

Kids don't have to be picky eaters

By Natalie Parletta, Washington Post

Hippocrates said, circa 400 B.C., that “food should be our medicine and medicine should be our food.” He would probably turn in his grave if he saw the amount of highly processed, sugary food and drinks marketed to children today. This food can be as addictive as cocaine or heroin. And it's difficult for parents to counteract its appeal.

One in three children and 66 percent of adults in the U.S. are overweight or obese. This is contributing to unprecedented levels of preventable obesity-related disease such as diabetes, heart disease, and liver and kidney failure. Unhealthy diets also contribute to poor mental health and lower IQ in children.

Parents have a very important influence on their child's health and eating choices. For starters, breastfeeding for 12 months can impact their taste preferences by exposing them to multidimensional flavors – and they can develop taste preferences for foods that mom eats too (healthy or otherwise).

Children will learn to like healthy foods, such as vegetables, if they are regularly exposed to them from a young age. When you can, cook baby foods yourself from fresh ingredients, and avoid adding sugars and salt. Children's taste preferences are established in early life. It is best to keep it simple – introduce new vegetables and fruit one at a time so they can learn to appreciate the individual flavors.

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