



FEEDING AND FUELING YOUR BODY

You have been on a major voyage through the many changes your body will experience during puberty. This train ride has been filled with stunning views of your one-of-a-kind body. All along the way you have learned how to care for your body as it does the hard work of helping you grow. Do you remember the three biggest ways you can help your body feel good and stay strong as you are going through puberty? You guessed it: nutritious food, fun movement and exercise, and a good night's rest.

NUTRITION

Your body is on a once-in-a-lifetime journey of growing and changing. To make the ride on the puberty train a healthy one, you will need wholesome and nutritious food. Often when we hear the word *nutrition*, we think of being forced to eat the yuckiest foods. Luckily, nutrition doesn't mean suffering through endless meals with peas, or whatever you don't like. Eating nutritious food can mean enjoying delicious food as well. Good for you can taste good, too.

Getting the right nutrition can not only affect how you grow during puberty, it can also affect how early or late you start puberty. Not getting enough healthy food can keep your body from launching the necessary hormones to begin puberty. And eating too much unhealthy food can cause your body to begin puberty changes sooner than it is supposed to. Since getting nutritious food is such a big deal for growing bodies like yours, let's talk about how to fuel your body.

A Rainbow of Flavors

One easy way to make sure you're getting lots of the healthy food you need to help your body handle puberty like a champ is to eat a rainbow. Okay, just kidding—you are not going to eat an actual rainbow. That would be quite a feat!

Eating the rainbow actually means eating natural foods that make up the colors of the rainbow, which

makes it easier to get the vitamins and minerals your body needs to develop through puberty. Here are the yummy colors you will want to see on your plate, and how they will help your body grow.


RED: apples, cherries, red cabbage, strawberries, tomatoes, watermelon.

Red foods can help you develop a sharp memory and healthy heart.

ORANGE/YELLOW: butternut squash, cantaloupes, carrots, mangos, oranges, pineapples, potatoes, sweet potatoes, yellow peppers.

Eating from the yellow part of the rainbow means getting the vitamins you need to have healthy eyes, heart, and immune system.





GREEN: asparagus, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, collards, cucumbers, green beans, green peppers, kale, peas, spinach.

Greens will help you have healthy teeth, strong bones, and sharp eyes.

PURPLE/BLUE: beets, blackberries, blueberries, dark beans, eggplant, figs.

Purple and blue foods will boost your memory and help your body stay strong as you age.

WHITE: ginger, mushrooms, onions.

White foods will help keep your heart pumping strong and healthy.

"But," you say, "what if I make a rainbow of orange cheddar potato chips, strawberry fruit snacks, and green apple gummy bears? Can that count as eating the rainbow?"

Well, friend, while those colors are found in the rainbow, you will probably get a bellyache and a trip to the dentist for cavities faster than you will get the nutrition you really need for your body. Nope, rainbow-colored junk food will not help the puberty train have a smooth ride. And foods that are high in sugar, fats, and salts can cause health problems as you get older.

This does not mean you can never eat chips, candy, or cake. They are fine in moderation, though they should never replace fruits, vegetables, and grains on the breakfast, lunch, or dinner table. Fresh natural

food that is close to its original form is what will always be healthier for you. This means trying to avoid *processed foods*.


The best way to know if a food is processed is to look at its packaging. Foods that come in boxes and cans or contain powders, syrups, or other flavorings are usually processed. Processed foods often have had lots of sugar, salt, and fats added to them, while many of the nutrients have been stripped away. It is better to look for fresh food choices whenever you can. For example, a fresh peach is going to give you more nutrition than canned peaches in sugary syrup.

Your body will need a few other nutrients to keep it in tip-top shape. Foods with protein—like meat, fish, beans, and cheese—will help you develop healthy muscles. You will also need foods with iron in them for energy, zinc to help your body fight illness, and folates to help your body soak up needed minerals.

Be a healthy food helper! Ask the grown-up who does the grocery shopping if you can tag along and help them pick out delicious rainbow-colored fresh food. Tell them it will be good for your taste buds, as well as your rapidly growing body.

Start Your Day the Right Way

One of the best gifts you can give your brilliant body is breakfast. Eating breakfast each day is like saying, "Good morning, body! Glad to see you today!" Breakfast is perhaps the most important meal of the day. It gives your body the energy it needs to start running all those



complicated functions that keep you alive. It also helps you not feel cranky and tired in the afternoon. Great breakfast ideas include oatmeal, fruit smoothies, eggs and toast, and bananas and peanut butter.

Allergies, Veggies Only, and Other Special Food Needs

People have different nutritional needs and their bodies react differently to food. Some people can't eat gluten (wheat products), and others have severe food allergies. Caring for our bodies sometimes means taking care of our special food needs. Food allergies—when foods cause a negative physical reaction in our bodies if we eat them (like itching, swelling, or other dangerous reactions)—are a common issue for many young people. In fact, up to three million people in the United States are allergic to some sort of food. Unfortunately, just because a food isn't good for your body doesn't mean it won't taste good. And this is where you can find yourself in trouble. Never eat foods you know you are allergic to, no matter how scrumptious they may look.

Hormone increases and stress during puberty can make allergies worse. So continue to eat healthy and be sure to stay away from foods that will trigger a reaction—your body will thank you!

Vegetarians are people who do not eat meat. People become vegetarian for many reasons, including religion and caring about animals. If you are a vegetarian or

★ ★ SPECIAL DIETS ★ ★ AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS

If you're going to a birthday party or a restaurant, let the adults in charge know about your special food needs in advance (whether you have allergies or are vegetarian). When you have special food needs, it can feel like you are left out of the fun, but that does not have to be the case. Learning what foods work best in your body is something to be proud of. It is a great way to care for yourself and to remind the world that there is more than one kind of body.

are considering becoming one, you'll need to figure out ways to get all the nutrition you need from other foods. You will need extra protein and vitamins (like B₁₂) that are mostly found in meat products. Talk with an adult and a doctor who can help make sure you are getting what your body needs to grow.

EXERCISE

One of the best ways to help your body is to move it! Exercise—getting up and moving around—is a wonderful way to support your ever-changing body.