

Creating Healthy Eating Habits

By Amy Bentley



Dr. Alexandra Roche
CHOC Pediatric Specialist

Dr. Roche, a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, is on staff at the CHOC Primary Care Clinic in Orange. Dr. Roche completed her residency at CHOC. She focuses much of her patient practice on obesity and eating disorders in adolescents.

Dr. Roche's philosophy of care: "I think every child has the potential to be a stellar human being and I want to help them reach their potential in any way I can."

EDUCATION:

New York Medical College in New York

BOARD CERTIFICATIONS:

Pediatrics

HEALTHY FOODS FOR KIDS

"It's important to offer children a wide variety of foods so they can try new things," says Dr. Alexandra Roche, a CHOC Children's Pediatric Specialist. "Fresh fruits and vegetables are always the best for kids. One of my biggest recommendations is to limit sweetened beverages as much as possible. Encouraging milk and water is best, with juice being okay once a day. Soda should only be for special occasions. Snacks or weeknight desserts can be yogurt with fruit, and then on the weekends, maybe dessert can be a special treat like cookies. Whole grains help keep people full longer, so offer whole wheat bread and pasta as opposed to white or highly processed foods." For healthy snacks, Dr. Roche suggests granola, apple slices with peanut butter, carrots, hummus, fruit smoothies and low-fat yogurt.

ESTABLISHING HABITS

"It takes children a long time to get used to a new food so just because they don't like it once doesn't mean they won't eat it later. Offer new foods multiple times in different situations, and many times the kids will get used to them," says Dr. Roche. In addition, she says, "Parents should also be willing to try new foods because they are role models. Parents should model good eating habits."



Eating dinner as a family together at the table definitely helps to establish good habits. People consume about 20 percent more calories when they are eating in front of the television. It's like mindless eating."

RISKS OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Overweight and obese children face many serious health threats. As kids, these threats include high blood pressure, joint problems and low self-esteem. Obese children and adolescents are likely to be obese as adults and are more at risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, several types of cancer and osteoarthritis, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Obese youths are two times more likely to die before the age of 55 compared to their healthy weight counterparts and 80 percent of obese teens will be obese adults. This is why prevention and early intervention is key," says Dr. Roche.

More than 1 in 3

THE NUMBER OF U.S. CHILDREN AND TEENS WHO ARE OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE, NEARLY TRIPLE THE RATE FROM 1963

40

PERCENT OF OBESE CHILDREN WITH ABNORMALLY HIGH CHOLESTEROL LEVELS



80

PERCENT OF OBESE TEENS WHO WILL BECOME OBESE ADULTS



50 YEARS OF EXPERT CARE

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