

Bright Futures for WIC NUTRITION SERVICES

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“*Bright Futures for WIC Nutrition Services*” was developed for presentation at the National Association of WIC Directors April, 2000 meeting and its September, 2000 Nutrition Services and Breastfeeding Promotion Conference.



Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition— A Resource for WIC

Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition is a 270 page guide that consolidates a tremendous amount of nutrition information between two covers! For WIC staff, it is a comprehensive, up-to-date resource on delivering nutrition services to the families of infants and children, as well as a resource for training and for developing nutrition education materials.

*Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition** is an implementation guide of *Bright Futures Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*.** The implementation guide was developed at the National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health, through a cooperative agreement with the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services

Administration, Department of Health and Human Services.

The guide was written by dozens of contributors and was reviewed by over 150 health professionals, educators, and representatives from family organizations. Organizational reviewers include the National Association of WIC Directors, the Society for Nutrition Education, The American Dietetic Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Nurses Association, and the American Public Health Association...as well as 31 other organizations.

For more details on the guide and ordering information, see *Selected Resources*.



The vision and goals of Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition are to:

- Improve the nutrition status of infants, children, and adolescents
- Identify desired health and nutrition outcomes that result from positive nutrition status
- Set guidelines to help health professionals promote the nutrition status of infants, children, and adolescents
- Encourage partnerships among health professionals, families, and communities to promote the nutrition status of infants, children, and adolescents
- Describe the roles of health professionals in delivering nutrition services within the community
- Identify opportunities for coordination and collaboration between health professionals and the community

* Story, M, Holt K, Sofka D, eds. 2000. *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition*. Arlington, VA: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health.

** Green M, Palfrey JS, eds. 2000. *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*, Second Edition. Arlington, VA: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health.



Explanation of these inservice materials

The purpose of this set of inservice materials, *Bright Futures for WIC Nutrition Services*, is to provide a general orientation to several of the concepts upon which the *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition* guide is based.

The inservice materials are organized so that they can be used to conduct one or more inservice sessions with a minimum of preparation time. Each of the three chapters in this set of materials could be covered at a different staff meeting or inservice. The Presenter's Guide has additional ideas on how to use or adapt these inservice materials for your own needs and audience.

Each chapter in this set of inservice materials has three parts. They are:

- **Introductory material with excerpts** from *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition and Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents* (Excerpts are boxed.)
- **Commentary** on the excerpts and the theme of the chapter
- **Discussion questions** for you to think about personally or that could provide the basis for a staff discussion on the material presented in the chapter

Three themes are explored in these inservice materials:

- The developmental approach to nutrition services
- Family partnerships
- Desired outcomes for nutrition services

In each of these three areas, the *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition* guide offers both information and tips for practical application. These three areas also offer a unique and potentially revitalizing perspective from which to view the nutrition services provided in WIC.



In these materials, as in the *Bright Futures* materials themselves, the word "parent" is used to refer to the adult or adults responsible for the care of the infant or child. All artwork is from *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition*.



1.

Exploring the Bright Futures Developmental Approach

Introduction and excerpts from *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition*

Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition promotes the concept of anticipatory guidance.

Anticipatory guidance is basically helping parents understand their child's current and upcoming developmental stages, so that parents know what to expect and are better prepared to cope.

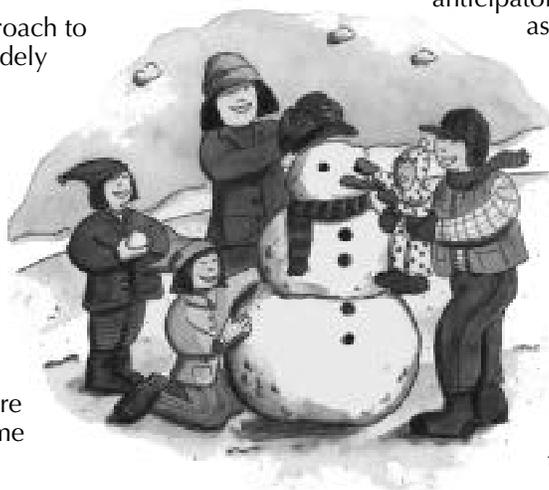
The anticipatory guidance approach to health supervision has been widely adopted in pediatrics training.

In 1994, the *Bright Futures* project published *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*. (See *Selected Resources*.) These guidelines, with their emphasis on anticipatory guidance, are being used in many primary care and public health settings. Some managed care companies have

adopted the guidelines. Many nurse homevisiting programs for infants and families are also based on the anticipatory guidance model.

With the publication of *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition*, nutrition educators and other health professionals now have a resource that helps merge anticipatory guidance with nutritional assessment and screening information, basic nutrition guidance on dietary intake, and health promotion around many issues and concerns, including obesity and physical activity.

The following three pages include excerpts from the guide to give an overview of it, as well as a sense of its developmental approach. On the next page is the guide's Table of Contents to show how the guide is organized.



Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition

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Here is some of the introductory material to *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition*. The first two paragraphs under “A Developmental and Contextual Approach” describe, in a nutshell, the developmental approach reflected in the entire guide.

What Is *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition*?

Optimal nutrition is important for sustenance, good health, and well-being throughout life. As the relationships among diet, health, and disease prevention have become clearer, nutrition and the promotion of healthy eating behaviors have received increased attention.

The nutrition status of infants, children, and adolescents affects their growth and development and resistance to disease. Lifelong eating behaviors and physical activity patterns are often established in early childhood. Therefore, it is important for children and adolescents to build the foundation for good health by choosing a healthy lifestyle, including practicing healthy eating behaviors and participating in regular physical activity.

A Developmental and Contextual Approach

Nutrition needs to be approached from two perspectives: (1) the development of infants, children, and adolescents and (2) the context of their daily lives and environment. The guidelines in *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition* represent a developmental and contextual approach for helping children and adolescents develop positive attitudes toward food and practice healthy eating behaviors.

The developmental approach, which is based on the unique social and psychological characteristics of each developmental period, is critical for understanding children’s and adolescents’ attitudes toward food and for encouraging healthy eating behaviors.

The contextual approach emphasizes the promotion of positive attitudes toward food and healthy eating behaviors by providing children, adolescents, and their families with consistent nutrition messages. Consistency, combined with flexibility, is essential for handling the challenges of early childhood. During middle

childhood and adolescence, it is important for parents to encourage their children and adolescents to become more responsible for their own health and to help them develop the skills they need to practice healthy eating behaviors.

Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition recommends that food and eating be viewed as both health-enhancing and pleasurable. Food provides more than just energy and sustenance. It holds innumerable symbolic, emotional, social, and personal meanings. Food is connected with nurturing, family, culture, tradition, and celebration. Promoting positive attitudes toward food and healthy eating behaviors in children and adolescents involves recognizing the multiple meanings of food and creating an environment that encourages the enjoyment of food. Family meals are emphasized because they help build on family strengths and promote unity, social bonds, and good communication.

Partnerships Among Health Professionals, Families, and Communities

Encouraging healthy eating behaviors in children and adolescents is a shared responsibility. One of the principles of *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition* is that, together, health professionals, families, and communities can make a difference in the nutrition status of infants, children, and adolescents.

Today, many families face the challenges of balancing work and home life and dealing with hectic schedules. Health professionals can help families learn how to fit nutritious meals and snacks into their busy lives. To be most effective, strategies need to be tailored to the family’s individual needs.



The family is the predominant influence on children's and adolescents' attitudes toward food and their adoption of healthy eating behaviors. The family exerts this influence by

- Providing the food.
- Transmitting attitudes, preferences, and values about food, which affect lifetime eating behaviors.
- Establishing the social environment in which food is shared.

Parents want to know how they can contribute to their infants', children's, and adolescents' health and are looking for guidance; however, they are faced with contradictory nutrition information. Dietary recommendations can be misunderstood or misinterpreted, especially when adult guidelines are applied to children and adolescents.

Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition will help health professionals revise standards of practice, promote the development of new nutrition programs, and provide the information children and adolescents need to develop positive attitudes toward food and practice healthy eating behaviors. The guide can serve as a resource for training health professionals and students. Sections of the guide—particularly the Frequently Asked Questions at the end of the Infancy, Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, and Adolescence chapters and the appendices on nutrition

risk, food safety, body image, and federal food assistance and nutrition programs—can serve as a resource for educating families.

Throughout the nutrition guide, we use the term “parent” for convenience to refer to the adult or adults responsible for the care of the infant, child, or adolescent. In some situations this person could be an aunt, uncle, grandparent, custodian, or legal guardian.

The community can be invaluable in helping children and adolescents develop positive attitudes about food and practice healthy eating behaviors. *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition* can be used in a variety of community settings (e.g., clinics, health and child care centers, hospitals, schools, colleges and universities). Community settings and events that provide a variety of healthy, affordable, and enjoyable foods can be instrumental in communicating positive nutrition messages.

Where We Go from Here

There are many opportunities for promoting the nutrition status of infants, children, and adolescents. It is our sincere hope that *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition* will be useful to health professionals, families, and communities as they strive to ensure the health and well-being of the current generation and of generations to come.

Here are excerpts from the *Infancy and Early Childhood* chapters, which briefly review social and emotional development in relation to eating behaviors.

Infancy:

Social and Emotional Development

Feeding is crucial for developing a healthy relationship between parents and infants. A parent's responsiveness to an infant's cues of hunger and satiation and the close physical contact during feeding facilitate healthy social and emotional development. During the first year, being fed when hungry helps infants develop the trust that their needs will be met. For optimum development, newborns need to be fed as soon as possible when they express hunger. As they grow older and become more secure in that trust, infants can wait longer for feeding.

Quickly responding to their infant's cues also strengthens parents' sense of competence. As they feed their infant, they learn how their actions comfort and satisfy. Over time, parents become more skilled at interpreting their infant's cues, and they increase their repertoire of successful responses to those cues. Physical contact during feeding enhances communication between the parent and infant because it provides the infant with essential sensory stimulation, including skin and eye contact, and strengthens the psychological bond between the parent and infant. A sense of caring and trust evolves and lays the groundwork for communication patterns throughout life.

(p. 26)

Footnotes:

1. Kleinman RE, ed. 1998. *Pediatric Nutrition Handbook* (4th ed.). Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics.
2. Satter EM. 1990. The feeding relationship: Problems and interventions. *Journal of Pediatrics* 117(2, Pt. 2): S181-189.

Social and Emotional Development

The Toddler: 1 to 2 Years

Toddlers tend to be leery of new foods and may refuse to eat them. They need to look at the new foods and touch, smell, feel, and taste them—perhaps as many as 15 to 20 times before they accept them.^{2,3}

Toddlers are unpredictable. The foods they like one day may be different the next. They may eat a lot one day, and very little the next. Unlike adults, they usually eat only one or two foods at a meal. Parents often become alarmed when toddlers' eating behaviors change so much, and often so abruptly.

Parents should not become concerned that their toddler is not eating enough. Toddlers' growth rates decrease during early childhood; therefore, their energy needs decrease. Despite these changes, toddlers will consume a variety of foods if parents continue to serve developmentally appropriate healthy meals and snacks.

To encourage toddlers to establish healthy eating behaviors, parents need to provide a structured, but pleasant, mealtime environment and serve as role models by eating a variety of foods. Parents are responsible for what, when, and where the toddler eats; toddlers are responsible for whether to eat and how much.³

The Young Child: 3 to 4 Years

Around age 3 or 4, young children become more curious about food, although they still may be reluctant to try new foods. This reluctance can be overcome if parents talk about new foods and allow their children to prepare and perhaps grow them.

As young children grow, they become less impulsive and can follow instructions. They can stay calm when they are hungry, join in conversation during mealtimes, serve themselves, and pass food to others. Young children are more comfortable eating in unfamiliar places than they were as toddlers.

Young children should be encouraged to try new foods. The goal is for children to accept a variety of healthy foods—not simply to get them to eat what is on their plates.

(p. 60)

Exploring the Bright Futures Developmental Approach:

COMMENTARY

Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents states:

“As the biological sciences provide the basis for preventive and therapeutic interventions in disease, the study of child development serves as the basic science for much of health supervision, especially health promotion.” (p.7)

Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition states:

“The developmental approach, which is based on the unique social and psychological characteristics of each developmental period, is critical for understanding children’s and adolescents’ attitudes toward food and for encouraging healthy eating behaviors.” (p. ix)

Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition clearly underscores the importance of development in infant and child feeding. Following that approach, let’s look at development more closely.

Development is the result of the natural drive within every child to push on to the next level of maturation. This natural drive propels the child to try to do new things and push the limits of what is possible. It’s what makes the child roll over, say the first word, push the chair over to the counter to attempt to get on top of the refrigerator, and insist on feeding herself.

Most parents are naturally aware of development in feeding, because it is so obvious, and since it so regularly presents challenges to the parent at mealtimes. Every meal is an opportunity for a child to learn and demonstrate new skills—and challenge the parent.

The challenges surrounding mealtime can be frustrating. Sometimes food and mealtimes become a battleground. Some parents decide it’s too much to handle and it’s easier to let the child graze all day. Have you noticed children in clinic who decide when and what to eat on their own? Have their parents given up? Perhaps the parents do not have the support or knowledge needed to do things another way, like to have family mealtimes or to provide structure and limits around feeding.

Development can make parents nervous. It can push so many buttons emotionally. Parents may think they are failures at feeding their child or at parenthood in general when they are dealing with a child who is going through a predictable developmental stage. Perhaps parents feel that their toddler is rejecting them personally or being “bad,” rebellious or “hateful”—when actually the child is just being busy, messy, noisy, self-centered and developing normally!

It helps parents to understand that the child is learning, exploring and testing at mealtime because, propelled by biology, the child *must* do it.



How feeding is handled impacts the parent-child relationship. *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents* states:

“Feeding is central to the parent-child relationship...Parents often measure their own competence by their ability to feed their child and promote growth.” (p.21)

This perspective of nutrition as affecting the parent-child relationship can enrich our understanding of how to make nutrition education increasingly helpful and motivating for the parents who participate in the WIC Program.

For instance, nutrition education has focused for a long time on the “what” of nutrition—providing healthy foods. However, it might be the “how” of feeding infants and young children that determines if healthy foods actually get eaten. Focusing more on

the “how”— how developmental progress is reflected in eating behaviors and how the parent and child negotiate the ever changing mealtime scene—may increase the degree to which nutrition education is helpful to families.

As parents receive increased support in dealing with feeding, then parents may see the stages and the eating behaviors involved as both temporary and manageable. Anxiety levels may go down and enjoyment of their children may go up. Parental confidence and competence in regard to feeding children may improve.

Feeding children well is not easy. It is definitely more difficult than just providing healthy foods. *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition* acknowledges this. It encourages an awareness of how healthy family dynamics around feeding can result in healthy lifelong eating behaviors.



Exploring the Bright Futures Developmental Approach:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

■ *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition* points out in the sections on “Social and Emotional Development,” that babies and children have needs at feeding time that go beyond just food.

Do you think that most of the parents you work with know these things?

- that young babies need rapid responses to their needs in order to develop a sense of security
- that older, mobile babies need to explore and learn by doing
- that toddlers are overwhelmed with their needs to establish separate identities from their parents
- that preschoolers have great needs to demonstrate how well they can do things by themselves.

How important do you think it is for parents to know about these developmental needs, in order for things to go well at mealtimes? Do parents leave your clinics with this kind of knowledge?



■ How important is it for parents to feel confident and competent? Think about your own experiences with raising children, if you have done that. How did you feel about the support you got or didn't get in dealing with your children's behaviors? What feedback from others helped you feel confident and competent? Can you remember some things people said to you that helped you?



Also, to apply that to working with parents in WIC, do you look for things that they are doing well and mention those, even when you are pressed for time? What kinds of things can nutrition educators say to help build confidence in parents?



■ What do you think about this experienced WIC nutritionist's comments about the developmental approach to nutrition guidance? Besides working in WIC, Janet Chalker, MPH, RD has a four year old. She also teaches and attends parenting classes at a local parenting center.

“To me, the developmental approach makes a lot of sense. When you explain things in terms of child development, it makes the advice relevant and reassuring. Parents listen. For example, ‘Your child is learning how to walk, so that's getting all her attention. Food is an annoyance to your child right now. It's the same way for most kids this age.’ When you couch behavior in those general, developmental terms, the parent gains insight and control, because the parent then has more options on how to react to their child's behaviors.”



■ Do you think that it is an important part of WIC nutrition education to help parents understand what typical eating behaviors are at various ages? Do you feel comfortable giving guidance in the area of development and child feeding? Would you like to become more knowledgeable about nutrition counseling in this area? If so, what can you do, either solo or with others in your work place, to learn more about feeding dynamics? (See *Selected Resources*.)



■ How can your educational materials help you more in this area? Pull out the materials you use. In which materials do you need more tips that address the typical eating behaviors of infants and young children at different stages of development?