

Eating Healthy From the Start:

Kid and Kidney-Friendly Nutrition Tips

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Making sure your child is eating healthy can be an enormous challenge! Whether your child has PKD or not, many parents worry about their children's nutrition. As toddlers, they seem to refuse everything except pasta and cheese. As they get older, they start making more and more of their own choices about what to eat. Yikes! It is highly probable that eating well in childhood may offer some protection to the kidneys and influence the early progression of PKD. The following recommendations are for children with healthy kidney function with and without PKD.

We suspect that some of the same dietary factors that influence the growth of kidney cysts in animal models of PKD will also influence humans. The ones that seem to make the biggest difference in slowing the rate of cyst growth are:

Flaxseeds are high in anti-inflammatory omega-3 fatty acids and can be ground and added to cereals, salads and smoothies.

Low-sodium diet (less than 2300 mg/day). Look for snack foods with less than 200 mg sodium per serving, and add less salt when cooking.

Increase fruits and vegetables (unless kidney function is compromised). They are rich in anti-inflammatory antioxidants and phytochemicals. Eat a rainbow diet – the more color, the better!

Moderating protein intake not to exceed needs. Choose vegetable protein sources such as beans, whole grains and nuts to complement animal proteins.

Soy-based foods such as soymilk (calcium and vitamin D fortified), tofu, edamame, tempeh and roasted soy nuts: Tofu can be crumbled into pasta sauce, added into fruit smoothies and breaded and sautéed. Edamame and soy nuts make terrific and tasty snacks. Note: Soy-based foods should be consumed in moderation. PKD patients who have liver cysts should not incorporate soy into their diet, as the estrogen-mimicking component can increase the rate of cyst growth in the liver.



A Few More Ideas to Boost Your Child's Health:

Eat together. Research shows that children who eat with their parents or caregivers are more likely to eat vegetables and try new foods than children who eat by themselves or with siblings. The influence is especially powerful if the adults they are eating with like those foods too!

Keep trying. It may take up to 10 offerings before a child will accept a new food. Research shows that it may be best to offer new foods in a neutral way, without coercion, and let your kids move at their own pace. Have faith!

Let them serve themselves. Many kids will gladly serve themselves vegetables and whole grains if given the opportunity. Try putting food on the table "family style," with kid-friendly utensils. Many kids love tongs.

Get them involved. Take your kids to the farmers market and grocery store to let them pick out fruits and vegetables. Grow a garden. My 4-year-old son loves to help plant and water the vegetables and will happily eat peas, spinach, lettuce, tomatoes, raspberries, and blueberries out of the garden. Older kids can help with meal prep. When kids get involved, they are more likely to eat healthy foods.

Even with the best intentions, some children will be adamant against eating anything their parents want them to eat. According to noted psychologist and nutritionist Ellyn Satter, feeding children involves a division of responsibility, so that parents remember what is and isn't in their control when feeding a child. Satter says it is the parents' job to choose the food that will be offered and decide when and where the food will be eaten. It is the child's job to eat. They can choose to eat or not and should not be pressured or coerced. Ellyn Satter's philosophy of feeding children is based on years of experience and research and has been adopted by many childcare organizations across the country. She has several books in print if you would like to read more on the subject.

With a little perseverance, creativity and patience, your child undoubtedly will develop the taste for healthy foods. The most important thing you can do as a parent is cultivate your own love for healthy foods, model good eating in front of your children, and keep offering!

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How Much Protein Do Children Need?

Protein is very important for growing bodies, so it is important not to restrict protein intake in childhood. That being said, many children (and adults) in this country eat more than enough protein. It may be healthier for the kidneys to emphasize vegetable sources of protein such as legumes, whole grains and nuts. The following is a list of average protein needs for children. Please ask your dietitian about your child's specific needs.

| AGE | Average Daily Protein Needs (Dietary Reference Intake) |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0-6 months | 9 grams |
| 7-12 months | 13.5 grams |
| 1-3 years | 13 grams |
| 4-8 years | 19 grams |
| 9-13 years | 34 grams |