



FROM THE
nutrition *corner*

BY SHARON PRICE, MS (NUTRITION), MBA

feeding today's family

Feeding our families can sometimes feel like a battle with too many fronts to fight. There's the debate about whole food versus processed, convenience foods; another about organic versus conventional farming. There's the challenge of avoiding phthalates and other hormone disruptors while sending the kids off to school with healthy food. And then there's the age-old struggle of how do I get my kid to eat vegetables?

And the newer poser may be the most challenging: *How do I find the time to cook at all?* It's not merely a matter of finding time in one's day, but it's about the time (and the cost) required to find the ingredients necessary to prepare a healthy diet. Processed and packaged "convenience" food has become the norm, making the preparation of meals "from scratch" inconvenient.

Further, amid a seeming explosion of food allergies and other health challenges, eating can seem anything but simple. And I see more and more children with complex issues that pose whole family challenges.

These issues can present in different ways. Recently, I saw a teenager with "stomach issues." Her parents told me she had multiple food allergies, but that they ended up giving her foods she shouldn't have because she wouldn't eat anything else.

During an hour-long discussion, this young woman fell asleep twice. She wasn't eating enough food and wouldn't eat in front of friends—all signs of disordered eating. In those situations, I refer for mental health counseling in addition to a more specialized type of nutrition support if necessary.

But her situation highlights the delicate balance of feeding our families today. How do families learn healthy habits together while not accidentally creating an unhealthy fixation on what they can't or shouldn't eat? What's a parent to do?

FOCUS ON THE BASICS

First, take a deep breath and focus on basics. Add more vegetables. Serve them early and often. Research shows that it can take 19 tastes for an infant to become accustomed to a new one. Understandably, many parents give up after one or two rejections. But once children develop a taste for healthy fare, it will be much easier to serve it rather than having to "hide" beans in the brownies.

And about those brownies? Limiting sugar is another basic that's trickier than it seems. That kid-friendly, "healthy" yogurt might have 22g of sugar—pretty much like giving them a candy bar. And "sugar" can look a lot like white bread, white rice, or pasta, since too much of these foods can increase the risks for type II diabetes and other health conditions more typically associated with old age than teenage.

As much as possible, healthful eating should be a whole family experience. Harder than it sounds, I know, but a good goal to set. And when you feel lost in a maze of food allergies or other restrictions, that's where someone like me can help demystify the process of planning and feeding your family.

In my practice, I help families identify the healthiest way to eat given their individual parameters—both health and time factors—and provide plans illustrating options and alternatives that fit . . . and how to make them fit into the day.

I try to expand and emphasize all the things they can eat rather than over-focusing on what they can't, which can lead to a sense of deprivation that has doomed many a New Year's resolution. My role is to help individuals and families savor good health without feeling enslaved to its pursuit. **h&h**

Sharon Price, MS (Nutrition), MBA became a nutrition "geek" following her own journey recovering from Lyme disease. She now offers that same problem-solving expertise to help individuals and families navigate the often-complex interplay between food and health—taking a special interest in gut health, autoimmune conditions, food allergies, and hormone balance. Her approach is simple: take the "heavy lifting" out of wellness by pairing scientifically derived expertise with personalized, concierge-level attention. You can reach her for help with personalized nutrition at sharon@notsohardnutrition.com or 919-322-8230, or on her website: www.notsohardnutrition.com