children have a backyard, they can play games with balls, hoops and ropes.





On rainy days, children can be active at home:

- › dancing to music or moving to an exercise tape or video; and
- › playing hide-and-go-seek.

With all this activity, children often get dirty. From about two or two-and-a-half years, they can take more responsibility for scrubbing their bodies in the bath, with close adult supervision of course. They will have already learned effective hand washing.

Young children can be active, responsible family members with daily or weekly child-relevant household tasks. At this age children are very able and competent and they love to help. As active helpers, children can learn about home-helping habits while they exercise their bodies. Responsibilities around the house, but always with calm adult guidance, might include:

- › sharing in keeping their room neat and tidy;
- › helping plant herbs (bending, stretching, reaching);
- › taking turns watering herbs in a large clay pot near the kitchen door (controlling a hose and nozzle);
- › lifting and carrying foods when shopping;
- › unpacking groceries and finding their storage places in the kitchen or pantry;
- › preparing some of their own foods (using simple recipes); or
- › setting the table with placemats, plates and utensils.



Healthy eating

From about age two, or even younger, children can be helpful grocery shoppers with their parents. This is a time for learning about foods—refrigerated or not, in-season or not, fresh or processed etc. They can point to things, put them in the trolley, help push it along and even help hand over the money. When they are three to five years old, children can actively learn about shared shopping; this means the give and take of making food and meal decisions. Parents show children how to be careful buyers by reading and talking about labels, and thinking about which foods are healthy. Careful shoppers learn how to make wise decisions and healthy choices about family foods. Children can begin learning about bodily needs for mostly wholesome, simple, fresh foods. Adults can talk with children about why we should eat less of some foods (excessive fat, sugar, salt, additives). This learning is about individual foods and combinations of ingredients more than trying to understand vitamins and minerals.

Two- to five-year-olds can be more responsible for brushing their teeth each morning and night, still with adult guidance. From about age two, children can practise 'swishing, swirling and spitting' clear water around their mouths to remove food particles from their teeth after a meal. This age group is often interested in body wastes and they can learn more about them (go to www.cyh.com then 'Kids' Health', 'Health information just for kids', 'Your body', 'Your waste disposal system').

This can be a learning time for re-visiting family daily food quantities and talking about them with young children (food intake=serving sizes, meal sizes, number of meals; note: we can eat all foods, learning here is focused on 'how often' and 'how much' we eat various foods with the aim of reaching a happy medium, according to levels of activity). One practical and fun way to explore quantities of foods is to do the 'filling my stomach' activity in the box on page 20.

'Parents show children how to be careful buyers by reading and talking about labels, and thinking about which foods are healthy.'



Suggested ingredients for a healthy cereal:

- › rolled oats;
- › rolled rye;
- › rolled barley;
- › small pieces of dried fruits;
- › ground or chopped nuts and seeds—linseed (excellent Omega-3 source), sunflower, pumpkin, almond;
- › psyllium (for active intestines and avoiding constipation); and
- › fresh fruits can be added when serving.

Take extra care that children don't choke—usually whole nuts and seeds are not given to children under age five. If children have allergies, these may include certain nuts.



Young children doing healthy things ...

- › 'filling my stomach'—use a medium–large clear ziplock bag as a second stomach and fill it with an exact duplicate of what a child eats during the day
- › drawing full body outlines on large paper and tracing 'disappearing food' from mouth to stomach to intestine to toilet
- › 'looking inside my body'—creating or buying a body apron with attachable/detachable organs (lungs, heart, liver, stomach, large intestine, small intestine, spine, pelvis, kidneys etc.; see Young, pp. 38, 49); viewing x-rays of people's bones
- › creating a family cereal—children can be involved in selecting an array of whole grains and other foods from the shop shelf; and at home, helping open the bags, then pouring and combining these foods into a large sealed container for family breakfasts
- › balancing a beanbag on one's head while walking (and try skipping) from one place to another (slow, fast, forward, backward, straight, curving, zigzags). Try balancing the beanbag on other body parts too;
- › forming different kinds of bridges and tunnels with one's body and body parts. Try two children cooperating; this strengthens muscles and increases flexibility. Remember sun protection too; and
- › playing 'Simon says' using both body parts identification and fitness tasks.



Parents, carers and educators working together everyday for wiser lifestyles

What young children do (their activities) and what they eat (their appetites) builds their bodies. Family genes are background factors. Social influences can also shape children's everyday activities and appetites. These include things like:

- › television;
- › marketing and advertising (see *Mind over media* resources);
- › accessibility of foods; and
- › what other children and adults do.

As part of children having healthy bodies, we need to wonder more about the cumulative effects of surrounding environments (see *Chemical trespass* and *Clean food organic* resources). Wondering about body health focuses our attention on children eating so many refined foods with artificial additives or residues. This includes:

- › preservatives;
- › chemicals;
- › antibiotics;
- › hormones;
- › pesticides; and
- › colours and flavours.

A plea from all young children to parents, carers, extended families and educators is ...

'Help ME learn now about healthy bodies, especially habits for MY body parts and MY eating, rather than having to change and relearn later.'

Everyday learning about healthy bodies means children gradually gaining awareness and appreciation of the body, and respect and responsibility for their bodies.

Books to share with children

Brown, M. (1947). *Stone soup*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Fox, M. (1983). *Possum magic*. Adelaide: Omnibus Books.

Munton, G. (1998). *Breakfast around the world*. East Sussex, UK: Wayland.

Newcome, Z. (2000) *My first body book: Head to toes*. London: Walker Books.

Roffey, M. (1988). *Mealtime*. Worcester, UK: Walker Books.

Toffs, H. (1998). *I eat vegetables!* Slough, UK: Zero to Ten.

Thomas, B. [photographs] (1995). *My food book*. Melbourne: Thomas C. Lothian.

Watanabe, S. (1994). *How do I eat it?* London: Random House Children's Books.



So, what can adults do?

Parents, grandparents and carers can actively work together in guiding, modelling, shaping, helping, revisiting, solving, sorting out, deciding and advocating about children's bodies and their healthy eating. They can:

- › campaign for more honest, family-friendly labelling and shop displays of 'eat-most' foods;
- › request policies for 'everywhere' health-promoting early childhood services and primary schools that prioritise children's physical activities, their food learning in kitchen-gardens, and meals with more local and fresh, natural, organic foods;
- › lobby for changing 'industrial food' regulations to help curb manufacturers of highly-processed and 'empty' foods in terms of sponsorships: in educational settings, at children's sports events, and during children's television hours;
- › gather information and ideas about children's activities and children's appetites, to share and inform action plans; and/or,
- › approach local councils to establish family-friendly planning guidelines related to locations for community-edible gardens and for neighbourhood services and businesses that encourage more family walking.

Summary

In summary, food is often about fond memories. Help your young children have fond food memories when they grow up. These memories can be about growing, preparing and eating.

Childhood play is often also fondly remembered. Such physical experiences can be supported by classic and contemporary children's books about healthy bodies and body parts, and particularly the role that food plays in our lives. Building family and cultural traditions now can be part of creating future healthy and happy memories for young children—and they will probably have active, healthier bodies too. Sensible childhood activities and appetites are worthwhile now, and worth looking back on later in life. They are the essence of a healthy family lifestyle.

References/Resources for parents and carers

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Visit the following online sites:

www.bfa.com.au

Biological farmers of Australia site with information on organic food production

www.cyh.com

A great range of resources about children's needs as they grow and develop

www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca

An online encyclopedia, find 'obesity'.

www.foodnews.org

Online wallet guide to pesticides in produce.

www.healthyactive.gov.au

Government site promoting healthy eating and regular physical activity

www.healthychildhood.org

Health promotion through early childhood programs

www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications

Download dietary guidelines

www.nutritionaustralia.org

Nutrition for all ages, recipes, menus, healthy living pyramid, including being active

www.saynotogmos.org

Say no to GMOs (genetically modified organisms)

www.truefood.org.au

How to shop GE (genetic engineering) free

www.un.org and www.who.int

Learn about BMI (body mass index) here

www.unsystem.org/scn/

UN standing committee on nutrition—various reports on their initiatives, especially in developing countries

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Everyday learning about healthy bodies outlines the basics of developing strong foundations for a healthy lifestyle for young children.

With an emphasis on healthy eating and lots of physical activity, experienced author, early childhood practitioner and lecturer Nadine McCrea provides expert guidance in a simple and effective way for parents, grandparents and other carers of babies, toddlers and preschoolers.

With ever-increasing awareness of the issue of obesity in children, this book is a great starting point for encouraging your child to develop sound habits that will ensure their future wellbeing.

I find these books to be very informative and helpful for first-time parents, as well as parents with babies and siblings.

They have a good range of information and are a handy size to have at home to help when needed or to find a tip to help with a certain problem. The books are easy to read and understand and have some good quotes.

Sometimes when parents get together, especially first-time parents, there always seems to be a lot of questions asked. These books would be good to have at playgroups, preschools, family day care etc., so parents are able to read through them.

I think these books are a great idea and could always be expanded with new and interesting topics.

Narelle, from Tweed Heads, mother of Jackson 6 years, Makensie 4 years and Logan, 6 months.

