



Caring for Children
Through Improved Nutrition
Family Guidebook—Child Nutrition Effort

Introduction for Families

Jesus welcomed children to come to Him, blessed them, and prayed for them. He said to the Nephites, "Behold your little ones" (3 Nephi 17:23). In our efforts to help our children grow up healthy, we follow Christ's example of tender care.

GOOD NUTRITION HELPS CHILDREN REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

As children grow, they need the right type and amount of food for their bodies and brains to develop properly. This is especially crucial from the start of the mother's pregnancy until the child is five years old. Good nutrition makes it possible for children to think clearly, do well in school, and fight off disease. These benefits last a lifetime.

YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD HAVE GOOD NUTRITION AND HEALTH

To help parents raise healthy children, the Church has prepared the short information sheets in this book. These guides cover topics such as food for children and preventing disease. They offer practical ways you as a parent can help your child grow up with a healthy foundation.

You don't have to use all this information at once. Focus on what matters most to you and work one step at a time. Remember that Heavenly Father loves your children as you do, and He will guide your efforts.

Table of Contents

Wellness and Nutrition

Topics	Family Guide Pages
Healthy Brain Development for Children	6
Breastfeeding.....	7
Healthy Eating for Children	8-9
Food Journal.....	10
Gardening.....	11
Safe Drinking Water	12

Hygiene and Safety Practices

Dental Health.....	13
Handwashing.....	14
Safe Human Waste Practices.....	15
Safe Food Preparation	16

Malnutrition Resources

What to Expect When Being Treated for Malnutrition at a Health Clinic	17
Recognizing Signs of Malnutrition.....	18

Family Guides

Healthy Brain Development for Children

The most important period for a child's brain development is from the time of conception to ages 2-3. A child's relationships and everyday experiences help shape the brain's development. Responsive parenting, two-way interactions, and chances to learn through play are key.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO:



LOVE

- Show interest in your child.
- Make eye contact and smile often.
- Hold, cuddle, and kiss your child.
- Notice and help when your child is hungry, tired, hurt, or sad.
- Show your love often.



TALK

- Talk to your child starting at birth.
- Have two-way interaction with your baby by repeating sounds he or she makes.
- Speak slowly and with expression.
- Talk about what your child is seeing or doing. Name things.
- Read books or show pictures.



PLAY

- Give your child safe and interesting things for play and exploration.
- Safe, clean household items like cups, spoons, and containers can be used for play.
- Play games together with back-and-forth interaction, like covering and then uncovering your face ("peek-a-boo") or rolling a ball.
- Let the child follow their own curiosity and interests in play.
- Find safe places to play outside.



Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding has benefits for children and mothers. Some of the benefits for children are:

- Breast milk contains all the essential nutrients your baby needs until 6 months of age.
- It provides enough hydration until the baby is 6 months old.
- It supports healthy brain development.



WHEN SHOULD I START BREASTFEEDING?

- Start Breastfeeding within an hour of birth.
- This first milk provides protection to your baby against infectious diseases.
- Consider that each mother's experience is unique and does not always go perfectly.
- Breastfeeding is a learned process. It can take some time for you and your baby to adjust to it.



HOW LONG SHOULD I BREASTFEED?

- If possible, breastfeed your baby for at least the first year of life. Continuing until the child is 2 brings added health benefits.



SHOULD I GIVE WATER TO A BABY YOUNGER THAN 6 MONTHS OLD?

- No. Adding water before this age increases the risk of diarrhea and malnutrition.



WHEN SHOULD I START GIVING OTHER FOODS TO MY BABY BESIDES BREASTMILK?

- Starting at six months, other foods should be added.
- If possible, exclusively breastfeed during the first six months.



WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM NOT ABLE TO BREASTFEED?

- If you find that you are not able to breastfeed, there are still ways you can bond with and nurture your baby.
- Although it does not contain all the benefits of breast milk, infant formula can be used as a substitute when needed.
- Prepare it with clean drinking water and follow the instructions in the package.
- Contact your clinical provider.



WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF SUCCESSFUL BREASTFEEDING?

- You can see and hear the baby swallowing.
- There is a rhythmic suck.
- Baby's arms and hands are relaxed.
- Diapers are regularly soaked.
- Stool changes from dark to light brown by day 3.



Healthy Eating for Children

To develop well, young children need the right types of foods. Different foods help the body in different ways. It's not enough just to have a full belly.



4 GOOD WAYS TO IMPROVE CHILDREN'S NUTRITION:

1

BREASTFEED BABIES (IF POSSIBLE) FOR AT LEAST A YEAR

- Two years is even better.
- Add other foods starting at 6 months.



2

GIVE YOUR CHILD SOME FRUITS AND VEGETABLES EACH DAY

- Fruits and vegetables help with many body processes and help prevent disease.

Foods like:



green leafy vegetables



banana



tomato



mango

3

GIVE YOUR CHILD SOME PROTEIN FOOD EACH DAY

- Protein helps the body grow and repair itself.

Foods like:



dry beans



fish



nuts



eggs



poultry

4

DON'T GIVE CHILDREN LOTS OF SALTY OR SUGARY FOODS AND PACKAGED SNACKS

- These foods don't have the nutrients children need.
- Eating too much of them can also damage children's health.

Foods like:



cookies



chips



candy



sugary drinks

Grains and Starchy Foods

Grains and starchy foods like rice noodles, bread, tortillas, and potatoes are often eaten at every meal. They give the body energy. But they don't give all the nutrition that is needed.

Fruits and vegetables and protein foods need to be added.



pasta



bread



rice



potatoes, sweet potatoes

Also follow any recommendations you have received from a health professional.

Healthy Eating for Children

Small changes in eating can make a big difference to a child's health.

Fruits and Vegetables

To start, try to give your child a fruit or vegetable once a day.
(A portion is about the size of your child's fist.)

What are some fruits and vegetables you could use?

How could you get them?

When you can, give your child fruits or vegetables at every meal. It is good if a child can get 5 portions of fruits or vegetables a day.

Protein Foods

To start, try to give your child a protein food once a day.
(A portion is about the size of your child's fist.)

What are some protein foods you could use?

How could you get them?

When you can, give your child a protein food at every meal.

Other ideas or questions

If your family is having problems getting these foods, please talk with your ministering brothers or sisters.

Food Journal

Child's Name _____ Child's Age _____

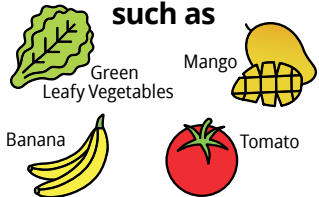
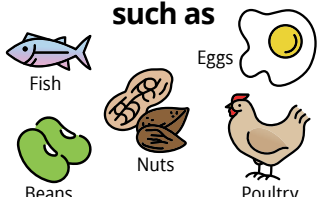
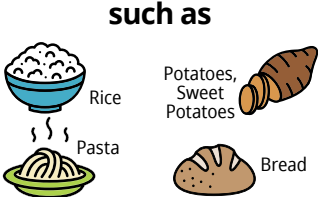
This is a place for you to record the foods your child eats. If you like, you can use it to see your progress toward better nutrition for your child. You can get extra copies from your Relief Society.

FOR EACH DAY, THERE IS ONE ROW

Starting with day 1, write down each food your child ate that day. Write the food in the correct space to show what type of food your child ate.

The yellow row is an example showing how to mark the chart

- A child ate some rice in the morning. Rice is a **grain**. The parent wrote "rice" under the **Grains and Starchy Foods** column for that day.
- Later that day the child ate some banana and an egg. The parent wrote "banana" under **Fruits and Vegetables** for that day. They also wrote "egg" under **Protein Foods**.
- The child ate rice for dinner. The parent wrote "rice" again under **Grains and Starchy Foods**.

	Fruits and Vegetables such as 	Fish and Other Proteins such as 	Grains and Starchy Foods such as 
Example day	banana	egg	rice rice
Day 1 date:			
Day 2 date:			
Day 3 date:			
Day 4 date:			

How many days did your child eat a fruit or vegetable?
 How many days did your child eat a protein food?
 What would you like to do next to improve your child's nutrition?

Gardening

Children need to eat fruits and vegetables every day. Growing some food for your family can improve your children's health.

HERE ARE SOME STEPS YOU CAN FOLLOW:



1

▶ 1. LEARN HOW TO GROW FOOD SUCCESSFULLY IN YOUR AREA

- It helps to know the best way to grow food in your climate and type of soil.
- Government agriculture specialists are a good resource. Local Church leaders may also suggest resources.
- Friends, neighbors, or Church members with gardening experience may be helpful.



2

▶ 2. CHOOSE WHAT TO GROW

- Choose plants that grow well in your climate and soil, and in the space you have.
- Choose foods your family will eat.



3

▶ 3. FIND A GOOD PLACE

- Find a sunny place. Vegetable plants need about 6 hours of sunlight a day.
- Choose a place you can get water to.
- You can also plant in containers such as buckets, pots, or large cans. Make sure there is a way for water to drain out.



4

▶ 4. PREPARE THE SOIL BEFORE PLANTING

- Dig to break up chunks of soil.
- Add fertilizer or other materials to your soil if needed.



5

▶ 5. WATER IS KEY

- Make sure your plants get enough water.
- Learn how to tell when your plants need more water.

What is a first step you could take to grow some fruits or vegetables?



Safe Drinking Water

Clean drinking water is important because it helps keep our bodies healthy and working properly. Unclean water can cause stomach pain, diarrhea, and other diseases.

Check your water supply to see if it is clean and safe to drink. If it's not, here are some things you can do to make sure you have safe water:



ASK OTHERS

- Community and Church leaders can help you find safe water.



PURIFY WATER

- You can purify water by boiling, filtering, disinfecting, or evaporating.
- You can also collect clean rainwater or use solar purification.



USE SAFE BOTTLED WATER

- Bottled water is usually safe if the seal on the lid has not been broken.
- Bottled water is unsafe if the bottle has been refilled with unclean water.



USE SAFE WELL WATER

Well water is usually safe if the well:

- Is deep, covered, and cleaned often.
- Does not have any damage or leaks.



STORE WATER SAFELY

- Use clean containers with a lid that can close tightly.
- Don't store water in sunlight.



USE CLEAN WATER FOR EVERYTHING THAT ENTERS YOUR BODY OR TOUCHES YOUR FOOD

- Brushing teeth
- Making juice or infant formula
- Washing food or dishes



SEE A DOCTOR

If you think your drinking water is making you sick, see a doctor.



Healthy Teeth

Healthy teeth are important for young children's overall development. Parents play a vital part in making sure their children's teeth are healthy.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO:



DON'T LET BABIES FALL ASLEEP WHILE DRINKING FROM A BOTTLE

- Falling asleep with a bottle containing juice or milk in the mouth is the leading cause of tooth decay in young children.
- Children should not go to bed with a bottle unless it's water.



START BRUSHING WHEN THE FIRST TOOTH APPEARS

- Dental disease can start at a young age, so start brushing your child's teeth as soon as they appear (usually around six months).
- Use a small amount of toothpaste with fluoride if possible. For children two years old and younger, use a dab of toothpaste the size of a grain of rice; for three years old and older, the size of a pea.



START FLOSSING EARLY

- When a child has teeth that touch each other (usually between two and six years old), it is good to start using dental floss, if available.
- Flossing helps remove little pieces of food from areas that brushes cannot reach.
- It is important that children get used to teeth flossing early in their lives.



AVOID SUGARY SNACKS AND DRINKS

- Snacking often on sugary foods damages the outer layer of teeth and causes cavities.
- If cavities are untreated, they can cause pain and serious infections.



GET CHECKUPS FROM A DENTIST

- Dentists can identify and treat small problems before they become more serious.
- If needed, look for low- or no-cost dental clinics in your area.



Handwashing

Proper handwashing helps reduce the spread of diseases

WASH HANDS:

- Before, during, and after preparing food.
- Before eating food.
- After using the toilet or evacuating waste.
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet.
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste.
- After playing or swimming.



1
wet

1. WET

- Wet hands with clean, running water.



2
soap

2. SOAP

- Apply soap.



3
rub

3. RUB

- Rub hands together for at least 20 seconds.
- Make sure to rub soap on the front and back of your hands, between fingers, and under nails. (Count or sing a children's song)



4
rinse

4. RINSE

- Rinse all the soap off with clean water.



5
dry

5. DRY

- Air dry hands or use a clean towel.

If clean water and soap are not available, try to use hand sanitizer. Cover hands and rub together briskly until it dries.



Safe Human Waste Practices

Toilets come in all shapes and sizes. No matter what type of toilet you use, these practices will help your family avoid illnesses related to unsafe human waste disposal.



FLUSH TOILET

1. Try not to touch extra surfaces.
2. Sit on the toilet like a chair.
3. Use toilet paper to wipe yourself clean.
4. If possible, put the toilet paper in the toilet. Otherwise put it in the trash.
5. Always flush the toilet.
6. Throw away trash.
7. Wash your hands with soap for 20 seconds.



SQUAT TOILET

1. Bunch your clothes around your knees.
2. Squat above the toilet without touching it.
3. Use toilet paper to wipe yourself clean.
4. If possible, put the toilet paper in the toilet. Otherwise put it in the trash.
5. If possible, flush the toilet.
6. Throw away trash.
7. Wash your hands with soap for 20 seconds.



OPEN OR NO TOILET

1. Pick a site far from people, houses, and water.
2. Dig a hole 15 cm deep.
3. Squat over the hole.
4. Use toilet paper or soft leaves to wipe yourself clean.
5. Place paper or leaves in the hole. Fill with dirt, mud, and rocks.
6. Make sure there are no traces of waste.
7. Wash your hands with soap for 20 seconds.



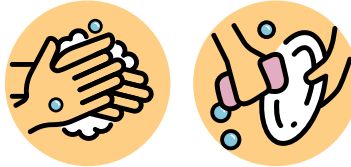
Safe Food Preparation

People can get sick from germs that aren't visible where food is prepared.

HERE ARE FIVE WAYS TO PREVENT DISEASE:

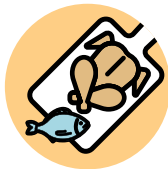
KEEP CLEAN

- Wash hands before, during and after preparing food.
- Always wash hands after using the toilet.
- Wash work surfaces and cooking equipment.
- Keep animals and insects away.



SEPARATE RAW FROM COOKED

- Keep raw meat, fish, and poultry separate from other foods.
- Don't use the same knife or cutting surface for raw meats and other foods.



COOK THOROUGHLY

- Cook food thoroughly, especially meat, poultry, eggs, and seafood.
- Let foods like soups and stews boil before eating.



KEEP FOOD AT SAFE TEMPERATURES

- Keep cooked food hot until it is eaten (60° C/140° F).
- Don't keep cooked foods at room temperature for over 2 hours.



USE SAFE WATER AND FOODS

- In cooking, use water that is safe to drink.
- Wash raw vegetables and unpeeled fruits before eating.



Adapted from the Food Safety Poster, World Health Organization (WHO/SDE/PHE/FOS/01.1)

<https://www.who.int/teams/nutrition-and-food-safety/multisectoral-actions-in-food-systems/five-keys-to-safer-food-poster>

Treatment is essential for a child with malnutrition

What to Expect When Being Treated for Malnutrition at a Health Clinic

Malnutrition can impact a child's brain development and physical growth. A child who is severely malnourished should be seen as soon as possible in a health clinic so they can get food supplements and other treatments.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE TREATMENTS YOU CAN EXPECT:



FOOD SUPPLEMENTS

- These are usually cereals, porridge, or other foods that have extra nutrients added to them.
- They might also be powdered supplements that you sprinkle on your child's food.
- On average, children eat these once a day for two to three months.



LIQUID SUPPLEMENTS

- If your child is experiencing dehydration caused by diarrhea, health workers may recommend a supplement in liquid form.



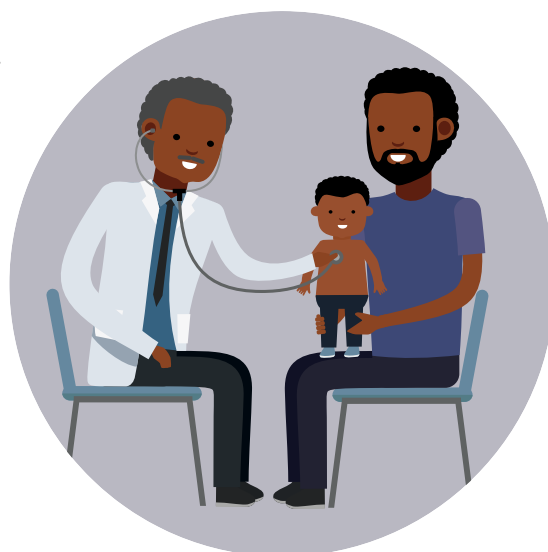
MEDICINE FOR INTESTINAL WORMS

- Children can sometimes be infected with intestinal worms that make it so they can't absorb nutrients from food.
- Health workers may give your child medicine to prevent or eliminate these worms.



MEDICINE FOR OTHER CONDITIONS OR DISEASES

- Health workers may identify other conditions or diseases that could be impacting your child's nutrition, such as a respiratory illness, malaria, or other infectious disease.
- Health workers may recommend medicines or shots to treat these diseases.
- Health workers may also recommend immunizations to prevent common diseases that can impact a child's nutrition.



Recognizing Signs of Malnutrition

- *Malnutrition can severely affect your child's health and development.*
- *Detecting and addressing signs of malnutrition can save a child's life and enhance his or her potential.*
- *This document addresses two forms of malnutrition: wasting and stunting.*

SIGNS OF MALNUTRITION:

Review the signs of malnutrition below to become familiar with what to watch for in your child. These signs do not represent every sign that may occur, and different children could present different signs.

ENERGY

- Lack of energy
- Dizziness
- Weakness



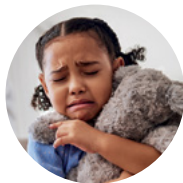
BODY'S DEFENSE SYSTEM

- Frequently ill
- Frequent diarrhea
- Slow wound healing
- Long recovery times



CONCENTRATION AND MOOD

- Difficulty concentrating
- Slow to react
- Easily irritated



APPEARANCE

- Dry, breakable hair, lightening of color, hair loss
- Sunken eyes, hollow cheeks
- Swollen, bleeding gums; decaying teeth
- Swollen abdomen, small legs, and arms
- Numbness and swelling in hands and feet
- Dry, scaly skin, bruising easily, swelling under the skin (edema)



APPETITE

- Reduced appetite
- Lack of interest in food and drinks



Take the Next Steps

It is not always easy to detect if a child is malnourished. They can look like other children in the area. If you believe your child could be malnourished:

- **Consult with a health professional.**
A professional can determine your child's nutritional status and provide additional guidance.
- **Meet with your Relief Society or Elders Quorum president to ask for guidance and help if needed.**
They can support you and help you find resources from the community and the Church to meet the nutritional needs of your child.



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

