

Feeding children is not easy! Keep these simple tips in mind so that your child is well-nourished and ready to learn:

Don't Let Sugar, Food Colors, and Additives take Center Stage in Your Child's Diet. Some children show sensitivity to these elements and their behavior may be affected. Too many of these foods crowd out good nutrition for your child.

Be Strategic with Snacks and Meals. Snacks can offer your child more nutrients but if they are full of sugar and fat (sweets, fried foods or chips) they can do more harm than good to your child's health. Schedule meals and snacks at regular times so your child will learn to expect and eat them at intervals that support normal appetite regulation and discourage over-eating.

Beware of Hidden Sugar. Added sugar (sugar that is added to food in processing, such as fruited yogurt, granola bars and cereals) can get out of control if you're not careful. Added sugar like sucrose, dextrose, glucose (or any ingredient ending in -ose) can be hiding in products that may seem to be healthy for your child. Read the Nutrition Facts Panel and the ingredients label!

Don't Fall for "Hunger" Pains. If you are feeding your child regular meals and snacks, every 3-4 hours, his or her physical hunger should be covered. If your child is asking for food every hour or so, he or she may be bored, experiencing emotions, or be in the habit of eating for other reasons—not hunger.

Optimize Your Child's School Lunch. If your child is buying lunch from school, help him choose menu options in advance and encourage him to eat his full meal so his appetite is covered until after-school snack time. If you're packing a lunch, don't make the mistake of packing nutrient-poor foods such as too many sweets or chips. Studies show that packed lunches from home can be low in nutrition and high in calories when unhealthy foods like these are included.

For more healthy food and feeding tips for children of all ages, visit my blog at www.jillcastle.com/blog/, join my Facebook page: Just The Right Byte, or sign up for my email newsletter at www.jillcastle.com! Also, my book Fearless Feeding: How to Raise Healthy Eaters from High Chair to High School is available on Amazon or for a personally signed copy, email me at Jill@JillCastle.com.