



NUTRITION AND THE DEVELOPING BRAIN

FUEL FOR THE MIND

NUTRITION IS THE BUILDING BLOCK OF BRAIN HEALTH.

Nutrition is important to brain health throughout a person's life, but especially at the earliest stages, when the brain is still developing. It is one of the most important environmental factors for babies in the womb, and nutrition is essential throughout childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Having the right balance of nutrients during each stage is critical to enhancing proper cognitive development well into the adult years.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

Cognitive: Various nutrients, including protein and zinc, help cognitive development

Synapses: Research suggests that fatty acids help the brain make connections

Brain development: Choline, folic acid, and zinc have been linked to early brain development

Motor development: Nutrients such as iron and iodine promote motor development

WHO'S AT RISK?

Poor nutrition is not limited to a particular demographic. However, children in low-income families that experience food insecurity and those who live in under-resourced communities are at a higher risk. The risk comes from limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables that contain essential nutrients and the widespread availability of hyper-processed "junk" foods.





HOW TO MINIMIZE RISK

**THE FIRST
1,000 DAYS
ARE MOST
CRUCIAL
FOR BRAIN
DEVELOP-
MENT**

- Eat a balanced diet
- Avoid overly processed foods
- Talk with a nutritionist
- Involve children in the food preparation process
- Model healthy eating behavior
- Provide more nutrient-dense snacks

HOW TO HELP

Do what you can to ensure that young people have access to healthy foods that provide good nutrition. Avoid highly processed “junk” foods. Paying attention to nutrition can have a positive impact on the development of healthy brains.

**A HEALTHY DIET
NOURISHES THE MIND.**