Wisconsin's Best Crop—The Child
1. It's Food

By

AMY L. DANIELS
of the Department of Home Economics of the University of Wisconsin

HEALTHY AND HAPPY
Health in a child is manifested by happiness, buoyancy of spirit, normal growth, and peaceful sleep.

File this bulletin where you can find it

Distributed by
Wisconsin Bankers' Association

G. W. Dudley
Chairman Agricultural Committee,
West Salem

George D. Bartlett,
Association Secretary,
Pabst Building, Milwaukee
The Child’s Food*

What a child is depends largely upon what it eats. Failure to grow normally or to do well in school work can often be traced to one of two causes—an insufficient amount of food or to a wrong adjustment of the various necessary food factors.

WHAT THE GROWING CHILD NEEDS

Children grow from small to large individuals. Their rate of growth is determined to a large extent by the kinds and amounts of food they eat.

In feeding a child to meet his bodily needs, he should have at least one food each day from the following groups: Group 1—tissue building foods such as milk, eggs, fish, meat, etc.; Group 2—fruits and vegetables; Group 3—wholesome fats, such as butter and the fats found in egg yolks and meats; Group 4—bread and cereals; Group 5—simple sweets; and Group 6—water.

WHAT EACH DOES FOR THE CHILD

The first group provides protein. Without those foods which contain what scientists call “proteins”, and which build up the tissues of the body, a child would not grow. Proteins are present in fairly large proportions in milk, eggs, cheese, fish, meat, peas, beans, and lentils. (When peas, beans, and lentils are served they should be thoroughly cooked and for the younger child mashed or run through a strainer.) Certain other foods contain these essential building materials in very small amounts. The tissue-building materials of milk and eggs are particularly good and should, therefore, be supplied to the child in fairly liberal amounts. Every child should have at least three cups of milk a day. To this would be added one egg, if the family budget will allow it, and for the older child (three years) a small amount of meat or fish. The child which cannot have the egg should be supplied with more milk. The remainder of the tissue building needs of the child will be supplied from other foods which are needed in the body for purposes other than building tissues, but which contain small amounts of tissue-building materials in varying quantities.

The second group yields mineral matter. A second need of the child for growth purposes is mineral material. This is especially needed for the development of bones, teeth, and muscles. Mineral matter is present in a fairly liberal amount in milk more especially, and in eggs, as well as in fruit and vegetables. Therefore, besides milk, we should include both vegetables and fruit in our children’s meals.

*The material in this circular has to do with children 15 months of age and older.
A good rule to follow in planning the meals for a child is to serve each day besides the fruit, two vegetables—one a starchy food like potatoes or rice or hominy, and a succulent vegetable such as carrots, spinach, turnips, or cabbage. As a considerable amount of valuable mineral matter, one of our chief reasons for serving these vegetables, dissolves out in the water in which they are cooked, the water should be saved. It may be boiled down to a small amount as the vegetables are cooked, and served in this form or made into and served as a sauce, or it may be saved and made into soup.

SERVE ONLY RIPENED FRUIT

The fruit given should be in all cases well ripened and may be served either raw or cooked. Under-ripe and over-ripe fruit may cause digestive upsets which have led many mothers to believe that fruit is harmful. This is particularly true of bananas, for these are all too frequently served in the unripe stage. When quite ripe, the skins are brown rather than yellow. If bananas or other unripe fruit must be served they should be cooked.

The third group furnishes fats. The heat and energy needs of children should be supplied by those foods that contain fat, starch, and sugar. Those fats which are best adapted to children are the fat of milk—butter and cream—and the fat of egg yolk and, to a certain extent, meat. Vegetable oils such as olive oil, cottonseed oil, peanut oil, and the like are also good, but should never be allowed to exclude the use of these other fats.

Too much fat may cause indigestion in children. Most mothers are familiar with the digestive disturbances following excessive eating of rich foods—for example, pastry, rich cakes, or fried foods. In these cases, too much fat has been taken together with other materials which may be detrimental. If we limit fat to the normal amount of butter served on bread, the cream (the top of milk) served with cereal, the fat obtained from the milk and egg, and the small amount found in other foods, as, for example, in simple pudding and muffins, the normal child will not be taking too much. Only the unusual child will need greater restriction in the fat content of his diet.

The fourth group supplies starches and sugars. A certain amount of starch and sugar should also be included in the diet of children. These are given for the purpose of supplying energy and heat to the body. The baby gets a sufficient amount of energy foods from milk. The older child must be given a larger proportion, so, besides the milk, he needs cereals, breads, fruits, and vegetables since varying amounts of sugars and starches are obtained from all these.

The cereals given to the child should include those which contain the outer parts of the grain. These not only supply mineral material but a certain amount of roughage necessary for normal digestive processes. The clogging of the intestines (constipation) is most often caused by too highly refined foods. More bulk in the form of coarse cereals, breads made from whole grains, fruits, and vegetables will frequently relieve this condition without using drugs.

The fifth group includes sweets. Because candy supplies nothing but energy material, whereas most of the other foods supply some other essential as well, it is wise to limit the amount of candy or cane sugar that a child takes,
lest he get too little of the other materials necessary to build his bones and tissues properly. The lump of sugar or piece of candy at the end of a meal may be beneficial, provided, of course, the child has eaten enough of the other foods served. A small amount of sugar on the cereal may encourage the child to eat what otherwise he would reject, but care should be taken that there is not an undue amount of sugar, or that the child is not eating sugar and leaving cereal.

WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD DRINK

The modern mother needs to give special consideration to the beverages her children are given. Tea and coffee no longer form any part of a child’s diet. They are not foods—only stimulants, and under no condition should they be given to children, even those of high school age. Chocolate and cocoa may be given in moderate amounts to the older child. In both of these are contained a stimulating material similar to that in tea and coffee but in lesser amounts. Sometimes very small amounts of cocoa are added to the milk for younger children in order to get them to take more milk. Only under such conditions is this permissible.

A liberal amount of water should, in all cases, be given. This may be taken not only between meals but with meals as well. Care, however, should be exercised that the water is taken between bites, and that it is not used to wash the food down. Children must be taught that food must be thoroughly chewed. Soft drinks, except those made from fruits, as lemonade and orangeade, or grape juice and the like, should be prohibited. Many mothers are not aware that root beer may contain a considerable amount of alcohol. This, as well as all other alcoholic beverages, should be forbidden.

HOW MUCH SHOULD CHILDREN EAT?

All children should be given three meals a day, and the amount given should be fairly evenly distributed among the three meals except for the undernourished child. Between-meal lunches should be discouraged. The habit among high school children, especially, of going to school without breakfast or with a cup of coffee and a slice of toast is dangerous. A goodly portion of our girls who fail to complete their high school courses because of ill health or low grades are under nourished. This does not mean that the home is not supplying enough food, but that the home does not see that the girl gets enough of the right kind of food. Success in all phases of life means adequate nourishment. Food faddists are in danger of being under nourished.

A normal healthy child seldom eats too much, although he may eat too much of one kind of food of which he is particularly fond. Only candy need be cited as an example. Good food habits should be taught early and the children should learn to eat a variety of foods. Nutritional safety lies in a fairly liberal supply of a variety of foods. If a person eats a variety of foods, he or she is much more likely to get some of all the necessary food substances than in cases where the variety is limited.