

Variety of foods -- the key for child nutrition

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New research shows that most children have a diet that contains enough essential vitamins and minerals.

Analysis of the Government's own survey of children's diets and nutritional status has shown that the average child gets the recommended level of most vitamins and minerals, even though they consume more added sugars than recommended.

The study published online in the *British Journal of Nutrition*, looked at a nationally representative sample of children aged 4-18 years who took part in the National Diet and Nutrition Survey. It found that the average child consumed levels of vitamins and most minerals that met recommendations, and in many cases, comfortably exceeded them. These conclusions were based on records from 7-day weighed food diaries and were confirmed by biochemical measurements of blood samples.

'The children in this study were healthy British children' said Mrs. Sigrid Gibson, lead author on the study. 'Some children who are fussy eaters might get lesser amounts of nutrients from their limited range of food choices, and if they also eat a lot of added sugars they might be at risk'. But she added, 'the solution is to broaden their choice of foods – it does not appear that simply discouraging sugar consumption would have any real benefit'.

Mrs. Gibson is an independent nutrition consultant, with over 20 year's experience of working with the government, food industry and agencies

such as the Food Standards Agency. She is the author of over 30 peer-reviewed scientific publications and is a regular contributor to nutrition journals. 'There is an over-emphasis on avoiding sugar at all costs rather than having a balanced diet' said Mrs. Gibson. 'Concerns that added sugars 'dilute' the diet and jeopardise essential nutrients are just not founded'.

The school food trust works to improve the quality of school lunches by providing information on the Government's food and nutrient standards. They recommend 10% of your energy intake should come from added sugars. The children in this study had on average 15% of their energy from added sugars and still had enough of most vitamins and minerals.

Source: The Sugar Bureau

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