



ARTICLE

Is your toddler nutrient deficient?

Nutritional deficiencies can affect the overall health of children. Adequate nutrient intake during childhood strongly promotes cognitive health and prevents onset of chronic diseases in later life.

3 mins read

Role of nutrition in child development

Nutritional deficiencies in children can affect their overall health. The importance of nutrition in childhood marks the way your child grows up in the coming stages. Introducing nutrient-dense meals in their childhood promotes cognitive health and prevents onset of chronic diseases in later life.

Signs and symptoms of iron deficiency and vitamin D are commonly seen among growing children. In addition, calcium deficiency symptoms in kids are common. Other nutrient deficiency symptoms, like vitamin A and iodine may also occur in children who do not consume a balanced diet.

A balanced diet for your child is the one which provides all the nutrients in required amounts and proper proportions. This can be easily achieved by consuming all the essential nutrients:

- a) Carbohydrates from whole wheat chapatti, rice, whole grain bread, whole wheat pasta etc.
- b) Proteins from Milk and milk products, pulses and legumes, chicken, eggs, fish etc.
- c) Healthy fats like nuts, seeds, vegetable oils, peanut butter, ghee etc.
- d) Vitamins and minerals. - Colourful fruits and vegetables.

Given below is a handy chart that describes the symptoms of different nutrient deficiencies and the food sources that need to be included in the diet to overcome them.



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NUTRIENT	SYMPTOMS OF DEFICIENCY	FOOD SOURCES
Iron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child may act irritable • Shortness of breath • Crave unusual foods (called pica) • Eat less food • Feel tired or weak all the time • Have a sore tongue • Have headaches or dizziness • With more severe anemia, your child may have: • Blue-tinged or pale whites of eyes • Brittle nails • Pale skin color 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken, fish, and other meats • Dals, rajma, chana and soybeans • Apricots • Eggs • Raisins and prunes • Spinach, mustard leaves, turnip greens, methi, bathua etc.
Calcium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bone and muscle pain • Muscle weakness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk • Milk Products like curd/paneer/Skimmed milk powder/cheese. • Green leafy vegetables like spinach/methi/mustard leaves etc. • Ragi and sesame seeds • Fresh as well as dried fish (small fresh fish) • Pulses, nuts and oilseeds
Vitamin D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor growth • Muscle weakness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oily fish such as salmon, sardines, herring, mackerel and fresh tuna, • Egg
Vitamin C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of appetite • Irritability • Swollen gums that bleed easily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh amla, • Citrus fruits like oranges/lime/lemon, • Guava, banana
Vitamin A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry skin and lips; thickened tongue • Frequent infections of the stomach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green leafy vegetables- spinach/methi/bathua/mustard leaves etc./ • Carrots, • Tomatoes, • Sweet potatoes, • Papaya, • Mango
Iodine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant feeling of tiredness accompanied by muscle weakness • Feeling cold in warm days • Unusual weight gain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk and milk products like curd/paneer/cheese/skimmed milk powder etc. • Pulses like arhar/lentils/urad/chana dal/ moong etc./ nuts like almonds, walnuts etc. and oilseeds like flaxseeds, melon seeds etc.

NUTRIENT	SYMPTOMS OF DEFICIENCY	FOOD SOURCES
Zinc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor growth • Frequent infections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beans • Nuts like almonds, walnuts, pistachios etc. • Seafood like fish/prawns/crab • Whole grains like wheat/ brown rice

The above-mentioned common micronutrient deficiencies can be overcome by ensuring your child consumes a balanced diet that provides all the nutrients in required amounts. In addition, incorporating fortified foods in your child’s daily diet will further help provide the necessary nutrition needed for their growth and development with the appropriate micronutrients.