Nutrition Tips for Children With ASD

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NUTRITION TIPS FOR CHILDREN WITH ASD

July 15, 2011 by cpehrson

Professionals who work with children with ASD learned the important role nutrition plays in managing the challenging behaviors and sleeping problems that are often associated with these disorders.

Fifty participants attended a two-day workshop on Nutrition Therapy for Autism Spectrum Disorders at USU last month. The workshop was led by Elizabeth Strickland, a registered dietitian who specializes in nutrition therapy for infants, children, and young adults with developmental disabilities, chronic illnesses, and special health care needs.

Strickland told participants that nutritional deficiencies can greatly affect a child's behavior, sleeping habits, and even the child's ability to function throughout the day.

She recommended a 10-step program to clean out the chemicals and sugar from the child's diet, and then told them how to use supplemental vitamins and minerals to boost the body's system. Once a highly nutritional diet is established, the supplements can be stopped and the nutrients will be found in the food that is eaten.

Strickland went on to explain that young children should eat every 2-1/2 to 3 hours to maintain their blood glucose levels so they don't crash and burn. They need to feel hunger and should not "graze" all day long on food and drinks. She suggested that children be given a high protein snack before bed to help them sleep comfortably through the night.

Along with these basic nutritional guidelines, Strickland stated that feeding skills should be included into Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) because they are a life skill, much like walking and talking.

The Infant/Toddler Feeding workshops are annually sponsored by the CPD’s Up to 3 Early Intervention program. For more information about these workshops, please contact Cathy Mace, registered dietitian for the Up to 3 program.