

Ways to make fast food healthy for children

Many parents often find themselves travelling or stuck somewhere with hungry children with a desperate need to find the nearest place to eat. Although fast food is usually the first option, these meals can be high in sugars and calories. As a parent, there are ways to make these meals healthier for your children.

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Parents, even the most health conscious ones confess to indulging their offspring a little bit more often than they would like. The truth is, fast-food restaurants with their promise of fun have a grip on us and the best thing to do here is to coexist in harmony.

Dr Doreen Kagezi, a nutritionist, suggests looking for the healthiest options on the menu. "For instance if you order for pizza, get vegetable toppings or instead of buying soda for the children, get them fresh juice or water," Dr Kagezi tips. You could also opt for yoghurt instead of ice-cream or fruit for dessert.

Eat together

Another option is to sit and eat the meal as a family as opposed to eating on the go. Nutritionists reveal that the brain takes about 20 minutes to get the message that the body has had enough.

"In order for the brain to do its job effectively, create the right signals. For instance sit down at a table, arrange your food and cutlery appropriately and focus on the meal. Encourage the



children to take time to chew their food longer instead of wolfing it down," says Dr Kagezi.

According to Dr David Okoth Dimo, a major concern with fast food is the amount parents let their children consume. "Children left on their own can go crazy ordering more food than they should be allowed to consume. Therefore, it should be the adult's responsibility to ensure that they get age appropriate servings," Dr Dimo says.

Sharing

Another alternative is sharing meals as a family. The adults can order healthy meals while the children order for their preferences with an understanding that it will all be shared by the entire family. "It is a win-win as the body gets to have its craving and healthy nutrients at the same time," Dr Dimo adds.

As the saying goes, prevention is better than cure, it is advisable not to let the children get so hungry that they are tempted by the allure of a fast meal.

Kate Nakate, a mother of four, says she has managed to curb down the fast food habit by always carrying healthy snacks from home. "I make sure I have fresh juice or fruits every time I go to pick the children from school or when we go to church. That way when they are hungry I will not give in to their demands for take away," Nakate reveals.

HEALTHY SNACKS

Fresh fruit. Small apples, pears, and bananas, grapes, blueberries, strawberries, and cubed melon are a few of children's favourite fruits to take on the go.