

The Noble Path Foundation Saving the Children

by Cindi Juncal

Our motto here at the The Noble Path Foundation is “Healthy Kids, Healthy World.” While our outreach programs to raise awareness on the importance of sound nutritional and lifestyle choices extend to all parts of the population, we focus primarily on the children because we believe it is their health which will ultimately determine our future.

Due to a gross and deliberate proliferation of highly processed junk foods marketed to - and targeted at - our youth, we have created the first generation in the history of the world not expected to have longer life spans than their parents. This dubious distinction has befallen them as the early onset of diseases that used to beset only our elderly, are now afflicting them in epidemic proportions.

Type 2 (T2) diabetes was previously called “adult onset diabetes” because only adults used to get it. Literally ... as recently as a few decades ago, T2 diabetes in children never existed. If we con-



tinue to feed them the highly-processed Standard American Diet (SAD), replete with excess sugar, refined carbohydrates and saturated fats, one out of every three children will be on course to develop this deadly and debilitating disease. And the most tragic part about this statistic is that it's totally PREVENTABLE.

In an article titled “How Children Develop Unhealthy Food Preferences,” pediatrician Suanne Kowal-Connelly, MD, FAAP points out that “the fast food industry spends nearly five million dol-

lars a day marketing products high in sugar, fat and salt, while also suggesting portion sizes grossly disproportionate to a child's energy needs.” She continues, “Remarkably, studies demonstrate that even very young children exposed to persuasive ads can develop food cravings for unhealthy foods that they have never even tasted!”

If you add the addictive properties of sugar to this slick campaign, you can see how our industrialized food system is protecting its investment by creating generations of junk food junkies and hoodwinking their parents into being the unsuspecting drug dealers.

The importance of putting our children on a path towards a lifetime of healthy eating habits cannot be overemphasized. Childhood is a period of rapid growth and development and food preferences are being imprinted in their earliest years of life. Studies have even shown that the mother's diet can impact metabolic imprinting as well.

We've known for two decades that some taste biases are being formed not only in infancy, but even prior to that. Flavors transferred from the mother's diet via amniotic fluid and breast milk have been shown to “modify the infants' acceptance and enjoyment of similarly flavored foods at weaning” - something to make you reevaluate the importance of womb service - if you pardon the pun!

I will acknowledge that getting our kids to enjoy the taste of REAL food may sound simple, but it's not always easy. Even as adults, we are failing miserably on this front. A 2010 report from the National Cancer Institute on the status of the American diet found that three out of four Americans don't eat a single piece of fruit in a given day, and nearly nine out of ten don't reach the minimum recommended daily intake of vegetables.

On a weekly basis, 96 percent of Americans don't reach the minimum for greens or beans (three servings a week for adults), 98 percent don't reach the minimum for orange vegetables (two servings a week), and 99 percent don't reach the minimum for whole grains (about three to four ounces a day). “In conclusion,” the researchers wrote, “nearly the entire U.S. population consumes a diet that is not on par with recommendations. These findings add another piece to the rather disturbing picture that is emerging of a nation's diet in crisis.”

If we want a healthy future we must do a better job of raising healthy kids. It's ironic how adults will take their time in a restaurant, searching for the healthiest options, and then casually order the absolute worst possible choice for their children from the kid's menu. As our most important and precious commodity, shouldn't our children be nourishing themselves on the very best food we can find?

If we could get rid of “kid food” vs “adult food” and focus on real food instead, we'd be making a good start towards eradicating childhood obesity, epidemic numbers of T2 diabetes and lifestyle related chronic disease.

There's no time like the present to start reinforcing our future with generations of healthy kids. So please, eliminate the highly processed food-like items found in the center of the grocery store. Shop instead on the perimeter, where the real foods sit quietly, with no bold marketing gimmicks or false nutritional claims yelling at you from the front of their packaging. Think of nutrition labels with a long list of indiscernible or unintelligible ingredients as warning labels and search instead for a short list of edible things your grandmother would recognize. Or better yet, pick something that is missing a label entirely, because as chef and child advocate Jamie Oliver says, “Real food doesn't have ingredients. Real food IS ingredients.” Together, we can use our forks to fight disease, instead of digging our own graves. 🍴

Cindi is President and Founder of The Noble Path Foundation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) dedicated to raising awareness on childhood obesity, T2 diabetes and the importance of sound nutrition and lifestyle choices for our youth. For sources and links to the statistics mentioned in this article, please visit her website and search for the article under her blog at www.thenoblepath-foundation.org.

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