Autism: Food and Nutrition Concerns

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Introduction and Background

Teen Group Food Lab

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Overview

Autism: Food and Nutrition

- Common eating concerns
- Comparisons of eating behaviors and nutrition status
- Into adulthood
- Nutrition strategies
- Overview of the Teen Group Food Lab
- Discussion
Common eating concerns

Difficulty accepting new foods

Restrictive and selective intake

Routinely eating the same foods (food jags)

Hunger and fullness

![The Hunger Scale](image)
Comparisons

Differences in food/nutrition intakes in children on the Autism spectrum compared to children who are not

- Less dietary variety
- Fewer vegetables
- Low fiber intake
- Lower overall intake of vitamins and minerals
- No difference in macronutrient or overall energy intake (carbohydrates, protein, and fats)

Health concerns into adulthood

Adults are considered to be at greater nutritional risk

A study looking at medical records of over 2,000 adults with ASD found higher rates of several health conditions


Nutrition Strategies
Context of food

Model positive eating habits

Interacting with non-preferred foods in a different context

Pairing Preferred Food with Non-Preferred Food

- dipping cookie in applesauce
- very small piece of lunch meat between 2 crackers

Building cooking skills

Active Engagement
● Allows each individual to progress based on their unique set of abilities

Aspects of Active engagement to build cooking skills
● Autonomy and choice
● Skill competence
● Adaptive methods and equipment
● Social environment
● A focus on motivation and self esteem

Food and Nutrition Activities

CSU, Chico Autism Clinic, Teen Group Food Lab
Mission statement
The project aims to promote healthy eating habits and a positive regard for food through food science and nutrition-centered activities in a fun, supportive and social environment.

Our Approach to Nutrition
We believe in empowering every individual to form a healthy relationship with food through increased knowledge and self-confidence.
Input from the Teen Group

Examples of ideas formed from Teen Group feedback

Most Common Favorite Foods
- Pizza
- Macaroni and cheese
- Quesadillas

Most Common Food Prep Skills
- Assembly
Designing material

Education Theories
- Social Cognitive Theory
- Theory of Planned Behavior
- Satter Eating Competence Model

Goals and Objectives
- **Goal:** To foster a healthy relationship with food.
- **Objectives**
  - To increase acceptance of food variety
  - To increase interest in food preparation
  - To increase self confidence with regard to food choices and preparation

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Are you a Competent Eater? Consider the four parts of EC:

1. Do you feel good about food and about eating—and feel good about feeling good?
2. Do you like a variety of food and enjoy learning to like new food?
3. Do you trust yourself to eat enough for you?
4. Do you take time to eat? To have regular meals (and snacks) and pay attention when you eat?

ellynsatterinstitute.org
Making pizza at home

Crust    Sauce    Cheese    Toppings
Juice Tasting Worksheet

Can you guess the 3 fruits and/or veggie in these 3 different juice blends? Juice A, Juice B and Juice C are all slightly different combinations of these ingredients:

You have the option of tasting juices A, B and C and using your tastebuds as a detective to identify the 3 ingredients in each type of juice!

If you have time, write down the flavors that you detect at the bottom of your worksheet: salty bitter sour sweet umami
Field Trip to the Compost Garden
When it comes to working with individuals on the Autism spectrum, what is the most important thing for a professional to consider and/or understand?
References

   http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2015.02.013

   http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2016.06.368


   http://dx.doi.org/10.3945/an.114.007914