

THE Clinician's Guide to Pediatric Nutrition

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American Academy of Pediatrics

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To the pediatricians at Children's Primary Care Medical Group

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to our patients and families at Children’s Primary Care Medical Group (CPCMG), where both of us practice as primary care pediatricians and dedicate 1 day per week to the CPCMG W.E.L.L. Clinic, a primary care–based healthy living, nutrition, and obesity clinic. Our patients have given us a hands-on opportunity to not only deepen our understanding of a large breadth of nutritional concerns but also hone our approach to communicating what we have learned and how to best provide tailored guidance and recommendations to optimize their nutrition, across a variety of concerns and health conditions. We also want to thank the other 150 pediatricians and the leadership at CPCMG for the referrals and support of our nutrition clinic. We dedicate this resource to them, because they have trusted us with their patients and helped us deepen our expertise in pediatric nutrition. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to share this information with other pediatricians and clinicians who care for infants, children, and adolescents.

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Introduction

Whether through anticipatory guidance or recommendations for the management of many acute or chronic health concerns, pediatric clinicians are trusted by families to provide nutrition information and advice to support and optimize a child's health. However, even though physicians report that they are willing to provide nutritional counseling to patients and families, and patients deem them a credible source of nutrition information, few provide this nutritional counseling. Most physicians cite lack of knowledge and lack of training as key barriers.¹

Although the National Academy of Sciences recommends that all medical students receive at least 25 hours of nutrition education, only 29% of medical schools meet this recommendation.¹ The reality is that most physicians receive very little nutrition training during medical school and residency.² Without sufficient training, medical students are unlikely to develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and confidence to provide nutritional coaching or counseling to patients and their families when they become attending physicians, yet patients and their families have many nutritional concerns and questions. Most pediatricians have limited access to a nutrition specialist, such as a registered dietitian nutritionist, to refer patients to. Given the time demands and limited training, clinicians need an easy-to-use, credible, evidence-based resource to optimize nutritional management.

The Clinician's Guide to Pediatric Nutrition is a resource written for primary care clinicians who work with infants, children, and adolescents. It includes the most up-to-date evidence-based and evidence-informed nutrition recommendations across the variety of topics that clinicians routinely encounter. With this resource, clinicians can feel confident that they are providing their patients the best nutritional advice.

An Overview

The Clinician's Guide to Pediatric Nutrition features many of the most common nutrition topics encountered in the primary care setting and provides guidance, resources, and recipes to help families translate guidance into nutritional changes. This guide helps pediatricians effectively apply nutrition information to the unique nutritional concerns their patients experience in the context of a busy primary care practice.

This book shows clinicians how to

- Evaluate growth and development, weight and adiposity, and signs of nutritional deficiency or excess.
- Complete a nutritional assessment, including a nutritional history, and provide a patient-specific nutritional treatment plan.
- Recognize whether a child has an unhealthy nutritional profile, such as malnutrition or nutritional deficiencies, and develop a plan to improve nutritional health.

- Determine macronutrient, micronutrient, and fluid needs for infants, children, and adolescents based on the Dietary Reference Intakes, a set of reference values used to plan and assess nutrient intakes of apparently healthy people who have typical growth and plasma nutrient levels.
- Select and interpret findings from screening and laboratory tests and diagnostic procedures to assess and manage a patient's nutrition.
- Use behavior change strategies and coaching techniques matched to a patient and family's readiness for change, including motivational interviewing, SMART goal setting, problem-solving, self-monitoring, stimulus control, and the 5 A's (ask, assess, advise, assist/agree, and arrange).
- Provide age-specific nutritional guidance for newborns or infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school-aged children, and adolescents on the basis of the most up-to-date information, including the *2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
- Most effectively incorporate scientifically sound nutritional guidance into the treatment of many common pediatric concerns, such as anemia, reflux, constipation, underweight, childhood overweight and obesity, dyslipidemia, prediabetes, fatty liver disease, hypertension, disordered eating, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and autism.
- Consult or refer to a registered dietitian and other health care professionals and community resources as appropriate.
- Screen for food insecurity, and connect with public health resources.
- Confidently answer the most common nutrition questions that parents and patients ask their pediatrician.
- Integrate nutrition principles into everyday life through application of culinary medicine and recipes.

Target Audience

The primary audience for this book is the pediatric primary care clinician who cares for children and adolescents in the outpatient setting, routinely providing nutrition-related anticipatory guidance during health supervision visits and addressing nutrition-related concerns, from the newborn stage to young adulthood. This includes primary care pediatricians, family physicians, pediatric and family nurse practitioners, and pediatric and family physician assistants. The secondary audience for this book includes pediatric residents, clinicians from other specialties who commonly work with children and adolescents, registered dietitians, and other allied health professionals.

Key Themes

The Clinician's Guide to Pediatric Nutrition emphasizes several key themes that are discussed and elaborated on throughout the text.

- Nutrition recommendations are best tailored to a child's age and developmental stage.
- A healthy, balanced eating pattern consistent with federal MyPlate recommendations provides a simple framework for nutritional guidance and applies to most children

and most underlying health conditions, with some modifications and a few exceptions. Popular diets are rarely advisable for children, although some evidence-based eating plans, such as the Mediterranean-style, Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, and well-planned vegetarian eating plans, benefit health.

- Nutrition plays an important role in and influences many common health conditions that infants, children, and adolescents experience, across all major organ systems and pediatric specialties.
- The knowledge of how to eat and the psychology of food and nutrition are as important as the understanding of what to eat when providing nutrition recommendations. This point is especially true in pediatrics, in which pediatricians offer nutritional advice most often to a parent or another caregiver who is then responsible for implementing the guidance with a child who may or may not be on board with the recommendations.
- Effective communication, an understanding of social determinants of health, and tailoring of guidance to a patient and family's current understanding, access to resources, and readiness to change are essential to support translation of nutrition information into patient-level behavior changes.

Features

The Clinician's Guide to Pediatric Nutrition includes several features that help clinicians translate knowledge gained into action to provide better and more efficient nutritional care to children, adolescents, and their families.

- **Clinical Practice Tips.** These boxes include easy-to-use and easy-to-access tools, resources, and information to help streamline nutritional assessment and counseling for busy clinicians.
- **In Greater Depth.** The evidence behind commonly discussed nutrition topics and controversies is explored in these boxes.
- **Frequently Asked Questions.** Quick answers to parents' and patients' most common questions are featured in this chapter of Part 5, Frequently Asked Questions, Case Studies, and Recipes.
- **Case Studies.** Patient examples bring key principles to life in this chapter of Part 5, Frequently Asked Questions, Case Studies, and Recipes.
- **Recipes and culinary tips.** Included in the book are recipes and culinary tips that clinicians can share with patients and families to make it fun and easy to translate information into real-world, actionable change leading to improved nutrition. Recipes and culinary tips related to chapter content can be found in Part 5, Frequently Asked Questions, Case Studies, and Recipes. Culinary tips are also included in Chapter 13, Culinary Medicine and Strategies for Healthy Eating.

Ultimately, *The Clinician's Guide to Pediatric Nutrition* will help pediatric clinicians develop a strong foundation and skills in nutritional assessment and counseling to help patients and their families thrive.



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