

managing DIFFICULT DIETS

TIPS FOR HANDLING A CHILD'S RESTRICTIVE DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Julie Custakis

Planning meals the entire family will happily eat is a challenge. If your child is diagnosed with a diet-altering health condition, the task can seem overwhelming.

"Focus on the positive, such as foods your child can eat, versus what she cannot," says Jennifer Cleveland, MMSc, RD, CDE, pediatric dietician with Riley Hospital for Children at IU Health. "Educate yourself and your child's caregivers. Reading labels is a must and preparation is key."

Finding a nutritionist who can provide educational materials, links to websites, support groups and grocers can also help parents with the process.

SOME BASIC TIPS INCLUDE:

- Pack food before traveling and ask what is being served at class parties, team meals or outings so that you can provide alternatives.
- Before shopping, arm yourself with a list of allowable products.
- Dedicate a cabinet and refrigerator shelf for safe foods.
- Consider separate cooking supplies for allergen-free preparation. Shared cutting boards, utensils and close proximity to foods with the allergen can lead to cross-contamination.
- As often as possible, prepare meals everyone can eat as a kindness to your child who is often singled out.

GLUTEN INTOLERANCE
Gluten is proteins found in specific grains of wheat, rye, oats, malt and barley and are often hidden in processed foods and restaurant meals. Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder in which ingesting gluten damages the small intestine and reduces nutrient absorption. Treatment is 100% avoidance of gluten for life. If you have a child with celiac disease, keep a list of acceptable snacks, foods and restaurants to share with anyone who may feed your child. Pack provisions or ensure safe food is available at school and extra-curricular activities. Go to tasting events at stores and expos to discover new food possibilities. Involving your child in food choices will increase compliance and acceptance.

MULTIPLE FOOD ALLERGIES
If you suspect your child may be reacting to certain foods, check with your medical professional to determine if the problem is a food intolerance or an allergy. Diets for both situations can be a challenge. An allergy requires a treatment plan for severe reactions. Cleveland advises getting a diagnosis from an allergist/immunologist using reliable and proven methods, such as a skin prick test, blood test, oral food challenge or trial elimination diet. "Educating yourself and everyone who has contact with your child is vital," explains Cleveland. "Read every label as ingredients change without warning. Familiarize yourself with 'hidden' sources of allergens." Connecting with other families and nutritionists can benefit families greatly in their understanding of how to manage these special diets.

BEING SENSITIVE

Strict diets can be a source of embarrassment and frustration for kids. As a parent, be discrete when providing food substitutes at public activities, yet steadfast and consistent despite any objections your child may have. Communicate with other parents and restaurants in advance to discuss menu decisions, reducing this dialogue in the presence of your child. Try seeking out new and appealing recipes and products. Eventually favorite foods will surface and your child will learn that feeling better is worth the sacrifices.

For more information on managing difficult diets, check out these resources.

CELIAC DISEASE / GLUTEN INTOLERANCE

Websites:
www.celiackids.com
www.celiacsociety.com

Books:
Kids with Celiac Disease: A Family Guide to Raising Happy, Healthy, Gluten-free Children by Danna Korn

Cilie Yack Is Under Attack: A Story About a Boy with Celiac Disease by Caryn Taty

Indianapolis Support Groups:
Raising Our Celiac Kids:
KellyKurzhalt@hotmail.com
www.celiac.org

Gluten Free Indy:
www.glutenfreeindy.com

Local grocers:
Nature's Pharm, Nature's Market, Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, Kroger, Meijer, Marsh

Internet grocers:
www.glutenfreemail.com
www.glutenfree.com
www.glutensolutions.com

Events:
Celiac Camp Jameson for Kids (Indianapolis)
Glutenfreelivingnow.org

Gluten-Free Food Allergy Expo:
August 23-24, Indiana State Fairgrounds, Indianapolis

IBD / CROHN'S / COLITIS

Websites:
www.crohnsandcolitisinfo.com (Free download: Crohn's Q & A Book)

www.ccfria.org (Free download book: IBD & Me: Activity Book for Kids)

Books:
The First Year: Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis: An Essential Guide for the Newly Diagnosed by Jill Sklar, MD

Toilet Paper Flowers: A Story for Children about Crohn's Disease by Frank Sileo, PhD and Martha Grandisher

Support Group:
Indiana Chapter of Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America (317) 259-8071 (800) 332-6029

MULTIPLE FOOD ALLERGIES

Websites:
www.aaaai.org (American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology)
www.foodallergy.org
www.allergicliving.com

Books:
No Peanuts for Mei by Dr. Catherine Hagerman Pangan

The Parent's Guide to Food Allergies: Clear and Complete Advice from the Experts on Raising

Your Food-Allergic Child by Marianne Barber, Maryanne Bartoszek Scott and Elinor Greenberg

Support Group/Events:
www.kidswithfoodallergies.org
Email: IndyFOCHA@gmail.com

Food Allergy and Research Education National Conference: June 20-22, Hyatt Regency O'Hare, Rosemont, Illinois



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