

Signs of Poor Nutrition in the Preschool Child

Symptom	Possible Nutritional Relationship
Underweight	Inadequate food intake Feeding problems Emotional problems - refusing to eat to gain attention Poor eating habits
Overweight	Entire family may eat too much Lack of exercise Emotional problems - overeating as a way to deal with other problems
Failure to grow	Inadequate food intake No breakfast Feeding problems
Lethargy or lack of attention	Inadequate food intake No breakfast Iron deficiency anemia Intestinal parasites (worms)
Jitters and hyperactivity	Inadequate food intake No breakfast Diet containing too much sugar Diet containing too much caffeine (colas, coffee, tea, chocolate)
Severe headaches or early morning headaches	Inadequate food intake Diet containing too much sugar No breakfast
Frequent diarrhea	Too much fiber in diet Diet not balanced Food allergy
Constipation	Inadequate fluid intake Lack of fiber in diet
Pallor (lack of color in skin)	Inadequate iron or iron deficiency anemia
Weakness or easy fatigue - leg cramps or bowed legs	Inadequate food intake Inadequate protein intake Inadequate calcium intake Too much phosphorous

How Much Is Enough? Nutritional Requirements Of Children

Care givers are faced with a challenge: feeding young children who have small and erratic appetites. This problem is complicated because children require nutrients in almost the same quantities as adults, but they need fewer calories. If children are to consume adequate vitamins, minerals, and protein, their diets must be carefully planned. Offer children only the most nutritious foods at meals and snack time. Avoid food that provides calories without many nutrients. Scientists identify more than 50 nutrients that must be included in the diet, but planning a diet to include all 50 is a difficult task. To simplify

menu planning, nutritionists have designated leader nutrients. Certain food groups supply certain leader nutrients. Refer to the following list of the four basic food groups and the leader nutrients supplied by each.

If you plan diets to include the leader nutrients, then the other essential nutrients usually will be included. It is important to note that you can plan an adequate diet using the four basic food groups only if you include a variety of food in the menu.

Food Groups and Their Leader Nutrients		
Four basic food groups	Leader nutrients	Servings needed daily by preschool
Fruits and vegetables	Vitamin A and C B vitamins (niacin and thiamin) Iron	4
Bread, grain and cereal	Carbohydrate Protein	4
Meat and meat alternates	Iron B vitamins (niacin and thiamin) Protein	2
Milk and milk products	Calcium B vitamins (niacin and thiamin)	3