

# The Role of the Healthcare Worker in Children's Nutrition and Health

Mani Grand\*

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## Abstract

Childhood is a crucial period in a person's growth and development, as well as the formation of their physical and mental abilities. As a result, establishing a child's ideal nutritional requirements that will boost and help this growth and development is of great scientific interest. Quantity, quality, timing, and nutrient composition are all considerations to consider.

\*Corresponding author: Mani Grand

✉ manigrand4@gmail.com

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## Introduction

Physical development occurs at the same time for all children, though at different rates. Post-natal growth is divided into three stages: infancy, which is the first year of life; childhood, which lasts from infancy to roughly the age of ten; and adolescence, which lasts from ten to eighteen years. Biological maturation includes changes in body proportions and the mastery of fundamental motor abilities at all developmental stages. These are also particularly sensitive to the individual's nutritional status.

The maturity of higher mental functions such as attention, memory, learning, and perception occurs throughout cognitive development in children. Optimal brain growth during these years has been linked to improved academic performance. If nutrition has a beneficial impact on cognitive development, then nutritional deficits have a negative impact on cognitive development.

Malnutrition in children involves both under- and over-nutrition, which are both deficiency illnesses caused by insufficient nutrition. Undernutrition during childhood leads children to have less energy and enthusiasm for studying, which has a negative impact on cognitive development and academic achievement. Physical growth and maturation are also affected by malnutrition, influencing growth rate, body weight, and, eventually, height.

Obesity is a type of malnutrition that is distinguished by its poor nutrient density, as well as its high fat and carbohydrate content. The incidence of juvenile obesity is causing increasing worry, as it is linked to an increased risk of developing cardio-metabolic disease in adolescence and adulthood. Obesity decreases children's confidence and competence during physical activity, complicating normal growth and development.

The timing of dietary deficiencies, according to evidence, can have a substantial impact on growth and development. Folic acid

deficit between 21 and 28 days after conception, for example, predisposes the foetus to a congenital deformity known as neural tube defect. Dietary deficiencies are especially vulnerable throughout childhood, when the brain is undergoing considerable structural and cognitive growth.

Primary healthcare providers are in a great position to spot malnourished people. Approved anthropometry metrics such as growth charts, body mass index, Z-scores, and skin fold thickness should be used when assessing child malnutrition. In order to fully comprehend a child's nutritional state, it is advised that a variety of metrics be used to assess their nutritional status.

The healthcare worker must efficiently and safely counsel parents and children about the importance of diet and nutrition, from macronutrients to micronutrients. Dietary pattern and quality, as well as macronutrient ratios (carbohydrate, protein, and fats) and the presence of crucial micronutrients, are all critical (vitamins, minerals, etc.). Omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins like vitamin B12, and minerals like zinc and iron are all crucial micronutrients for the latter.

A fundamental awareness of the role of nutrition in growth and development is required of all healthcare workers. Healthcare providers should be encouraged to make use of the current techniques and resources for detecting and evaluating malnutrition in children. It may be easier to make improvements through dietary interventions than wholesale modifications once they have been discovered.

Obesity in childhood has far-reaching consequences for the development of disorders such as osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and liver disease later in life. The provision of pleasant and practical counsel that encourages healthy parenting

and child behaviour should aid in the prevention of paediatric obesity. To avoid the unavoidable obesity epidemic, engagement should begin as soon as feasible.

Breakfast is crucial as well. The glucose metabolism of a child is higher than that of an adult, and the constant supply of glucose

to the brain is more necessary in children than in adults. Although there aren't many researches on the best kind, composition, and portion size of breakfast for cognitive development, a carbohydrate-rich, low-glycemic index meal may help students do better in school.