Nutritional Concerns in Children with ASD

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Outline

• Weight Management
• Nutrients of Concern
• Selective Food Intake
• Edible Reinforcements
Obesity

• Adolescents with autism are 1.5-2 times as likely to be obese compared with typically developing peers \(^1,2\)

• Considerations:
  – Atypical physical activity patterns
  – Screen time
  – Food based reinforcers
  – Restrictive food preferences\(^3\)
  – Psychotropic Medications
Tips & Tricks

• 5 or more servings of fruit and vegetables
• 2 hours or less screen time
• 1 hour or more moderate intensity physical activity
• 0 sugar sweetened beverages
Underweight

4.5% of children with autism are underweight \(^1,2\)

- Considerations:
  - Selective diets
  - Increased activity level
  - Stimulant medications
  - Constipation
Nutrition Supplements

- Carnation Breakfast Essentials
- PediaSure Grow & Gain
- Benecalorie Food Enhancer
- Kid Essentials Kids Nutritional Drink
- Boost Breeze Nutritional Drink
- Olive Oil
Nutrients of Concern

- Vitamins A, D, K
- Calcium, Potassium
- Fiber
- Protein
- Sodium
Selective Food Intake

- Food Selectivity: Sensory aversions, brand rigidity, environmental impacts, frequent single food intake⁵
- Children with selective food intake are less likely to consume a nutritionally appropriate diet⁶
- Intervention: Behavioral approach in a team based setting⁷
Food Reinforcers

• Using food as a reward:9,10
  – Disrupts natural hunger and satiety cues
  – Increases the appeal of the food used as a reward
  – Associates food with feelings of success

Sensory reinforcers can be as or more effective than food reinforcers11
References


Questions