

Why Children Need Healthy Fat?



Fat has always been associated with being harmful to our health. Too much fat intake is said to cause many diseases such as obesity, heart attack, diabetes and the list goes on. If you walk into any supermarket, chances are you would find many different kinds of dairy products labeled with **low-fat** which sounds to be “healthier” than whole milk. Is that really the case?

While it’s true that some fats are bad for health, many don’t know there are actually **healthy fat** that is vital for human brain and overall wellbeing, including children. Even better, healthy fats should be included in children’s diet not only to provide them with energy but also for their **brain growth, physical and behavioral development.**

Want to know more? Continue reading as the **Food Experts of Asia** reveal to you what is healthy fat and why it is important for children to get daily intake of healthy fat in their dietary.

What is Healthy Fat?

Healthy fats can be categorized into two types which is **monounsaturated fat** and **polyunsaturated fat**. Some might wonder what is so great about healthy fat and how are they different from the normal fat or unhealthy fat. Of course, they are different in terms of the positive impact it will have on our health, if taken in moderation.

Healthy fat cannot be produced by our own body which means it must be **consumed through food sources or supplements**. **Monounsaturated fat** can be found mostly in healthy oil certain nuts and seeds such as olive oil, peanuts, almonds, cashews and also avocados. As for polyunsaturated fat, it can be divided into two categories: omega-3 fatty acid and omega-6 fatty acid. **Polyunsaturated fat** comes from plant and animal food sources such as salmon, vegetable oil, dairy products, eggs and nuts.

Healthy fat offers a wide range of health benefits to our body and wellbeing. Research suggests that continuous intake of healthy fat in our meal plan will significantly **improves our heart, body and brain** thus reducing possibility of getting serious diseases such as heart attack and diabetes.

Omega: Brain Food for Children

Childhood is the most important phase when the body needs all kinds of good and balance nutrients for brain growth, memory, physical development and creative thinking. Besides carbohydrate to gear up their energy, protein for growing strong bones, body muscle and organs and all vitamins and minerals for healthy skin and eye, children must also be provided with healthy fats in their meal plan for their **brain growth and neurological development**.

Healthy fats are essential in children's diet because it provides **long-lasting energy** due to its energy provision as well as its essentiality for **physiological function, growth and brain development**. Foods that are rich in omega-3 such as **salmon, mackerel and sardine** and **tuna** should be incorporated into children's lunch or dinner as these fishes contains high level of DHA which is considered as **'the brain food'** for children because its vitality for children's IQ, memory and creativity.

DHA in omega-3 is the critical component for the **development of brain, eye and nervous system** during childhood. According to promising researches, omega-3 has been found to contribute significantly to brain development and mental health. Numerous studies have also concluded that continuous intake of DHA among children significantly improve their ability to **control emotion and behavior**.

Improving Reading Ability

The benefits of healthy fat to children does not only limited to brain growth and behavior but also **improving reading ability**. Numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of DHA supplementation on school performance such as improved measures of school performance including **learning ability, reading and spelling**. So, if you're expecting your children to progress well in their literacy skills, or if you're feeling worried that they are not showing reading improvement even after the age level has passed, you should consider adding DHA-rich food into their daily meals.

Continuous intake of food rich in omega-3 and DHA since babyhood to childhood is definitely important to achieve **maximum learning and literacy benefits** in school and positive outcome in the future. A 2016 study of mainstream children in Sweden found their ability to read improved after they received omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acid supplements for 3 months (Johnson et al., 2017).

In contrast, researchers concluded that the lack of omega-3 consumption among children may affect their **behavior and cognitive development** such as learning ability, problem solving, how children think, how children explore and figure things out. Accumulating evidences of studies have demonstrated that low dietary intake of omega-3 may promote detrimental effect on children's behavior and cognitive development (Schuchardt et al., 2010). Other studies also suggested that dietary intake of omega-3 are widely acknowledge in bringing benefits for general **physical health and mental health**.

Increasing rate of ADHD

As mentioned before, inadequate consumption of healthy fats among children could impose more serious effects on children's wellbeing including the increasing rate of **attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)**. ADHD has becoming a common trend of childhood development disorder which is likely to carry on into adolescence and adulthood. It is characterized by symptoms of **inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity**.

Therefore, increasing the omega-3 fatty acids consumption helped to **reduce the severity of ADHD-type behavior** as well as **improving symptoms of inattention in boys** with and without ADHD. Besides, dietary supplementation with omega-3 fatty acids promotes the improvement of cognitive control in ADHD. According to Johnson et al. (2009), consumption of omega-3 and 6 fatty acids for 6 months helped in reducing a subgroup of children that characterized by inattention and associated with neurodevelopment disorders with meaningful reduction of ADHD symptoms.

Conclusion

Healthy fats such as omegas play a crucial building block in the normal development and functioning of the brain system. They are essential healthy fatty acids that help feed the brain and keep it healthy. Besides that, DHA supplementation appears to offer a safe and effective way to promote healthy wellbeing among children. So parents, always ensure your children consume adequate amount of healthy fats in their daily meals to achieve a healthier brain, healthier heart and happier life.

You may also be interested in [Healthy Fats for Pregnancy](#), [Keto Diet for Weight Loss](#) or [Healthy Fats for Seniors](#).

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