

Family Living

Kids' Nutrition Q & A

August 1999

Q: Is Broccoli more nutritious than Spinach?

A: Broccoli and Spinach are both nutritional powerhouses, says Dr. Michael Grusak, a plant physiologist with the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine. Both are rich in fiber, vitamins and minerals, and low in calories.

Each has specific nutritional strengths, however. Spinach is richer in iron, foliate and vitamin A, but Broccoli has more vitamin C and calcium. In addition, broccoli and other cruciferous vegetables, such as Brussels sprouts and kale, contain glucosinolates. Glucosinolates are a group of phytonutrients thought to help the body detoxify carcinogens and increase human resistance to cancer.

But, before going overboard on either broccoli or spinach, remember that variety is the spice of life and key to good nutrition. So, don't worry which is more nutritious - eat both!

Q: Although I want to breastfeed my new baby, I don't want to give up having an occasional glass of wine. Any advice?

A: Timing and moderation are the answer, says Dr. Judy Hopkinson, a lactation physiologist with the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center, a Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Alcohol does get into breast milk when you drink. But, if you limit yourself to an occasional single three-ounce glass of wine and wait two hours or more before nursing, your body will be able to clear both your blood and milk of alcohol, making it safe to breastfeed.

Exposure to alcohol could become a problem for your infant, however, if you nurse too soon,

drink too much or drink frequently. A baby's body metabolizes alcohol very slowly, so even a small amount can affect nursing and sleep patterns. Initially, alcohol reduces nursing time by inducing sleep. But it will eventually interfere with sleep. Regular alcohol exposure can also affect a baby's behavior and coordination.

Q: I say that fat accounts for 20 percent of the calories in 80 percent lean ground beef. My husband disagrees. Who's right?

A: He is. According to nutritionists at the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center, at Baylor College of Medicine, ground beef labeled 80 percent lean is 20 percent fat by weight, not caloric content.

What makes this distinction important is that each gram of fat yields 9 calories, while a gram of protein yields just 4. For example: a 100-gram burger (about three and one-half ounces) made from 80 percent lean ground beef contains a total of 260 calories and 20 grams of fat. Since that 20 grams of fat yield 180 calories, the percent of calories from fat is 180/260, or nearly 70 percent.

Although this might be surprising, don't let your new insight turn you against iron-rich red meats. Remember that the heart healthy goal of keeping your fat calories to 30 percent or less of total calories applies to your overall diet, not a single food. So, on days when you want to enjoy a lean beef burger just remember to control the portion size and watch your

overall fat intake during the rest of the day. This is easier if you choose more fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods, and few high-fat snacks and convenience foods

Q: Is homemade baby food healthier than store-bought?

A: Commercially prepared baby food is nutritionally equivalent to the home-made version, says Dr. Debby Demory-Luce, a registered dietitian with the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine. So, the decision comes down to personal preference.

Some parents enjoy making their own baby food and find it

more economical. The texture of homemade foods can also be easily varied to promote chewing skills in babies who are developmentally ready.

Should you decide to make your own baby food, be sure to keep cleanliness and food safety in mind during preparation and storage? Clean hands, preparation surfaces, utensils, and containers are a must. Also, avoid adding sugar, honey, salt, or seasonings to your baby's food, whether purchased or home-made. Adding honey is particularly dangerous because it can harbor a bacteria that causes a potentially fatal illness in babies less than 1 year of age.

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Court to Rule on Adoption Law

The Oregon Court of Appeals is expected to decide soon whether a new law allowing adult adoptees to view their birth certificates should be enforced. "The Oregonian" reports that Measure 58, which passed in November, has been stalled in court by six birth mothers who oppose the change. The court will have to decide whether to allow the law to go into effect, or honor the confidentiality thousands of women were promised years ago when they relinquished their children for adoption.

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