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Delicious meatball stir-fry

Ingredients

2 tbsp. oil
 1 onion, chopped
 1 red bell pepper, chopped
 1 green bell pepper, chopped
 1 bag frozen broccoli pieces
 1 bag frozen green beans
 1 can pineapple pieces, drained
 24oz bag of fully cooked meatballs
 3 tbsp. low-sodium soy sauce
 1/4 cup sweet chili sauce
 Salt, pepper and garlic to taste

Instructions

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the bell peppers and onion, cook until crisp tender, about 2 minutes.

Then mix in the green beans, broccoli and meatballs, and cook an additional 5 minutes.



Stir in the sweet chili sauce and soy sauce. Reduce the heat to low, stirring until the sauce has coated all of the meatballs.

Mix in pineapple and season with salt, pepper and garlic to taste.

Enjoy as it is, or serve this dish over steamed rice.

Note: Change up the flavor profile if you want by adding mushrooms or other seasonal produce available. Make it your own, the sky is the limit.

Supporting youth through the challenges of pediatric Long COVID

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In my role as a consultant nutritionist to Siletz Tribal Head Start, I offer information for families and the community. This month, I want to highlight the challenges our youth face with Long COVID, and/or the mysterious undiagnosed lingering symptoms for which there is often little hope offered.

Long COVID can fall hard on our youth, as it is not well understood, and solutions are often not apparent. It is devastating to be told, "there is nothing that can be done". Special providers work with children experiencing Long COVID, and they offer hope with their tips and insights. Usually, there are underlying root cause(s) that haven't yet been identified, preventing full recovery.

The symptoms may be acute or gradual onset, and this sometimes complicates how to interpret its cause(s). Furthermore, the condition known as Long COVID resembles the lesser-known, condition of ME/CFS, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, which may or may not include COVID as a known cause.

When the onset is gradual, parents may wonder if this is a phase, making it hard to know when to reach out for medical support. It is important to look back at personal history, for clues to identify when things changed, such as flu or illness, a sibling being born, stress at school, parental divorce, a trauma or accident, or something environmental, such as a water leak or mold exposure.

Similar and sudden onset of neuro-psych symptoms, have been identified as PANS or PANDAS (Pediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome or Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections, defined below). Most, if not all, Long COVID cases have significant brain

inflammation, also called neuroinflammation, possibly with a simmering, sub-acute infection. COVID can also harm the body's ability to produce the energy required to heal.

It is important to seek medical care and to look for other root causes, including hidden infection, toxic load, trauma/stress, lack of energy to heal (mitochondria dysfunction), or other. Often, something may seem "off" for a while, but rather than getting over it, the symptoms get worse. For recovery, it is important to look deeper. There are many possible triggers that could make the co-occurring condition(s) harder to ignore.

It is especially critical to meet our youth where they are emotionally. This might mean we need to find an effective counselor to allow them to talk about, and to process what is happening, so that they can find their inner resources to get well. Caregivers also need compassion and skill to open safe communication with supportive curiosity.

Children with autoimmune conditions are thought to take on emotional messaging, and turn it inward (possibly an expression of why the body begins to attack itself). Children living in homes with neglect or abuse may be absorbing negative energy from the household, adding to their risk for Long COVID.

With awareness of the overwhelming condition of Long COVID, let's focus on the emotional needs by wondering, "How well are we digesting or processing our information?" Healing can't occur while we feel unsafe. We can't process or digest toxic emotions, or anything that feels aggressive or inconsistent with our values. Can we encourage our youth to consider this question, "What is your body saying or asking for?"

How can we support our children, especially our teens, to know what needs the body is trying to communicate? We can't heal if we don't feel

safe. There needs to be an emotional container of safety to benefit from the medical support for healing. Without support to understand what the body is saying, while also sick, with too little energy to go to school or play with friends, our youth may spin out into hopelessness and helplessness.

As caring adults, we may need to observe their natural ways, and to support them to be aware of what already works for them to restore. With this invitation, they can be empowered to discover their needs for themselves, as they talk through their emotions of the day. Do they need more contact with peers? or family? Or do they need a private room with a soft blanket and quiet to find balance? Remember, their needs might not be the same as yours.

When we are facing Long COVID, and feeling unwell, it is not always clear how to process the emotions and the information that comes at us. Are we able to take in and be nourished by what is useful, and to remove or eliminate toxicity or infection as waste? It is important to focus on healthy digestion while also working on the nervous system regulation, because the gut and the mind are linked.

If you have ever felt really emotional during a meal, and then had an upset stomach, or could not eat, this connection is apparent. When there is constant scanning for safety, it is possible that this "over-digesting" of emotions or events, may actually impair digestion in the gut.

How can we support parents to start speaking to children in ways that help to make sense of what's happening? How can we continue activities that support their processing and emotional regulation? It is important to ask questions to see where children/youth may be receiving aggression or silent treatment.

They may be absorbing the thoughts of others, or start having negative thoughts towards them-

selves or feelings of unworthiness. If they become impulsive, they may need support to release emotion, through movement or expression to translate it. Healthy self-esteem is vital for physical healing. Whatever's happening within our body is also happening at the mind level.

It is essential to understand and process what our body and mind are saying. This is the gateway to understanding what is needed and how to heal the body and the mind, so that the soul can return.

In summary, Long COVID is inflammatory with many possible root causes beyond the initial viral infection. To support our youth, we need to support their emotional, energetic, sensitive imprint in addition to medical care. This can be through counseling and skillful, curious, parental communication. When we understand the messages from our body about what nourishment it needs to function, we are in a stronger position to self-advocate and to heal.

Please know that Siletz Tribal Head Start offers support for nutritional consultation at no cost to Head Start families. This usually occurs over the telephone. If you have concerns about your Head Start child's nutrition or family nutrition concerns, please contact your teacher or the director and ask to speak to the nutritionist. We want to support your children and families.

*PANS/PANDAS were first reported in 1998, with severe behavioral symptoms due to infection in children from age 3 to puberty, primarily thought to be from Streptococcus. Understanding of these conditions continues to evolve, and to include other infections. It is believed possible that adults could also develop similar conditions, with slower onset of symptoms, or recurrence, without prior diagnosis.