

Parenting

early years

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FIT GENERATION PART 3



Family Meal Makeo

If you've been following *Parenting's* shape-up series for the last two months, is for keeping your kids' health and weight in check—and learned how to get whole program is online at Parenting.com.) Your mission this month: Eating The whole family. We've got the 411 on just how much your kids should be superfoods, and smart strategies to get them to munch more good stuff.



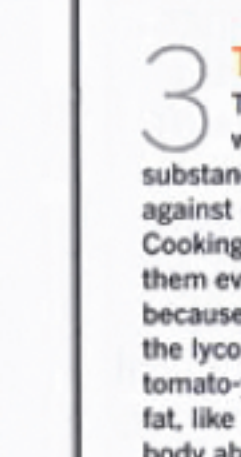
10 Superfoods for Kids

It's a fact of life: Chips, cupcakes, and lots of other not-so-nutritionally-noble foods are going to find their way into your child's mouth. Heck, if left to their own devices, a lot of kids wouldn't eat anything that didn't come out of a pizza or pasta box. But that's all the more reason to make sure the meals you serve up are packed with as much good stuff as possible. *Parenting* went to Rachel Beller, R.D., founder of the Beller Nutritional Institute in Beverly Hills, CA, a mom of four, and an expert in eating for true bite-for-bite nutritional powerhouses. Most important, they're also foods kids might actually eat. Add them to this week's shopping list!

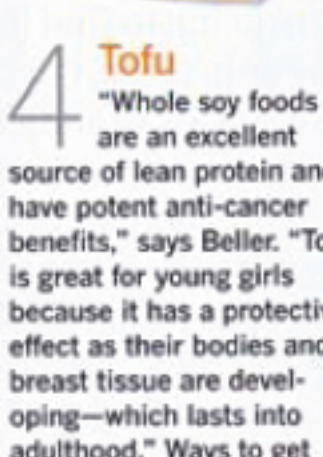
- 1 Blueberries**
They've ranked among the healthiest fruits for years (go, antioxidants). Now research suggests that in addition to protecting against heart disease and diabetes and improving brain function, blueberries may also help reduce visceral "toxic" belly fat—a type of fat that has been linked to obesity and metabolic syndrome. Ways to get them in your kid's diet: They're a natural go-with breakfast choice (say, tossed into a bowl of granola and milk) and are also great in summer salads and desserts. Try making ice pops by freezing a blend of whirled-up blueberries, yogurt, and some honey (after age 1).
- 2 Cocoa**
You probably think of the marshmallow-studded beverage, but cocoa powder actually has one of the highest concentrations of flavonoids, a compound known to improve blood pressure and heart and oral health. They may also protect skin from sun damage. Use at least 70 percent pure cocoa and check that it isn't processed with alkali (also called "Dutch processed"), which removes most of the flavonoids. Ways to serve it (beyond hot cocoa): Sprinkle it on pancakes, waffles, or French toast, or melt some dark chocolate and dunk strawberries in it.

Turn the page for more amazing superfoods! →

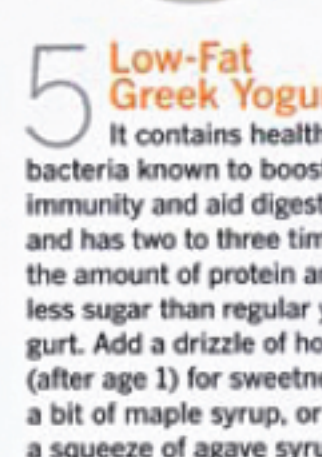
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you know how important exercise them moving. (Missed it? The healthier. You. Your child. downing, nutrition-packed Chow's on! By Shaun Dreisbach



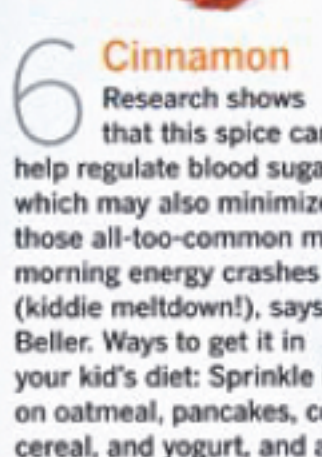
3 Tomatoes
They're loaded with lycopene—a substance that protects against many cancers. Cooking tomatoes makes them even healthier because the heat releases the lycopene. Hint: Pairing tomato-y foods with a good fat, like olive oil, helps the body absorb more. Ways to get them in your kid's diet: Pizza and pasta sauces are obvious choices, or add tomato sauce to turkey meatballs or meatloaf if you need to disguise it. A bowl of chili and salsa for dipping are good options if you've got a spice lover.



4 Tofu
"Whole soy foods are an excellent source of lean protein and have potent anti-cancer benefits," says Beller. "Tofu is great for young girls because it has a protective effect as their bodies and breast tissue are developing—which lasts into adulthood." Ways to get it in your kid's diet: Stir-fries or soups; use the silken variety as a sub for yogurt in fruit smoothies; snack on lightly boiled and salted edamame (soybeans)—the kids will have fun popping them out of the shells.



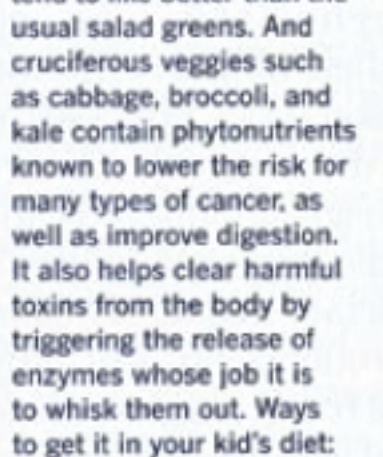
5 Low-Fat Greek Yogurt
It contains healthy bacteria known to boost immunity and aid digestion, and has two to three times the amount of protein and less sugar than regular yogurt. Add a drizzle of honey (after age 1) for sweetness, a bit of maple syrup, or try a squeeze of agave syrup (a sweetener index, so it won't make your child's blood sugar—and energy level—spike and then crash soon after breakfast). Agave is available in grocery stores, either in the organic aisle or where you'd find honey.



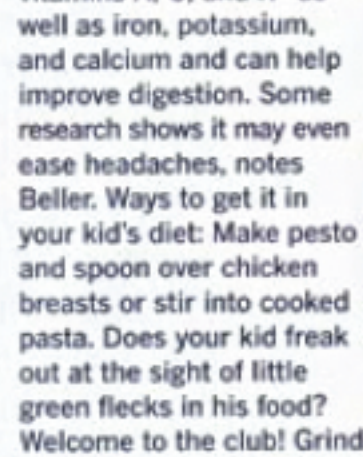
6 Cinnamon
Research shows that this spice can help regulate blood sugar, which may also minimize those all-too-common mid-morning energy crashes (kiddie meltdown!), says Beller. Ways to get it in your kid's diet: Sprinkle it on oatmeal, pancakes, cold cereal, and yogurt, and add a few extra dashes of cinnamon to muffins or quick-bread recipes that call for it. "My kids also love it on air-popped popcorn," says Beller. Or combine it in a shaker with cocoa and sprinkle both together for a superfood two-fer.



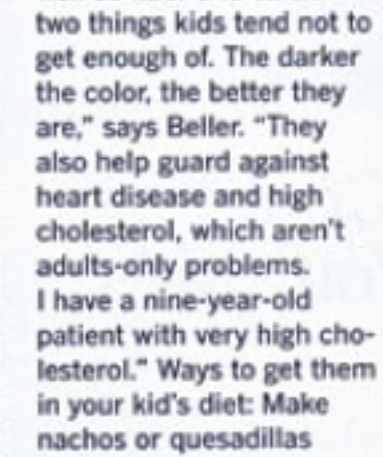
Portion Control Is that blob of mac and cheese just right—or more than your kid's fair share? It's actually not the complicated to figure out—and you don't need to weigh or measure a thing, says childhood obesity expert and pediatrician Sarah Hampl, M.D. **The answer is right in your child's hand:** A child-size portion of meat is about what would fit in your guy's palm. For whole-grain carbs, such as brown rice or pasta, a serving is roughly the size of his fist—a measurement that also applies to fruits, veggies, and dairy products such as yogurt. A serving of cheese is about thumb-sized, and for munching on snack foods, think a handful. "The great thing about this system is that it works no matter what your child's age—because his hand grows as he, and his appetite, does. So you don't have to memorize portions," Dr. Hampl notes.



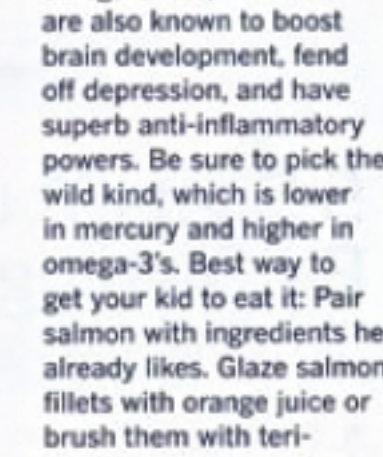
7 Cabbage
It has a mild flavor and crunch that kids tend to like better than the usual salad greens. And cruciferous veggies such as cabbage, broccoli, and kale contain phytonutrients known to lower the risk for many types of cancer, as well as improve digestion. It also helps clear harmful toxins from the body by triggering the release of enzymes whose job it is to whisk them out. Ways to get it in your kid's diet: Make coleslaw with low-fat mayo; shred and toss it into soups or Asian noodle dishes.



8 Basil
This herb is packed with antioxidants—vitamins A, C, and K—as well as iron, potassium, and calcium and can help improve digestion. Some research shows it may even ease headaches, notes Beller. Ways to get it in your kid's diet: Make pesto and spoon over chicken breasts or stir into cooked pasta. Does your kid freak out at the sight of little green flecks in his food? Welcome to the club! Grind it up superfine and hide it in sauces, soups, and that ever-popular master of disguise, meatballs.



9 Black Beans
"Beans are a great source of protein, as well as fiber and calcium—two things kids tend not to get enough of. The darker the color, the better they are," says Beller. "They also help guard against heart disease and high cholesterol, which aren't adults-only problems. I have a nine-year-old patient with very high cholesterol." Ways to get them in your kid's diet: Make nachos or quesadillas with black beans, cheese, and salsa; try black-bean veggie burgers, or whip up black-bean hummus.



10 Salmon
It contains heart-healthy omega-3 fats, which are also known to boost brain development, fend off depression, and have superb anti-inflammatory powers. Be sure to pick the wild kind, which is lower in mercury and higher in omega-3's. Best way to get your kid to eat it: Pair salmon with ingredients he already likes. Glaze salmon fillets with orange juice or brush them with teriyaki sauce. Or serve it as salmon cakes, burgers, or salad (mashed and mixed with low-fat mayo).

Learning to Like the Good Stuff

Expert tricks that really work—even with super-picky eaters—from The Sneaky Chef Missy Chase Lapine, a *Parenting* Mom Squad member:

Don't make a big deal about it. If you announce "We're going to try something new tonight," your child will just translate that as "This is going to be disgusting; prepare to hate it." Instead, just set the plate down and let your kid explore it for herself.

Work with her. Incorporate the healthy stuff into dishes you know your child likes. If she loves pizza, try adding pineapple. Got a muffin fan? Make a batch with blueberries or grated zucchini or carrots. Chicken-nugget chomper? Bake them with whole-grain bread crumbs.

Talk it up. A kid couldn't care less about cholesterol or heart disease, but he will take notice if you tell him that doughnut won't give him enough energy to climb the jungle gym or keep up with his friend in the swimming pool.

Eat it yourself. If you won't touch anything green, why should they? But if they see you enjoying a big salad or a fish dish, they just may come around (well, eventually).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: YALONSKI/SHUTTERSTOCK, ERIC GEAR/SHUTTERSTOCK, BARBARO BERGEL/SHUTTERSTOCK, ALEX STARGES/SHUTTERSTOCK, CORBIS PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES, ALLOY PHOTOGRAPHY/VEER, NEOLA BILIC/SHUTTERSTOCK, ROBIN MACKENZIE/SHUTTERSTOCK, DAVID SYKTIK/SHUTTERSTOCK, PFLUGRIM/SHUTTERSTOCK, ZEWU/SHUTTERSTOCK, MOTOHOLA/SHUTTERSTOCK