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Transcript:

Amy Cox (2412700) started transcription



Amy Cox (2412700) 0:04

Hello and welcome. My name is Amy Cox. Student number is 241-2700. Thank you for joining me here today.

So the focus of the presentation today is the critical importance of maintaining a healthy, well balanced diet during early childhood. This topic has become increasingly relevant as the early years of a child's life formed the foundation for physical growth.

Cognitive development, emotional regulation and long term health outcomes.

It is during this stage that the body and brain are undergoing rapid changes and the role of nutrition cannot be ignored.

From providing energy to fuel our everyday needs to supporting our immune systems, our functions and brain development, food and more importantly, nutrient dense food is vital for well-being in the early years.

Today I will explore the benefits of a well balanced diet that is rich in essential nutrients and that we can positively influence physical health, mental well-being, behaviour and future lifestyle choices. At the same time, I will highlight the consequences of unfavourable diets.

such as those high in added sugars and saturated fats, which continue to pose a threat to Children's Health across the UK and globally. Additionally, I will explore

alternative dietary patterns with a specific focus on veganism.

And finally, a key part of today's presentation is to consider the role of early as practitioners. I will discuss responsibility and opportunity that practitioners in early childhood settings have to support children's and nutritional needs both in general and when accommodating vegan or other diets.

And hopefully by looking at real world barriers such as income inequality, social challenges and gaps in education.

We'll be able to explore how collaboration with families, additional training and government led strategies can help bridge these gaps to give every child the healthiest, best possible start in life.

Now the early years of a child's life are truly remarkable, filled with rapid physical and contact of growth. Because of this, it is crucial to provide adequate nutrition during the vital time to support their optimal development and neurological health.

Yeah.

Research shows that balanced diet rich in essential nutrients not only support physical development but also enhances emotional well-being. On the other hand, poor dietary habits can lead to developmental delays and even behavioural challenges.

Perez, Escamilla and Moran, 2017. Now we all know that food fuels the body, but for babies and young children it does a great deal more.

Not only does the service fuel, but it also aids in brain development, builds immune systems and lays the foundation for their physical, emotional health. However, many children globally, as well as right during our own doorsteps, are not receiving the vital nutrients they need.

Consequently, there are numerous repercussions Kuzumchak 2022.

OK.

Now, according to UNICEF, at least one in three children under the age of five, which equates to around 200 million children globally, are either undernourished or overweight. Even more alarmingly, nearly two in three children between the ages of six months and two years are not being fed food that properly supports a rapid growth.

Growing bodies and brains. This puts them at risk of poor bone development, weakened immunity, increased infection risk, and even more worryingly, death.

UNICEF 2019 multiple studies have highlighted concerns regarding young children's diets in the United Kingdom.

One particular study by the National Diet and Nutrition Survey revealed that children between the ages of one and five years of age often exceeded the recommended levels of sugar and saturated fats, while failing to meet the daily recommended amounts of fibre. Public Health England 2020.

The issue with this is that high consumption of added sugars, unsaturated fats during

early childhood can be associated with various health issues.

Excessive sugar intake has been linked with an increased risk of obesity. It can also affect insulin resistance and has a detrimental effect on children's teeth to here 2019. There are concerns that these dietary imbalances can contribute to raising relevance of childhood obesity and the health issues that are related to it. Office for Health and Improvement Disparities 2024.

However, by simply educating parents and early years practitioners on the detrimental effects of excessive sugar intake and providing them with strategies such as extra educational training or environmental modifications such as limited access to sugary drinks.

Hopefully these effects could be mitigated before Sunday, 20/21.

The Welsh Government has taken significant steps to mitigate these effects through a wide range of policy updates, public health guidance and environmental interventions. Just recently, in 2024, they updated their dietary advice for children between the ages of one and five years.

They recommended that free sugars make up no more than 5% of a child's total dietary energy intake. Welsh Government 2024, a, also advising that dairy products such as yoghurt and yoghurt drinks are unsweetened.

Welsh Government, 2024 B.

To help support such policies, the Welsh Government also announced an investment of £5.5 million as part of the healthy weight Healthy weight strategy. It hopes that this funding will provide improved access to nutritious food and drink, increased drinking water availability and investment in promoting healthier lifestyles.

Such as cycling and walking routes, Welsh Government 2020 these interventions collectively represent a comprehensive approach to addressing the overconsumption of sugar and its health implications nearly childhood across the whole of Wales.

However, it is not always that simple.

And access to healthy foods still remains a significant challenge for so many children, especially those from low income families.

A review by Wreble et al. 2021 highlighted that environmental factors such as low income and even ethnicity can serve as barriers responsive feeding patterns.

Responsive feeding practices, which are known to be crucial for promoting healthy eating in child in early childhood, when these factors are present, it can lead to restrictive eating patterns that's adversely affecting children's eating behaviours and their overall health.

Red Select aisle 2021.

Supporting this, a further study by John Setal, 2023 identified several barriers to families being able to have healthy meals. These included barriers such as time restraints, financial limitations and more often than not, a child's own preference for unhealthy foods.

These challenges combined can make it difficult for parents to provide nutritious meals consistently. And because of this, it could lead to children and their families feeling well, experiencing negative health and having overall and happy lifestyle. A report by Public Health Wales 2024 supports this, reporting that social factors, rather than lack of knowledge or skills, are the primary barriers preventing families from maintaining healthy weights, whether underweight or overweight.

Factors such as the prevalence of unhealthy food with these options often being cheaper than the healthier counterparts, are said to be the most significant obstacles.

Additionally, though Wales also offers the flying start, food and nutrition team, which runs the lit, the Cox programme is a practical cookery initiative designed for children. Earlier settings, the programme aims to engage children food preparation, enhance their understanding of healthy eating while developing fine motor coordination and numeracy skills.

It also supports settings in achieving the gold standard Healthy snack award, and it also aligns the healthy Sustainable Preschool scheme flying start Cardiff no date.

Now next we'll move on and discuss the vegan diet and its benefits.

And detriments in early childhood.

So recently there has been an increase in alternative diets such as the vegan diet, although in early childhood there can be notable benefits, this day it also comes with potential detriments depending on how well it is planned and monitored. Kili 2021. Positively, a vegan diet that is rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts and seeds can promote healthy growth as well as support the child's immune system and reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases later on in life. Diseases such as obesity, heart disease and take two diabetes.

There is evidence that suggests that children raising a well balanced vegan diet may also have lower cholesterol levels and better fibre intake compared to their peers who have an omnivorous diet.

Furthermore, children exposed early on to a variety of plant based foods could be encouraged to continue with lifelong, healthy eaten habits. Desmond Dental 2021.

However, significant concerns have been raised that must be addressed to avoid nutritional deficiencies, vital nutrients such as vitamin B12, iron, calcium, zinc and omega-3 fatty acids are more challenging to obtain from strictly plant based diet.

They may require fortified foods or supplements to meet a growing child's developmental needs. This is because an adequate intake of these nutrients lead to developmental delays, weakened bones, anaemia and even cognitive impairments. Jenkins et al, 2020 new finger and Elanda, 2023.

As well as these concerns around the nutrients that can and cannot be obtained, restrictive nature of a vegan diet may also pose social challenges for young children, particularly in Group settings like nurseries and schools and parties where food

choices may be limited. Hunt 2021.

Yeah.

In the settings, though, early years practitioners can play a pivotal role in supporting children on vegan diets, helping ensure all the nutritional needs are met while fostering inclusive in education and environment. However, given the complexities associated with the plant based diet.

Practitioners must be well informed and proactive in their approach.

There are many ways that they can do this and one step is to assure that they establish clear and open communication with parents. This collaborative approach ensures that the child's dietary needs are consistently met both at home and in an educational setting. Open discussions also ensure that the child's diet aligns with cultural and ethical considerations.

Within the setting and at home, Williams 2022, another way to enable practitioners with the knowledge they need to help provide alternative diets in these settings would again be with continuous professional development. Practitioners must receive proper training on nutrition.

Focusing on the specific needs of vegan and other diets, this training equip staff to confidently plan and prepare meals to support the child's health development and cultural needs. Practitioners should also ensure that they regularly monitor the child's development.

Observing any health or behavioural changes.

This allows practitioners to identify any potential nutritional deficiencies that occur and will allow them to intervene if needed. Get us in 2016 Wallace et al, 2024.

Now to conclude.

The evidence presented is clear. The early years of child's life are not only critical for physical and cognitive development, Broads of establishing long lasting dietary habits which shape the future health and well-being, and unfortunately.

Despite increased public awareness, many children continue to face dietary imbalances. Whether this is due to excessive consumption of sugar and saturated fats, away lack of access to nutrient dense foods, the impact of these poor dietary habits underlines the need for awareness and action both at individual and policy levels.

While there are some promising developments, such as the updated guidance from the Welsh Government and initiatives like the Flying Star Little Cooks programme that have been mentioned here, we must also acknowledge the ongoing challenges many families are facing, especially those with low income.

We can see for many that the issue is not just a lack of knowledge, but instead it is about access, affordability and consistent support, ultimately supporting a children's nutritional health is not just about the food we provide them.

It is also about equity, education and empowerment.

Whether it is through direct care with parents, educational settings in the practitioners or policy implementations, every adult involved in a child's life has a role to play. And given the healthiest possible foundation, a foundation that they can use to build a healthy lifestyle.

it has been a pleasure to present to you today, thank you for taking the time listen.



Amy Cox (2412700) stopped transcription

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