



Cereal: A Child's First Junk Food

Step away from the cereal! That's right – throw that box in the garbage! DO NOT feed it to your infant, child – or to anyone at all! I know. It's completely the opposite of what you've probably been told – by your medical pediatrician, by your mom, maybe even by your grandmother. Almost every childcare book and piece of advice you hear from others encourages young parents to start their infants on rice cereal as one of their first foods. And then, to make matters worse, what are some of the most common first finger foods? Cheerios, goldfish and teething cookies.



I know, you've been told it's safe and healthy, right?

We've even been told by a wide range of sources that cereals (wheat, corn, rice, barley, oats and rye) are the foundation for a healthy diet (insert *Rice Krispies* or *Frosted Flakes* commercial here)! The information that has led medical pediatricians and even your parents to make these assertions, and recommend cereal as the foundation for a healthy diet is outdated. In the middle of the last century, more mothers were entering the workforce, and industrial food production was on the rise. Doctors began to mistakenly operate under the assumption that scientifically created foods were somehow healthier for babies than mother's milk or whole, natural foods. Suddenly, the bad habit of starting babies on white rice cereal was born, and we spiraled out of control from there. If you're interested in providing your children the best nutrition and the opportunity for exceptional health, and are open to doing things differently than the "average" family.....read on.

Cereal is VOID of Nutrition

A great deal of research has been done that proves that there are no nutritional benefits to consuming cereals at all. Think about what you know about healthy, nutritious foods. We know we're supposed to be eating whole foods, healthy fats, fruits, and vegetables. Do you know what cereal is? None of those things!

Cereals are: **Processed – Pressed – Milled – Sealed – Preserved – Shelf-stable for Months or Years**

You know that type of food isn't healthy for you. Doctors tell you not to eat that kind of food if you want to enhance your health. **So why do we think it's healthy to feed our infants and children this kind of food?** It goes against everything you know about what food is: real, whole, unprocessed, fresh, in its original state, no added ingredients, no fillers, something that eventually decomposes. There is absolutely no nutritional value in cereals, so don't worry; you're not neglecting any of your child's nutritional needs!

"White rice -- after processing strips away fiber, vitamins and other nutrients -- is a 'nutritional disaster' ...

~Dr. Alan Green, MD (pediatrics)

Cereals are Packed Full of Sugar



Would you give your child a spoonful of sugar as their very first food? Of course not! But for the last 50 years in the US, nearly 98% of babies' first foods have been white rice cereal! Feeding your baby a spoonful of cereal is practically like giving your baby a spoonful of sugar. Refined carbohydrates are bad for all of us, let alone your baby. In addition, an increasing number of studies are showing that how we feed our children in their first months matters for the rest of their lives. As of 2010, one in three babies born today is expected to develop diabetes in their lifetime. Obesity, even in children is on the rise. So why are we starting kids out with a food that has no health benefits whatsoever and are likely to predispose them to health issues later in life? It makes no sense at all.

Inflammation, Digestive System Damage and Immune System Weakness

Not only are all cereals very high in sugar, but they contain a type of sugar that is very difficult for a young and immature digestive system to break-down. In order to digest any cereals or grains, the body needs the enzyme amylase, which babies don't make in large enough quantities to digest grains and cereals until they are almost two years old. This means that the undigested grains sit in the baby's digestive system longer than they should, and cause damage to the intestinal lining. This damage is caused by chronic inflammation, which we know is caused by cereals in the intestinal system of nearly everyone – especially infants and children.

Intestinal inflammation leads to several health problems, some of the effects are immediate, and others are often not detected until years later. When inflammation is present, the surface area available for the digestion of vital nutrients is decreased. Essentially, you're feeding them an indigestible, high sugar food-substitute in place of a nutrient-dense food that would enhance their brain and nervous system development.

Cereals and grains also destroy the balance of bacteria in the digestive system. Good, healthy bacteria make up the immune system – and when the balance of those healthy bacteria is thrown off, the child's immune system becomes weakened. Complications such as food sensitivities, allergies, eczema, asthma, behavioral issues and mood disorders have all been linked to this imbalance in gut flora. And when a child's immune system is weakened, they are sick more often, more easily susceptible to illnesses, and are more likely to get stuck in the medical system, taking antibiotics, and their health spirals further and further down the rabbit hole.



What About Infant Rice Cereal?

We've been made to believe that parents needed something to give their children to make them feel full, and that babies need "iron fortified rice cereal" to get the iron they need. Quite simply: not true. Babies have survived for centuries without iron-fortified foods, and we know for a fact that real, whole food sources are a far superior option for iron than fortified commercial supplements anyway. Because of the type of sugar in rice cereal, and that it is difficult for babies to digest, it "sits in the stomach" longer than healthy foods that are digested properly. This is why you'll hear "experts" giving the bad advice to give your child rice cereal to help them sleep through the night, when research shows it doesn't even work! And if your child is hungry, they're ready for more nutrition – so you certainly want to provide something healthy, rather than a "filler" that will just sit in their stomach. In short, there is no benefit to using rice cereals in infant's bottles as supplements to either breast milk or formula, with several health risks. Skip them completely; they'll be healthier for it.

Best First Foods and Healthy Children's Snacks

First of all, it's healthiest for your baby to breastfeed as long as possible. The nutrients gained through breast milk from a healthy mother cannot be replicated or matched in any way. When it's time to begin solid foods, start with real food! Remember, this is the period of time when you begin teaching your child about healthy food habits. Some of the best first foods include avocados, sweet potatoes, squash and bananas. When children have not become addicted to starchy, sugar-filled foods when young, they're much easier to please as young children because they've never gotten a taste for unhealthy foods. Continue feeding them fresh fruits, vegetables, and hormone and antibiotic free proteins. To further enhance their health, all children should be on a few nutritional supplements for nutrients that cannot be gained from food. These supplements include a probiotic (enhances the immune and digestive system), vitamin D3 (especially in the winter) and Omega-3 essential fats (brain food!).

Speak with your chiropractor for additional information on how to keep your family healthy, naturally!

We're here to help your family experience exceptional health!



~The CornerStone TEAM