

## Food Recipes And Early Childhood Nutrition Education

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**Abstract.** *Early childhood is an important period in a child's development. During this period, children are actively growing and developing, so good nutrition is very important. The quality of food given to children at this age can have a major impact on their physical growth and cognitive development. In order to provide balanced and quality nutritional intake, it is important to understand food recipes that are suitable for young children. Apart from that, proper nutritional education is also needed so that parents and educators can provide optimal care. In order to achieve optimal results, nutrition education must continue to be improved and updated in accordance with the latest scientific developments. In addition, nutrition education must be integrated into early childhood education programs and become an important part of parents' role in raising their children. With proper attention to nutrition and nutritional education, we can provide a strong foundation for young people to have a healthy and bright future.*

**Keywords:** *food recipes, nutrition education, early childhood*

**Abstrak.** *Usia dini adalah periode penting dalam perkembangan anak. Pada masa ini, anak-anak sedang aktif tumbuh dan berkembang, sehingga gizi yang baik sangat penting. Kualitas makanan yang diberikan kepada anak-anak pada usia ini dapat berdampak besar pada pertumbuhan fisik dan perkembangan kognitif mereka. Dalam rangka memberikan asupan gizi yang seimbang dan berkualitas, penting untuk memahami resep makanan yang cocok untuk anak-anak usia dini. Selain itu, pendidikan gizi yang tepat juga diperlukan agar orang tua dan pendidik dapat memberikan perawatan yang optimal. Dalam rangka mencapai hasil yang optimal, pendidikan gizi harus terus ditingkatkan dan diperbarui sesuai dengan perkembangan ilmiah terbaru. Selain itu, pendidikan gizi harus terintegrasi dalam program pendidikan anak usia dini dan menjadi bagian penting dari peran orang tua dalam membesarkan anak-anak mereka. Dengan perhatian yang tepat pada gizi dan pendidikan gizi, kita dapat memberikan landasan yang kuat bagi generasi muda untuk memiliki masa depan yang sehat dan cerah.*

**Kata Kunci:** *resep makanan, pendidikan gizi, anak usia dini*

### Introduction

In early childhood, children experience rapid physical growth and significant cognitive development. This period is crucial in establishing the foundation for subsequent health and development. Therefore, good nutrition is essential. Young children have different nutritional needs than adults. They require proper nutrition to support the growth and development of the brain, bones and other organs. Lack of

nutrition during this period can result in developmental disorders and long-term health problems (Susanto, 2021).

Eating habits formed at an early age can have a long-term impact on a child's diet. Good nutrition education at an early age can help children develop healthy food preferences and good eating patterns throughout their lives. Parents and educators have a key role in providing proper nutrition to young children. They need to understand children's nutritional needs and serve appropriate foods. Educators can also provide nutrition education to parents and design effective nutrition education programs in early childhood education settings.

Nutritional problems in early childhood also have a wider impact on society, including high health costs, increased risk of chronic diseases and child development problems. Therefore, nutrition education in early childhood is also a preventive measure to reduce these problems in society.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **A. Balanced Nutrition Intake in Early Childhood**

#### **1. Factors affecting children's growth and development in early childhood**

Here are some of the main factors that affect children's growth and development in early childhood:

- a. **Genetics:** Genetic factors play an important role in determining a child's growth and development potential. Height, weight and other physical development patterns tend to be influenced by genetic factors from both parents.
- b. **Nutritional Intake:** Adequate and balanced nutrition is a major factor in a child's growth and development. Children require nutrients such as proteins, vitamins, minerals and fats for cell growth, brain development and body tissue formation.
- c. **Maternal Health During Pregnancy:** Maternal health during pregnancy has a major impact on fetal development. Nutritional deficiencies during pregnancy can hinder fetal growth and development.
- d. **Environmental Stimulation:** Interactions with the child's surroundings, including play, communication and sensory stimulation, can affect the child's cognitive, social and emotional development.
- e. **Quality of Care and Nurture:** Attention and care provided by parents or caregivers play an important role in a child's development. Factors such as bonding, love and responsive care can provide important emotional support.
- f. **Access to Health Services:** Good access to health services, including regular well-child check-ups, vaccinations, and appropriate medication, can keep children healthy and support their development.
- g. **Exposure to Environmental Toxins:** Exposure to environmental toxins, such as air pollution or exposure to hazardous substances, can negatively impact a child's development.
- h. **Educational Stimulation:** A good early education, both at home and in formal education settings, can affect a child's cognitive and social abilities.
- i. **Socioeconomic Factors:** A family's socioeconomic status can affect access to resources, including good nutrition and health services. Children from lower

socioeconomic backgrounds may be more vulnerable to growth and development problems.

- j. Gender: Several gender factors may affect children's development, including gender roles in society, social expectations and differential care for boys and girls.

## 2. Nutrients needed by young children

Here are some important nutrients that young children need:

- a. Protein: Protein is an important building block for the growth of body tissues, including muscles, skin and organs. Foods such as meat, fish, eggs, milk and soy products are good sources of protein.
- b. Carbohydrates: Carbohydrates are the main source of energy for children. They provide the energy needed for play, movement, and daily activities. Foods that are sources of carbohydrates include bread, rice, pasta, and cereals.
- c. Fats: Fats are another source of energy and are necessary for brain and nervous system development. Healthy fats can be found in olive oil, nuts and fatty fish like salmon.
- d. Vitamins: Children need different types of vitamins for healthy growth and development. Some important vitamins include vitamin A (important for vision), vitamin C (for cell growth and the immune system), and vitamin D (for calcium absorption).
- e. Minerals: Minerals such as calcium, phosphorus, iron, and zinc are important for bone development, cell growth, and the immune system. Dairy products, green leafy vegetables and meat are good sources of minerals.
- f. Fiber: Fiber helps maintain healthy digestion and prevents constipation. Fruits, vegetables and whole grain cereals are examples of good sources of fiber.
- g. Water: Adequate hydration is very important for children. Water helps maintain a stable body temperature, organ function and a good digestive system.
- h. Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Omega-3 fatty acids, such as those found in fatty fish, are important for children's brain and vision development.
- i. Sugar and Salt: Sugar and salt use should be kept in check in early childhood. Too much sugar can lead to health problems such as obesity and tooth decay, while excessive salt consumption can lead to high blood pressure.

## 3. Impact of undernutrition in early childhood

Malnutrition in young children can have a serious impact on their growth, development and health. Some of the main impacts of undernutrition in early childhood include (Putri Yusniar, 2022):

- a. Impaired Growth: Children who are malnourished tend to grow more slowly and have weight and height below their age standard. This can impact their physical and cognitive development.
- b. Impaired Brain Development: Adequate nutrition is important for optimal brain development in children. Nutritional deficiencies, especially nutrients such as

- iron and folic acid, can hinder brain development and potentially lead to cognitive problems, such as low intelligence and impaired concentration.
- c. **Decreased Immunity:** Malnutrition can weaken children's immune systems, making them more susceptible to infections and diseases. They may get sick frequently and struggle to recover from illnesses.
  - d. **Long-term Health Problems:** Malnutrition in early childhood can have a long-term impact on health. Children who are malnourished have a higher risk of developing chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease later in life.
  - e. **Psychosocial Problems:** Children with malnutrition may also experience psychosocial problems such as anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems. This can affect their quality of life.
  - f. **Impaired Organ Function:** Malnutrition can lead to impaired functioning of organs such as the liver, kidneys and heart. This can impact the general health of children.
  - g. **Limited Learning Ability:** Malnutrition can affect children's ability to learn and develop optimally. They may struggle to digest information and participate in learning activities.

## **B. Food Recipes Suitable for Early Childhood Children**

1. Example of a balanced food recipe for early childhood.

Here is an example of a balanced meal recipe for early childhood for 7 days. Be sure to vary the meals and adjust to your child's preferences (Nuraini, 2007):

- a. Day 1:
  - Breakfast: Oatmeal with fresh fruit pieces (e.g. banana or strawberries).
  - Lunch: Whole wheat bread sandwich with chicken, vegetables and cheese.
  - Dinner: Brown rice with grilled fish and broccoli.
- b. Day 2:
  - Breakfast: Low-fat yogurt with granola and apple slices.
  - Lunch: Whole wheat noodles with carrot vegetables and minced beef.
  - Dinner: Roast chicken with mashed potatoes and peas.
- c. Day 3:
  - Breakfast: Toasted whole wheat bread with peanut butter and banana slices.
  - Lunch: Quinoa with green beans, tofu and tomato sauce.
  - Dinner: Vegetable soup with pieces of whole grain bread.
- d. Day 4:
  - Breakfast: Poached egg with whole grain bread and cherry tomatoes.
  - Lunch: Rice with stir-fried vegetables and chicken.
  - Dinner: Baked salmon with mashed potatoes and broccoli.
- e. Day 5:
  - Breakfast: Spinach smoothie with banana, yogurt and honey.
  - Lunch: Whole wheat bread sandwich with peanut butter and pear slices.
  - Dinner: Brown rice with fried tofu and peas.
- f. Day 6:

- Breakfast: Whole wheat pancakes with mango slices.
  - Lunch: Soba noodles with vegetables and beef strips.
  - Dinner: Grilled chicken with brown rice and boiled carrots.
- g. Day 7:
- Breakfast: Low-fat yogurt with mixed nuts and blueberries.
  - Lunch: Whole wheat bread sandwich with apple jam and cheese.
  - Dinner: Potato soup with minced beef and vegetables.

Make sure to give age-appropriate portions and always supervise them while eating. Always pay attention to your child's preferences and make sure the food served is safe and suits their nutritional needs. Also, watch out for food allergies if any.

## **2. How to prepare and serve meals that kids love**

Preparing and serving meals that kids love can be a challenge, but with a few strategies, you can make the eating experience more positive. Here are some steps that can help you:

- a. Recognize Children's Preferences:
  - Observe the foods your child likes the most and understand the types of foods they dislike.
  - Discuss with your child about the foods they would like to try or their favorite foods.
- b. Child Involvement:
  - Involve your child in choosing food and making food decisions with you. This gives them a sense of ownership over the food.
  - Take them shopping and choosing food at the store or market.
- c. Attractive Presentation:
  - Serve the food in an interesting way. You can try making funny shapes or using interesting colors.
  - Make the food in portions that fit their hand size.
- d. Variety in Menu:
  - Try different dishes and meals to ensure variety in the menu.
  - Try cooking foods in different ways, such as baking, steaming or boiling, to provide variety in flavors and textures.
- e. Involve Children in Food Preparation:
  - Invite your children to help in food preparation, such as washing vegetables or mixing ingredients.
  - This can help them feel more involved in the food process.
- f. Schedule Meals Together:
  - Try to have meal times together as a family. This is a good opportunity to talk and socialize while eating together.
  - Keep distractions like cell phones or television away during the meal to focus on the food and family interaction.
- g. Respect Children's Preferences:
  - Do not force foods that the child does not like, but try to introduce new foods slowly.

- Respect when your child doesn't want to eat more and avoid making food a source of stress.
- h. Good Example:
  - Set a good example by eating healthy food and trying new foods in front of your children.
  - This can provide inspiration and teach them about good food.
- i. Give Praise:
  - Give praise when your child tries new foods or eats healthy foods. This can provide positive motivation.

It is always important to create a positive and fun eating environment. Remember that every child is unique, and what is liked or disliked can differ from one child to another. A focus on balanced meals that include a range of essential nutrients is key to supporting your children's growth and development.

### **C. Nutrition Education for Parents and Educators**

#### **1. The important role of nutrition education in caring for young children**

Nutrition education plays a very important role in caring for young children. Here are some reasons why nutrition education is particularly relevant in the context of early childhood care:

- a. **Optimal Growth and Development:** Young children experience rapid growth and development. Good nutrition is key to supporting optimal physical growth and cognitive development. Nutrition education helps parents and caregivers understand children's nutritional needs and provide appropriate meals.
- b. **Prevention of Malnutrition:** Malnutrition in young children can have a serious impact on their health and development. Nutrition education helps parents and caregivers identify signs of malnutrition and prevent it through proper feeding.
- c. **Healthy Eating Patterns:** Nutrition education helps teach children about the importance of eating a balanced diet and choosing healthy foods. They also learn how to understand nutrition labels and recognize nutritious foods.
- d. **Development of Good Eating Habits:** Nutrition education helps form good eating habits from an early age. This includes teaching children to appreciate healthy foods, portion control and limiting consumption of foods high in sugar, salt and saturated fat.
- e. **Prevention of Health Problems:** Good nutrition is key in the prevention of health problems such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Nutrition education helps parents and caregivers understand how to prevent these health problems through a healthy diet.
- f. **Mental Health and Quality of Life:** A good diet also impacts the mental health of children. Nutrition education helps understand the correlation between food and mood and energy. Children who eat a balanced diet tend to have a better quality of life.
- g. **Food Safety:** Nutrition education also includes food safety. It involves the introduction of safe foods and good food processing practices to prevent illness caused by contaminated food.

- h. **Role of Adult Models:** Adults, including parents and caregivers, are models for children when it comes to eating behavior. Nutrition education helps adults model healthy food choices and set an example for children.

Nutrition education is key to ensuring that young children are nourished according to their needs, understand the importance of healthy food, and form positive eating habits throughout their lives. This supports optimal growth, development and health.

## **2. How to convey nutrition information to parents and educators**

Conveying nutrition information to parents and educators is an important step in ensuring that children get proper and balanced nutrition. Here are some ways to convey nutrition information to them (Festy W, 2018):

- a. **Seminar or Workshop:** You can organize specialized seminars or workshops on nutrition and child development. Invite parents and educators to attend and actively participate.
- b. **Brochures and Printed Materials:** Provide brochures, pamphlets or other printed materials that contain information on nutrition, healthy foods and nutritional recommendations for children. Distribute these materials to parents and educators.
- c. **Presentations:** Create easy-to-understand and illustrative presentations on children's nutrition. Use graphs, diagrams and pictures to explain nutrition concepts more easily.
- d. **Personal Counseling:** Offer personal counseling sessions to parents and educators. Talk about their child's specific nutritional needs and provide advice accordingly.
- e. **Social Media:** Utilize social media platforms to share relevant nutrition information, healthy recipes and tips on food for children. This can reach a wider audience.
- f. **Newsletter:** Create a regular newsletter containing useful articles on children's nutrition and send it to parents and educators.
- g. **Training:** Provide training to educators in schools or educational institutions on the importance of nutrition and how to integrate it into the curriculum and daily activities.
- h. **Consultation with Nutritionists:** Advise parents and educators to consult a nutritionist or pediatrician for more specific nutritional guidance according to the child's needs.
- i. **Collaboration with Schools:** Collaborate with the child's school and school to ensure that the school meal plan meets proper nutrition standards.
- j. **Good Practice Examples:** Model good practices in terms of healthy food and nutrition for children. For example, encourage parents and educators to jointly practice healthy eating at home and in the school environment.

It is important to ensure that nutrition information is delivered in a way that is easy to understand, relevant and can be implemented in daily life. With a holistic and sustainable approach, you can help parents and educators maintain children's optimal health and development.

### 3. Resources and guidelines that can be used for nutrition education

There are many resources and guidelines that can be used for nutrition education, both for formal and informal education. Here are some examples of useful resources and guidelines (Natalia Veerman & dkk, 2023):

- a. **Books and Reading Materials:** Many books and reading materials written by nutritionists, pediatricians or educators provide insights into nutrition and healthy eating for children.
- b. **Nutrition Websites and Apps:** There are various nutrition websites and apps that provide information on nutrition, healthy recipes, calorie counts, as well as dietary advice for children. Examples of popular websites include WebMD, EatRight.org, and MyPlate.
- c. **Healthy Food Guidelines:** Guidelines such as the Food Pyramid or Food Stack are visual tools that help in illustrating the components of a healthy diet and a balanced comparison.
- d. **Health Organizations:** Organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), or the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) usually have resources and guidelines on children's nutrition that can be accessed online.
- e. **Online Courses:** Many universities and educational institutions provide online courses on childhood nutrition. You can join these courses to gain a deeper understanding of the topic.
- f. **Educational Materials and Brochures:** Printed resources such as posters, brochures and nutrition guides that can be used in a school or family setting.
- g. **Videos and Multimedia:** Educational videos and multimedia materials can help visualize nutrition concepts. For example, animated videos that explain how food is converted into energy in the body.

### Conclusion

Food and nutrition education for early childhood are two complementary components in ensuring children's optimal development and health. In this paper, we have discussed various aspects that are important in understanding the importance of nutrition and nutrition education in the growing years of young children

The importance of paying special attention to early childhood nutrition has been demonstrated in its positive impact on growth, brain development and long-term health. Collaboration between parents, educators and children's service providers is essential in creating an environment that supports children's healthy development. Through nutrition education, parents and educators can recognize the importance of healthy food and set a good example for children. By providing healthy food recipes that meet the needs of young children, we can help ensure that children get the nutrients they need to grow and develop properly.

In order to achieve optimal results, nutrition education should be continuously improved and updated according to the latest scientific developments. In addition, nutrition education should be integrated in early childhood education programs and be an important part of the parents' role in raising their children. With proper attention to

nutrition and nutrition education, we can provide a strong foundation for the younger generation to have a healthy and bright future.

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