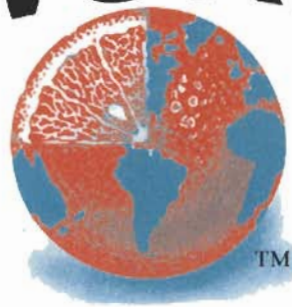


# R.D. NETWORK



# NEWS

FOR FOOD AND COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSIONALS

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## NUTRITION FOR CHILDREN TODAY

We have more American children today than ever before...even more than during the Baby Boom, according to the 2000 census. But these 72.3 million kids have specific nutrition and health needs...and may be adopting adults' "couch potato" and "mouse potato" ways. And young people have a big effect on which foods and other products are bought: their annual direct and indirect purchasing power is estimated at \$51 billion.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and the American Dietetic Association, 13% of children aged 6-11 are overweight, and 14% are at risk for becoming overweight (based on Body Mass Index). Diabetes is also on the rise in children. The American Diabetes Association reports that about half of the new cases of diabetes in children are Type II diabetes. Up to 85% of the children with type II diabetes are overweight.

Eating enough of certain nutrients remains a challenge. While most children aged 2-11 exceed the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) for vitamins and minerals, 91% of 6-11 year olds don't meet the goal of 5 servings a day of fruits and vegetables. The average is just 2.5 servings a day. Calcium, zinc, and iron are often lacking in teens' diets.

### ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

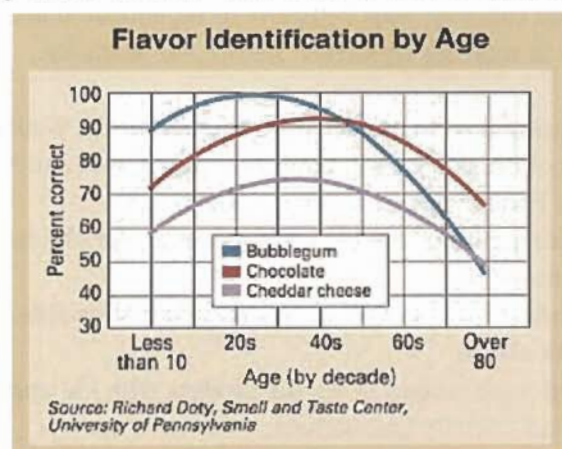
There is also some very good nutrition news. In the last 30 years, the infant mortality rate and the prevalence of many nutrition deficiencies and have declined. The percentage of calories from fat in children's diets has declined from 38% to 33%, although over 70% of children aged 6-11 consume more than the 30% recommended calories from fat. Changes in the National School Breakfast and Lunch program may have contributed to some of these improvements. In the last 6 years, meals have been required to meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This includes at least 1/3 of the RDAs per meal and less than 30% of calories from fat. Many factors are felt to contribute to child obesity. Kids may eat more calories today than they used to,

which mirrors adult trends. Portion sizes have grown in everything from beverage containers to restaurant portion sizes. Yet food is just one part of the equation. A decline in school physical education classes, and an increase in popularity of video and computer games may play a role. Some children are also encouraged to play indoors for safety from traffic or crime.

### LITTLE NIBBLERS

Most kids love to snack, but their snacks don't have to be empty calories. Children have a small stomach capacity and should snack to meet their relatively high calorie needs. A recent study conducted at the University of North Carolina found that children's snacks provided an average of 25% of total caloric intake, which is an increase from 18% in the 1970's. This opens opportunities to promote nutritious and tasty lower calorie snack choices for children.

Anyone who has tried to feed a picky toddler knows that good tasting food is essential. Children may be more sensitive to sweet and salty flavors, and may have less sugar and salt in their food than many adults prefer. A greater number of taste buds on children's tongues, cheeks, and the roof of the mouth may contribute to finicky eating, although individual taste perception varies. Bitter flavors like coffee are usually not a favorite until later in life. However, some



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research suggests children's ability to detect flavors is not as acute as we might expect (see chart). Children were less accurate in detecting bubblegum, chocolate, and cheddar cheese flavors than adults in their 20's, which is felt to be related to decreased familiarity with some foods.

While children's teeth are growing in, smooth foods may be easier to eat. Smooth peanut butter and spaghetti sauce are often preferred to their chunky counterparts. Older children and teens may also avoid crunchy or sticky foods that would get stuck in their braces.

Many kids lead busy lives. Portable snacks are gaining popularity, such as tubes of yogurt and packages of string cheese. As children become more independent, they may like to have snacks they can easily unwrap or microwave by themselves. Kids also strive to fit in with their peers. Age-appropriate licensed characters can inspire trust and brand loyalty.

R.D. Network's registered dietitian consultants across the nation can help your company or organization become a leader in meeting children's' nutritional needs by:

- Advising how to market your product for the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Head Start
- Creating customized nutrition messages for children or parents
- Assisting with packaging, labeling, and allowable health claims
- Developing recipes using the product with kid appeal and kid-friendly instructions

## BEVERAGE BRAIN BUSTERS

Summer's steamy weather is just around the corner. Are you ready to stay healthy and hydrated through the muggy months? Try our quick quiz to see how today's beverages fit in with healthy drinking.

1. *Who is at high risk for dehydration in hot weather?*
  - A. Babies and young children
  - B. People on certain medications for heart problems
  - C. People who are overweight
  - D. All of the above
2. *Which is the best beverage choice for hydration?*
  - A. Double espresso
  - B. Cool water
  - C. Beer
  - D. Frozen Daiquiri
3. *Why may someone exercising for hours in the heat benefit from drinking a sports drink?*
  - A. The amount of carbohydrates is less than fruit juice and is absorbed quickly
  - B. Packed with more natural sugar than fructose for an instant energy boost
  - C. Typical sports drinks are high in protein to rebuild muscles
  - D. No special benefit
4. *Which is not an early warning sign of heat stroke?*
  - A. Excessive hunger
  - B. Fatigue or dizziness
  - C. Headache
  - D. Nausea or vomiting

Answers: 1. D 2. B 3. A 4. A