

## CHAPTER XXI

# Food for the Child

WITH a better scientific knowledge of what is proper growth and optimum nutrition in children, the necessity of adequate food for such demands is of interest to the average homemaker.

Food for children should provide:

1. Building foods to furnish material, not only to build muscle, but teeth and bone and nerves.
2. Foods containing the vitamins which regulate growth and are essential to life itself, as A and B, and also those which prevent scurvy and rickets, the latter a disease which 90 percent of the children have at some time during their childhood to a greater or less degree.
3. Foods to give the energy the growing child needs, since it is very active.
4. Foods to develop the jaw muscles and teeth, because of difficulty in mastication.
5. Enough food, as a child needs 2 to 3 times the amount of food an adult does per pound of body weight.

### *FOODS SUITED FOR CHILDREN*

1. The building food best suited to children's needs is milk. It contains the protein for building muscle and the lime for building teeth and bone. Vitamins A and B are also present. Each child should have a quart of milk every day. It may be used in cooking the food, by substituting milk for water in cooking cereals, or it may be made into a cream soup.

Eggs, particularly the yolks, are not only a valuable source of protein, but the iron and vitamins they contain make them a necessary food for children.

Meat and cheese are both suited for older children. Meat, like sugar, is a food with a flavor, and likely to be preferred to such bland foods as milk. One chief reason for stressing milk is that there is no food which in quantity or economy of cost furnishes the lime, so necessary for good teeth, as milk does. Meat furnishes the phosphorus and some parts, as the liver, are unusually rich in iron and vitamins. Broths from meat are desirable to use with children even

one year of age, but meat once a day is sufficient after the third year.

2. We are dependent on fruits and vegetables for some of our most important vitamins. Children should learn to eat them at an early age in order to insure the safety which they afford both thru prevention of disease and providing for proper assimilation of foods eaten.

Citrus fruits, such as oranges, are especially good, but if economy must be practiced, tomato juice may be used instead. The giving of cod liver oil to children thru infancy and childhood furnishes the vitamin D which prevents rickets.

Vegetables and fruits should be strained or rubbed thru a sieve for young children because of the large quantity of food they need in proportion to their size. In teaching children to eat vegetables, begin with only a small amount at first and gradually increase. Above all, remember practice is better than precept and the example of the parents of eating vegetables is a strong incentive to children eating them.

3. Sugars, starches, cereals and fats give the child the energy needed for his bodily activity.

Sugar should find little use in his dietary as sweet foods soon cloy the appetite. If they are given, they should be at the end of the meal. Foods given to children, such as cereals, cocoa, custards and ice cream, ought to be less sweet than those given to adults.

Starches in the form of bread and crackers are good in their place, provided they are used to develop the jaws and teeth. For this reason they should be stale. Too many children satisfy their appetite with bread and butter early in the meal and neglect the bone and body-building foods found in fruits, vegetables and milk. Bread and butter should be given to children after the above foods are eaten.

Graham crackers, which are made of the whole wheat kernel, are a good source of energy as well as minerals and vitamins, tho the graham cracker is too sweet to permit of an extended use. Cereals are of value for children as they contain phosphorus, and the whole ones vitamin B.

Fats particularly of benefit to children are butter and cream, which may be easily added to flavor their vegetables.

The importance of cod liver oil has already been mentioned.

4. Foods which encourage chewing are dry crusts, toast, zweiback, etc.

5. The fruits, vegetables and cereals are the bulky foods needed in the diet.

### *SUGGESTIONS FOR FEEDING CHILDREN*

1. The normal child, who exercises and plays out of doors in the sun, is hungry. The sun is a wonderful tonic for the appetite.

2. Children often do not eat because they play so hard that they become too tired. Such children are often underweight. Such a child should lie down a half hour before eating and rest afterward, also, to insure proper digestion and assimilation of food.

3. It is best not to discuss food with children. The plate may be served with small portions, and when eaten, second portions may be given or the dessert may be given. Allowing children to eat dessert first, or having two desserts, is a mistake, as too much sweet takes the place of food needed for building and growing.

4. The importance of children being taught to eat all the food on the plate is necessary, from an economic standpoint of teaching that food ought not be wasted. Those serving should plan smaller portions for children.

5. Children going without breakfast are endangering their health. If children arise and do something about the house first, an appetite is usually created. A glass of cold water on rising helps.

6. Tea and coffee have no place in a child's diet and if cocoa is used it should be only of such strength as to flavor the milk. Cocoa is a stimulant like tea and coffee.

7. Cooked fruits, vegetables, meats, eggs, etc., ought to be cut in small pieces and stones of fruit removed for the child. This aids in making the child like such foods, as he often becomes discouraged trying to master a prune pit or an unruly leaf of spinach.

8. The school lunch ought to be prepared with all the foregoing points in view. Milk should always form a part of it. With the use of a thermos bottle, hot milk soups, cocoa, etc., may be used to provide both milk and a hot dish.

9. Children are as sensitive to form and color as older people are. Sometimes a bit of jelly or a garnish changes the looks of a food so that he may grow to like a food which has been distasteful. Flavor, also, such as salt and cream or butter, are as necessary in children's foods as in adults'.

10. Children should be encouraged to use good table manners in handling silver and food. Nagging them continually develops indifference or emotional disturbance liable to interfere with digestion.