



NUTRITION TIPS

Healthy Digestion in Children

Teaching your children how to eat well is something you must make a habit this year since this will help them develop a healthy digestive system.

The foods children eat are usually not in the form that their bodies can use as nourishment. During digestion, these foods are broken down into smaller forms that their bodies can use. Children's digestive system consists of a series of hollow organs that run in a twisting tube from the mouth to the anus. These organs contain muscles that are constantly undergoing rhythmic movements necessary for the digestive process.

Importance of Proper Chewing

Children should be made to chew their food properly before swallowing. This is because since digestion begins in the mouth, this action helps break down the

very large food into smaller particles. Proper chewing ensures that the food mixes well with saliva so that it becomes soft and is more easily moved through the oesophagus to the stomach. When food is not well chewed, the fragments remain big and are consequently not properly digested.

How Food is Digested

Once the food gets into the stomach it is mixed with digestive juices and enzymes and protein-rich foods like beans, eggs and meat are digested into smaller compounds called amino acids.

The carbohydrates and fats are later digested when they get to the upper part of the small intestine to give glucose and fatty acids respectively. These nutrients are then absorbed into the body where the amino acids are used to make new cells or repair old ones and the glucose and the fatty acids are either used to provide energy or are stored for future use.

Tips for Healthy Digestion

A poor diet and bad eating habits in children can lead to heartburn, diarrhoea and constipation.

To prevent these you need to give your children healthy meals and also ensure that they develop good eating habits. Give them foods like vegetables and grains since these are high in fibre.

Try limiting the amount of fat in their diet and ensure that they drink enough fluids like water and milk since these will lubricate the food they eat and make it pass more easily through their digestive tracts.



* For more information on child nutrition

Visit the Olu Akinkugbe Foundation
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