**Nish Nutritsion**

[00:00:00]**Delphine:** [00:00:00] welcome. Come back to the access to education podcast, where we talk about everything having to do with learning challenges and learning disabilities on the show today, we're talking about something, a little different. We're going to be talking about how food and nutrition can sometimes impact our kids and their learning.

Today. I have Mr. Saxena. A registered dietician and expert in pediatric nutrition. She works with families through it, the life stages to support their understanding of food. Using an evidence-based approach. Her knowledge of pediatric nutrition is uniquely qualified to support families. One who struggled with exceptionalities, who also struggled with food.

From sensory issues to understanding how food affects the brain and this just supports it all. Nisha, welcome to the show. I'm super excited to have this conversation too.

**Nish:** [00:00:43] Oh, thank you so much, Delphine. I am super pumped to be here.

**Delphine:** [00:00:47] Let's start at the beginning of this whole conversation and let's try and understand a little bit about your definition of nutrition.

**Nish:** [00:00:55] Okay. I love that. And so what I would say is, I think nutrition is, it goes way beyond [00:01:00] just, these things like vitamins, minerals, carbs, protein nutrition is really the way you nourish your body. And so that encompasses everything briefing from not only the actual foods that you're eating on a regular basis, it's really the regular chronic things that we eat that affect our body.

Not the once in awhile. Unless they're always once in a while. So it's the combination yes. Of the things you're actually putting in your body and eating, but it's also the, how, the, how of how you're eating and how you come together to eat. What does food mean to you? How do you use food in your life?

What does food represent? And it also encompasses other lifestyle pieces that fit together. When do you eat? Are you eating with other people? You know and how you're using food in your life. So are you using it for nourishment or using it to fuel yourself or other, triggers kind of affecting how you're eating?

So nutrition is actually all of those things together, and it's not just the you know I really try to coach people to get away from nutrition ism, which is really when we look [00:02:00] at. Well, what does vitamin a do for me? Do I need more vitamin able vitamin a solve my problems? You know what? No vitamin a alone will not solve your problems.

It's really the whole picture. Your whole diet, the who, how, when, where and why of how you're nourishing yourself. That's when nutritionist.

**Delphine:** [00:02:17] Yeah. So it's a way bigger umbrella that just like eating fruits and vegetables daily. It's kind of making sure you're getting the fruits, the beds, the salts, the all that kind of good stuff, right?

**Nish:** [00:02:28] Yeah. It all counts. It all counts. Absolutely. And the way you do it also counts.

**Delphine:** [00:02:34] So, we all know that to some extent, food has an effect on brain development, on brain function on all of that sort of greater piece of nutrition and eating and being well. But how can. The foods that we choose have an influence on the brain and its ability to function say during a Workday or a school day, but also on the development of young brains.

So how does food [00:03:00] play a role in that piece? Because it continues to play a role through our lifetime.

**Nish:** [00:03:04] Yeah. And it's such a great question because food and the in development, developing brains in particular are. Absolutely responsive to what they are fed. And so therefore it becomes crucial really crucial during those early years, there's lots of studies looking at children from six months to two years and what they are fed during that time when they are developing their brains is absolutely crucial to their future development and the way that they will be able to learn and be able to absorb information and all of the cognitive and neurocognitive.

Functions they have. So it's a it's 100% incredibly important. Now it of course fits into the puzzle piece of also being, you know, loved and nurtured and having stimulation. But the nutrients that we give our children in those very young years are absolutely integral to how their brain will develop and whether or not it's actually nourished enough to grow the way that we want children's brains to grow.

When they're going [00:04:00] through all of these new experiences, they have.

**Delphine:** [00:04:02] So what are the things that parents really need to consider parents, families, caregivers, guardians, whoever that person is that is supporting. And I'm actually, even now that I think about it, I'm thinking about school snack programs and lunch programs and all of that stuff.

What are the things they need to consider when they're looking at the items that they're putting in front of those kids? So I often think of. Like when I go grocery shopping I look at the labels and I'm like how much sugar is in it and how much fiber is in it or whatever. Like how much of that in terms of vitamins and sugar and all of that, how much of that do we really need to pay attention to?

Is it really important? Are the Omega's as important as they say for brain development and all that.

**Nish:** [00:04:42] It's a great question. And what I will actually say the most important thing you want to look at when you're feeding on children is whole food. So as a principal, as much whole food, when I say whole food, I'm talking about minimally processed food, meaning an Apple compared to Apple sauce, a tomato compared to tomato sauce, [00:05:00] whole food is the thing that contains the most intact nutrients together.

And the human body actually absorbs more and absorbed. Do differently when it's eating a food in a whole intact form, compared to when it's been processed. Now let's be real, real, snap programs, parents working, parents they're busy. There's no way that they're only ever we're offering their children whole food.

That's ridiculous. So of course we have processed food in our children's diets, but what I would say too, when you're looking at, snacks and snack programs and school programs, that should be the smallest part of a child's diet. So the first thing I would say is hopefully the child is getting.

The bulk of their diet, 80, 85% as whole food in other places, you know, at home and during other parts of their life, such that the snacks that we offer, kids that in those moments where we do need processed foods then we ha it's less impactful. It's, we're not as worried if we're offering children snacks that might be lower in fiber, as you just mentioned, or you know, have higher sugar amounts than we would like, because this is not the bulk of the diet.

[00:06:00] Now that being said. I definitely do have looked at thousands of brands over the years, and it's great when we find a great brand, a product where a parent can see definitely high fiber, so high fiber foods, anything 15% or more. And for children, I would even say 10% or more on a food label is going to demonstrate that that's actually a great source of fiber.

It could be an excellent source of fiber, sugars, very contentious added sugar in terms of sugar, sweetened beverages are really something that we know can be linked to type two diabetes cancers. And potentially do have some impact in children that are that experience, you know, different abilities that can irritate things such as ADHD in different conditions.

It's not causative, but it's not beneficial. So absolutely looking at, products that have lower amounts of added sugar when you're looking at packaged and processed foods. One real thing I would ask. Parents and school providers to try and avoid is a lot of the added colorants and, and preservatives.

So [00:07:00] these are things that actually have very good evidence for children that are more sensitive in terms of either attention or in terms of autism spectrum disorders. These are things or different neuro atypical children. These are things that have been shown to potentially be great irritants.

And the thing is with young children, some of them aren't even in a place where we've learned a little bit about how their brain patterns work and how they learn. And so we don't want to be feeding children, foods that have a lot of additional colors and additives preservatives, because those things are actually quite well-documented to be irritant.

So if it's possible to find, some decent snacks that are higher in fiber and lower in sugar salt would be another one, excessive, sodium is something that's really problematic for snack foods for kids. So looking for something that's low salt, I'll be honest. It's hard to find something that meets all of these.

So you do the best you can. And the protection comes from the fact that this is a snack that a child's having. It's not the main source of food that they're having for most of their diets. So that's what I would offer as advice [00:08:00] there.

**Delphine:** [00:08:00] And that's what I love about your approach to things Nish is that it's really about doing the best that you can and not necessarily worrying about all of it, because there's no way as busy parents with busy children.

And especially if we have you know, neurodiverse children, we're busy, we're going to the appointment. Running around. We're trying to keep up and sometimes kid is hungry and it's like, here, just eat this because it's quick. And because you can.

**Nish:** [00:08:26] Yes. And I think you're also want children. They have to have the experience of having some of these more processed foods, or they will actually not learn how to manage eating them or how to regulate any of them.

They don't understand kind of where they fit in their life. And so it's important to have kids have exposure to all different kinds of foods and understand Hey, this is a really high energy food. I know it's a quick snack. My mom gives me, but you know, I don't sit down at the table at dinner time and need a bag of potato chips because that's.

Probably not going to be hopefully a regular pattern that a child is seeing, but they do need to learn how to eat potato chips. They do need to learn how to eat [00:09:00] some of these higher energy foods. And it realistically, absolutely Delphine even people with more traditional, a typically developing children certainly are going to have moments where they need to rely on processed food.

That is just reality of modern life.

**Delphine:** [00:09:13] Yeah, and we all do it. Right. So let's talk for a second though. Cause this is always my big question. When I look at labels and I've heard this said, and I don't know if it's fact or fiction, so maybe you can help me identify whether it's fact or fiction. I have always heard that when you look on the back of a label, stoner and granola bar package, for example, if the first thing you see is something that tells you it's.

Fructose for example, so it's high sugar, but that first ingredients means it's the most of that ingredient in the label is that

**Nish:** [00:09:39] yes.

**Delphine:** [00:09:39] In fact, a fact

**Nish:** [00:09:41] that is in fact, a fact. So in Canada, it is a fact, it is in fact, a fact. So in Canada, when you read those words, after the word ingredients printed on the back of a label, they are in descending order of content in terms of what the bulk of that product is made with.

As [00:10:00] an example, I think I looked at some type of an Asian sauce that I was going to use in a recipe. And the first ingredient was sucrose slash glucose. So that means that the bulk of that bottle, that liquid bottle 300 mils is mostly sugar. And then. In descending order after that, it'll be the next highest ingredient and the next highest and such.

And the very last ingredient will be what is the lowest amount in that entire product. So that's a great tool to use, to understand a bit more about what is the actual food you're giving your kids made of for sure.

**Delphine:** [00:10:32] Okay. Nice to know that it's actually fact cause I, sometimes I was like, there's no way they could be that specific about the order in which like, why don't they just give us the recipe then?

**Nish:** [00:10:39] Yeah, no, I mean, it's interesting that it's a really, it's funny because Canada compared to other countries has very strict policies on how you have to get that food label. So it is some, you know, yeah, it is actually something food labels have, inaccuracy. So they. Sometimes they're thought to be 20% incorrect, up to 30%, nobody has a proper statistic on this.

And the problem is [00:11:00] because nobody is, doing batch testing and verifying like all of this information. You only need to provide at once, really as a product when you're developing a product. But in Canada we do have some pretty great laws that actually give these types of structures to the nutrition facts label.

And so that's something that at least gives you a little bit more peace of mind,

**Delphine:** [00:11:18] Yeah, that's really helpful to know. So you touched on this a little bit, maybe there isn't more to say. So feel free to kind of repeat what was said before, but when we look at kids with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, when we look at kids with autism, with down syndrome, with any of those, like even learning disabilities or just, any sort of exceptionality.

How does nutrition play a role in supporting their learning and keeping them going in a positive move forward?

**Nish:** [00:11:47] I would say it's it's crucial. So I think it should actually be a high priority focus of that child's life. Because they have some of these diff these neuro atypical patterns, [00:12:00] developmental differences, genetic differences, more than ever.

They need to be supported well with whole nutrition to provide their body with every opportunity that it can have to absorb all of the micronutrients in particular minerals you know, high quality fibers that will then digest in the gut and actually be. Eaton and help develop a positive gut bacteria in the gut.

Things like adequate protein, lots of children struggle with getting decent amounts of protein if they aren't eating well. And in many cases where children are have some of these extra layers, they may not be eating a really diverse diet. Every bite that you're eating is actually incredibly important.

Now, the one thing I do want to be clear about is as much as supporting a child in these situations is crucial for their growth and their development and making sure they have every opportunity to develop as they are going to develop. It's obviously a bit of a misnomer to think that it's curative. So we want to make sure we're clear about the fact that if you do have a neurological disorder, if you have a genetic disorder, [00:13:00] these are things that are not going to be corrected and cured in any way by food, but they will definitely be supported such that all of the other interventions that your child can get all the other types of supports and helps help.

And then as well, even if you have a child who has, is developing atypically, they're still developing. There's still a growing and developing child. Their bones are still growing. They're still being active in their own way. They're still wanting to connect. They're doing all of the other things.

Children do. They just have this extra layer. So of course we want to make sure that those children have every opportunity to develop all of the parts of them that are typical and good quality, whole food nutrition is going to be crucial in that factor.

**Delphine:** [00:13:40] I think the whole food is such an easier way of thinking about it.

The non-processed food for me, when you say whole food, I hear that. And I go, okay, I get what you mean. It makes more sense to me in terms of the whole food being the whole Apple or the whole orange or the whole piece of lettuce or whatever it is, makes more sense than just stay away from process like that.

That's I don't know.

[00:14:00] **Nish:** [00:14:00] It's a good point because I think the other thing is, there's some statistics that have recently come out about we don't have good. Starts in Canada. And if anyone's listening, who's a statistician, please help us with this. But in the U S as an example, I mean, and I realize it's 10 times, 15 times the population of Canada, but they have up to 60% of the diet of children in the U S is processed.

And so what we're looking at is. The differentiation between what is processed mean? You know, there's minimal processing, there's highly processed and then there's ultra processed. And it's the combination of all of those things. If you have a diet that is 60% of those things that is something that if you tell someone to have less processed food, it's like telling them to give their kids will like.

Take a, what am I going to replace 60% of their diet with? Right? So the piece is really the education and the encouragement is really about trying to work on the pieces that aren't processed and then start to decrease that ratio as much as you can. And it does require a little bit of educational work and a little bit of preparation.

And it definitely [00:15:00] requires cooking. This is something like, I talk about a lot, you know, you, you really can't get away with. Unless you're, you know, hiring someone to do home cooking. It really does involve more time, but I promise you that it is time that you will never regret spending.

**Delphine:** [00:15:15] so when we think about, if we go back to the idea of kids with exceptionalities, and even sometimes not with exceptionalities, to be really honest, because this could apply to all kids.

So we think about sensory issues. And as I said, it's not just kids with exceptionalities who tend to have sensory issues to food. I've got one kid who loves fish. Cause he doesn't mind the taste and the texture, but I have two who are like, yeah, I'm not eating that like that. I don't like the taste.

I don't like the feeling. And I know that. Fish right. Has one of those vitamins not to be nutritionist or whatever, but it's got that vitamin in it that Omega three that I know is important for their brain. So I keep trying to be like, here, eat this. And they just won't. So how do parents support their kids with sensory issues?

And still ensure that they're eating a well balanced [00:16:00] diet. And when I talk about sensory, I don't just mean not liking the texture of the taste or texture of the item, but even just the simple thing of they don't like, or they can't swallow properly or something has happened that is causing a sensory reaction to something.

So how do we, as parents support our kids and ensuring they're eating well while still dealing with what some of the issues might be.

**Nish:** [00:16:23] Yeah, it's a great question. And I know that once you have a multi child household, obviously you're not just dealing with, you know, one child you have, and we, as we know, you can raise children in the same house, they can be totally different.

So what I would say the very first part of the answer is going to be, don't give up. So you have one child that likes fishing consumes it and the other two aren't into it. That's okay. You're still going to have fish meals in your household. Hope you know, you and your partner, it's beneficial for the three out of five of you.

So it doesn't mean that fish stocks being on offer because there's two people in the household that don't tend to respond to it. So you don't give up and you don't reduce [00:17:00] exposure in total, right? To children with sensory issues, because then you actually completely remove the ability for them to ever shift or change.

Okay. And that's the thing that we don't know. We never know when a child might have a moment of interest in extreme feeling of safety. Whatever it is that can trigger child to be interested in trying something. So number one, never stop making food. That is whole food. Just because you're getting some of that friction, of course, you're not going to make fish every single night.

And when you make a meal, for instance, that has an ingredient that some other, One of your other children might respond to negatively it, that meal should also include foods that make them feel safe. So we wouldn't just offer a plate of fish with like beet puree because that that's intense, so, but you might have, you know, we'll fish with some, white rice and maybe like frozen corn or some pieces of broccoli, maybe some fresh raspberries and maybe some bread. So that at least when the other children are present at the table and they're having that. That sensory reaction. You, as a parent have done your job, you have offered them [00:18:00] fish.

You've shown it to them. And it's really up to them to put the food into their body or not. And that would bring me to my second point, which is at some point you have to let go of the idea as a parent, that it's your job to get the food into your kids' bodies. It's actually not your job is to make sure that there is lots of access to food, whole food, regular intervals, scheduled times to support the option for your children to consume specific foods.

But at the end of the day, it's not your job to get that food into their body. You know, we don't advocate obviously, right? Bing, goading. Force feeding, tricking children into eating because it's it breaks trust it's not necessary. Children are their own people and they even when they are atypically developing or have these exceptionalities, they need to be able to make a choice.

And be interested in putting the food into their mouth. So one part of the equation is actually letting go of those expectations. Managing expectations, as apparent with children with exceptionalities [00:19:00] is really, really important so that you don't carry with you a sense of doom. Oh, I didn't, you know, I've been trying to give my child DHA.

I've been trying to feed them fish. They're not getting DHA. Their brain's not going to grow. There's billions and billions of children across the world who do not consume fish. And that could be because of religious, cultural or access. And it, they still grow and develop. Okay. There's difference between optimal.

And what needs to happen to have a child survive and thrive. That would be a number one, number two, major important thing. And then number three, I would just say, is take into consideration, food format, try and be as you know, Listen, we all have sort of energetic limits and we all have, you know, times where we may be more yeah.

Able and interested in making food fun, but as much as you can, being creative with whatever it is, textually that you're trying to encourage your child to eat. Whether it's a vegetable, whether it's a bitter compound, whether it's something still Furic like broccoli or eggs, whether it's something metallic, some children's sense, protein foods like meats and [00:20:00] poultries as metallic, whether it's fish with some kids.

I find that really difficult to consume or whether it's something smooth, like, a yogurt or an oatmeal that has a porch consistency, or whether it's just the concept, like you mentioned texture versions, don't always have to re relate to texture either way. It's about being creative.

So, taking porridge and cooking it into a muffin. It's still Portage, right? It's just in a muffin taking broccoli and dipping it into tempura and doing a light fry on it. It's still broccoli. It just crispy broccoli. You know, having fun with food away from the table. So your children that have aversions can yeah.

Just experience of food in a different way. In particular, it's a little tough with like fish, cause you don't usually flick a play with fish, but it's not a crazy idea. You never know when you might have the idea to, have fish type toys and things like that in a bath time and creative play or children, aren't under pressure to consume a food.

Even if they feel averse to it, they have the opportunity to interact with it. In a low pressure environment. And [00:21:00] there's lots of other sort of tips in terms of things like food chaining bringing a child from a more processed version of a food that they are texturally or that they're okay with.

They're not averse to and chaining that closer to a food that's in, it's more whole form. It's a process. I would say. Do your best, but never, ever feel guilty as a parent. As long as you're out there doing the work, like a soldier offering that food and irregular intervals good quality food.

That's your, that's really what your job is. That was a really long answer. Sorry.

**Delphine:** [00:21:31] That was a really long answer, but it was really good and really concise. And I think it has, there's a lot of information in that answer, so I think it was really good. Okay. But when we think about. Healthy eating.

One of the things that Gets me stuck often is the expense or what I perceive to be the expense of healthy foods. Yeah. So I think of like, I go to the grocery store and I look at the bananas in the organic aisle. And then I look at the bananas on the other side of the aisle that aren't necessarily organic.

Yeah. [00:22:00] And to be fully transparent. You and I have worked together with my family because of my boys with ADHD and my husband and all of that stuff. And so we've worked together and one of the really interesting things you and I did together was we went to the bulk barn, which never would have occurred to me to do.

And the bulk barn does make some of that stuff feel a little less. Painful in terms of price point, right? Because you get more of the actual amount that you need for whatever the recipe is, right? Yep. Yep. So that was eye-opening for me, but let's talk for a minute about how we can help parents. And I'm maybe I'm the only parent out there who gets overwhelmed by the perceived cost of eating really healthy and that it all has to be organic.

So can we talk about that for a little bit?

**Nish:** [00:22:45] It's a great, great point. And you know, what is very interesting as I've been in practice as a dietician now for 15 years and. I would say 10 years ago, I wouldn't have said that there was that much difference between the price of course, organic produce and food in [00:23:00] general has been always slightly more expensive.

But now in this year, in particular, in the last four years in Canada, food costs have increased by 18%. That's for basic food. That's not for organic food. So now when you see the difference between eggs that are $2 and 99 cents, Versus $6 and 99 cents, for a family of five that's three times, two and a half times the price so the, the cost and that the gap is huge now between some of these foods.

And I used to be a dietician who would say, well, no, there's healthy food there. There's healthy food. And yeah. You can eat the same whether you're eating at low cost or not, I actually don't believe that now healthy, healthier options that do support and have higher levels of nutrients and are better quality.

Even the whole raw unprocessed food, even if it's not organic is now more expensive. Okay. So it's a huge problem for lots of families. What I would say is. Again, prioritizing what it [00:24:00] is that you can do in terms of getting. The best quality food that you can for what you can afford. So in terms of the organic piece, it's a very interesting question.

Very short answer. I'll try and keep it short. There's many reasons to choose organic and that go beyond just the concept of not putting pesticides in your body. And therefore, there might be reasons that many people try to choose organic because perhaps they're trying to create lower environmental too.

Toxic loads with pesticides. It's the way farmers and animals and different aspects of the production are occur. Maybe they're better, better, and they're more in line with their values, but ultimately there's not, sometimes it tastes better. I sometimes find organic food tastes better, but at the same time, choosing between not giving your child fruits and vegetables, because you can't afford the organic, that's never going to be a good choice.

And the real focus should not be on organic. Only the real focus should be on whole food. So within the whole food that you buy for your family, right? There's three food groups [00:25:00] now have fruits and vegetables, protein foods, grain foods, any of those foods that you can buy at the highest quality you can afford.

That's where you're going to want to sit and set and may change month by month. Right? It may change week by week. That's a situation a lot of families are experiencing right now. If you have very young children that are under five or you yourself are a pregnant woman. You, if there are some foods that if you can purchase them organic while you're developing a baby or your children are very young, it could be beneficial.

So. The dirty dozen, not as it's well known is a list of foods that changes annually of those that are the most highly sprayed with pesticide residues. And these are things that when we remove them from the diet, we actually see there's a study done in Canada where you see a 66% reduction in serum levels of pesticides in the body.

So it does make a difference, however, With food costs changing right now. And the way they're rolling. I don't think it's feasible for most families to be eating in that fashion, especially with families with multiple children. So what I would say is you will, there really isn't good [00:26:00] evidence that shows us that people who eat organic food over time have less disease.

People who are organic food over time have, somehow longer lives or their children tend to do better in school or have better outcomes. We do see a difference. Between processed food diets of children that are highly processed versus diets, that children that are whole food. Definitely very clear.

We don't see a difference when it comes to organic. So my my, my advice would be buy the best quality food you can. You know, a bread when you're reading that ingredient lists that the first ingredient isn't sugar and glucose. Okay. It may not be organic, but if you're reading a bread label that it says, well, it's a hundred percent, whole wheat or whole spelt, that's still a great choice for your child and for your family, even if it is not organic.

I haven't seen a lot of good studies. There are some foods that tend to have a higher amount of nutrition, very few specifically because they're organic. So I wouldn't get too caught up in that. I think there's. When you can do it, do it, but don't worry too much about that because feeding your child whole food [00:27:00] is way more important than, than feeding them solely organic produce or all of that.

And one last thing is in Canada that we have to remember is we have a lot of amazing again, the laws in Canada for house, for instance, milk. Meat poultry and eggs are produced your milk. I should say dairy, all dairy products. We don't add hormones to food. We have very specific laws where our, the way that food is controlled here, it's not perfect, but it's definitely yeah, we've got some good stuff in place.

So we don't have that. Quite the level of worry as some other countries in the world where these structures are not in place and you can add anything to food and you don't even have to list on the label. It is quite different here. So we do have that protection to help parents feel at ease.

**Delphine:** [00:27:40] That's I think I had heard that, but I think, you know, hearing it kind of more directly makes it seem more realistic for sure. Yeah. Okay. So let's talk about vitamins. This is my sticking point in my house and especially these days. So we're recording this during the [00:28:00] pandemic and we're hearing all about vitamin D and all about multivitamins and how we need to whatever.

So it's a tough one in my house because I have one kid who will take it religiously too, who are like, take it, leave it don't care. Don't want to know, but I've got one of those two was constantly eating. We'll pick the bag of carrots over the bag of chips. So I'm like, and you're eating your whole foods to your point.

So I'm not worrying too much about it. So, should we give kids multivitamins? Are they important or is it just better to give them more of the whole foods? Like what,

**Nish:** [00:28:32] yeah, it's a great question. So there's two part answer the number one, most important thing. I want everybody listening to take and give their child is vitamin D.

So COVID in particular during this pandemic has shown us that not having the right amount of vitamin D in the body, which most Canadians didn't prior to they don't anyway. So many and most Canadians are either. Deficient or insufficient. And the science is very, you know, the controversy is still there, but where vitamin [00:29:00] D should be, what level it should be at in your bloodstream to actually be optimal.

That is still something debated in science. But, you know, being a science nerd, myself, doing a master's degree in nutrition, science research, and constantly staying abreast of nutrition science, I can tell you that some of the guidelines and reference ranges are not as accurate as what's happening in the literature.

And so vitamin D. Is crucial. All children should take vitamin D all adults should take it. The doses may be different, but that was even true prior to the pandemic. And now it's even more important in terms of a multivitamin. It is such a great question because the studies that have shown. There was a study, done, a household kind of a census done in 2012 and candidates kind of old data.

There's another one from 1997, which was really old that showed that children that took multivitamins didn't seem to have any difference in an outcomes than other children. So they don't necessarily get. More well-nourished or stay healthier because of vitamin and mineral [00:30:00] supplementation. And that study was looking at most children, but it was a small study in Canada.

Get what they need from whole foods. Now, the difference that I would say is, yes. With children with exceptionalities, we may not have kids that are having a really complete whole diet. You may have kids that have really limited intake. Maybe they have a low variety or they have really specific foods.

They eat, they don't eat a huge variety of plants, plant diversity, and the types of plants and foods, your kids are eating fat is the thing that offers health protection. So in those cases I don't think it's unreasonable to offer a child a well-balanced multivitamin. I don't think that parents who feel like they do have children that eat quite well and quite balanced.

You don't have to feel like you need it. The mistake I see parents make is they think, well, yeah, they don't eat great. You know, they're only eating really like chicken and pasta and toast and then sometimes bananas. So I'll give them this multivitamin and that'll cover their basis. No, it won't. So the real important thing to remember is a multivitamin will not do the job of whole [00:31:00] food.

So as much as you give your child a multivitamin every day, if it makes you feel better first of all, whatever, they don't absorb from that multivitamin that the less than 20% of it, that is actually absorbed If they don't use it in that moment, it will be excreted, especially if it's water soluble and then it does not replace a healthy diet.

And I hate seeing parents think, Oh, I'm good. You know, my kid had their gummy, so they're doing good. So, you know, I don't feel worried about what they're eating because then you give weeks and days the past where you're not really putting in the effort, or you're not really focusing on giving, offering your kid that whole food.

And then you go down the rabbit hole of having a kid with a limited diet taking multivitamins that aren't doing anything. So I don't think it's unreasonable. Please look for one that is formulated for children. That's very important. Some of them have really excessive levels of different types of multi things like vitamin a iron, be very, very cautious.

I would never take offer a child, a multivitamin iron in it. That's extremely dangerous. As well as vitamin a [00:32:00] can be extremely dangerous. So you really want to make sure you're getting inappropriate formula, but most of all, you want to take vitamin D. And still focus on diet. If you have a really exceptional eater, that's really limited.

You may use a multivitamin last piece. Always make sure you give your multivitamin with some kind of food. It actually needs to be catalyzed by food because you know, you want it to be released in the body as as though it is in that same digestive process. So make sure you do that.

**Delphine:** [00:32:27] Oh God, I did not know that is a new piece of information and I guess.

Adding vitamin D to my grocery list for tomorrow.

**Nish:** [00:32:34] You are, you definitely are. And you know, there's lots of different formats. I think for most people I would recommend a drop because it is a fat-soluble vitamin. And so in a drop often, it's like a coconut oil emulsion. I mean, if you have any other issues with coconut oil, but it's a really easy thing for kids to take, they can, you can drop it into a little bit of water or they can lick it off their hand, which is even more fun.

And yeah that's a crucial piece. The other thing I would lastly say is if you do. I think there [00:33:00] is a specific deficiency. Like, you know, it's very hard to test for some of these vitamin and mineral deficiencies to the blood because everything is not shown in the blood minerals in particular, a really great example of that.

And so. You just want to kind of try and maybe hone in on, if you think your D your child is never eating fruit, they're never eating any brightly colored vegetables. Perhaps vitamin C might be more inline with what they need instead of like a broad spectrum, multivitamin, but, you know, that's something I would work with a professional teacher.

**Delphine:** [00:33:27] I was going to say, I feel like that's a deeper conversation with someone, for sure. Yeah. So I think I know what this. The answer to this question is going to be having now spent a good amount of time with you and heard you say this many times, but I'm going to ask the question anyway. So if we look at what one piece of advice would be that you would give a family about food and nutrition with their kids with, or without learning differences, I'm just talking broad spectrum general family.

What's your piece of advice that your take-home piece of advice for that family?

[00:34:00] **Nish:** [00:34:00] This is, I'm gonna throw you a curve ball right now, Dell. Cause I know you don't think I'm going to say this. My number one piece of advice is eat together. Eat together. And now most people are having like a lot more meals together right now, and snacks, but eating together with your children, whether they're exceptionally, you know, different levels of exceptionalities or not, is it does way more than just offering whole food with, a kid sitting there alone eating their dinner, eating together is the thing that really allows.

All those pieces that we talked about at the very beginning of like, what is nutrition eating together is almost the solution to all of that. Because if you're going to eat together, you're probably not going to sit down and split a bag of potato chips. You're probably going to try and put a meal on the table.

If you can get that meal to have all three food groups, if you can get that meal to be something you cooked at home, instead of being processed, I mean, you're more than winning, but eating together is the thing that actually. Proves and shows the most benefit to children because [00:35:00] of the connection, because it represents the how, because we should be eating together as much as possible.

And it represents the role modeling that's required to actually have children develop healthy habits and a healthy relationship with food. They want to see what their, the people in their group are eating, They want to see what their parents are eating. And that is something that is a huge driver for how they eat.

They will be feel there's studies that have shown children feel a lot safer. There's a lowering of anxiety. Now this is with a family where obviously eating is not like a very high anxiety. Experience, we want to make sure you're getting help. So that eating is not like the most stressful part of your day.

That's why you work with pediatric dietician, for sure. But at the same time, eating together, it does so many things at once without being something that's very difficult to do. Yeah. So that would be my number one piece of advice for families. It may not be every meal. It may be as many as you can do in a week.

And it may sometimes be one parent and two kids or three kids. But [00:36:00] anytime you get the whole family together, it's absolutely transformative in terms of the life cycle of your child. Okay, fine. So that might've been my second choice with you. So I thought for sure you were going to say whole foods. I know, I knew you thought that's what I was going to say.

And I would say they're closely tied, but I do think eating together fully outweighs that,

**Delphine:** [00:36:21] but your point about eating together makes me think of when my kids were in. Daycare and they would eat something, a daycare with their peers at the table at daycare. And then I would try and make that same thing at home.

Even though we ate it together, they wouldn't eat it at home. Like, what do you mean your daycare tells me that you eat this by the bucket full and then I don't understand. So I, yeah. Are you going to,

**Nish:** [00:36:43] it's the energetic difference, right? When they're with you, you are the people that they trust the most, and there's all of those behaviors and all of that emotional, all of the complexities, of being like a parent to your child. And so it's a totally different relationship. So children just don't [00:37:00] respond the same way when their parents feed them, compared to when they are in a learning Institute or a care environment, or even at another kid's house. If you remember it. Yes, I have kids that come to my house and I've had their parents say what did you do?

My kid ate tote. You told me you gave them tofu. I mean, I've the parents' permission to feed them by the way. So I'm not just, I'm not doing experiments on other people's kids, but. And part of it is just, there's no expectations, right? Sometimes as parents, as much as we're doing our best and we're feeding our kids and we think we're like chilled out, this is cool.

I'm good. This is all good. There's still a lot of emotional expectation involved with feeding our own children. Whereas in other environments, it becomes really what it is, which is a function to fuel the body. It's a function to be social. And that's it. And then you go off and you do play time, reading time, story, time, dancing activities.

And so there's a lot less of that. Emotional intensity the elephant in the room compared to when we eat at home with our family, not that it always has to be intense at home either that's something to work on, but [00:38:00] that is why you see that difference is very common.

**Delphine:** [00:38:03] So what about books or maybe cookbooks that you think are really important?

I mean, I think of one that I had with the kids, and as you were talking, I was like, Oh, I totally deceived them by like making the avocado chocolate pudding right. To try and get them to eat that. So I think it was called deceptively delicious for a while. It was like everybody, right. All of us moms, we all had it on our bookshelves and we all made a couple of them.

And then I kind of gave up on it. It was just some of it was just quite frankly too much work. Yeah. But I mean, it was what it was. So are there any good ones that you've got that you would recommend?

**Nish:** [00:38:38] I know. And this is a question. So the answer is I don't exclusively have I'm looking for them. So if anyone listening has one, please send it to me because I'd love to review it and check it out.

But no, I think any cookbook that is a real you know, it's for children, for them to engage with food and make simple recipes. Is a great place to start for kids to get involved [00:39:00] with cooking. So there's that piece of it. And I, there's nothing that really stands out to me, anything for a parent cooking food for their kids, as long as the recipes, start off as, as simple and uncomplicated, really.

I don't have a specific recipe or book that I recommend because I think it really depends on, you know, your food preferences and what you like and just how you cook. I will say I totally disagree with that. Hiding and sneaking any kind of food, I think for, okay. So for example, you're going to make zucchini muffins or banana loaf, like those have fruit and vegetables in them and they're, they that's the recipe.

They're meant to have that in there, but like pureeing a whole bunch of cauliflower and hiding it in a, you know, a vanilla cake or appearing cauliflower and hiding it in pancakes. So it's in quote unquote, invisible. Your child has no idea they're eating cauliflower or vegetables. Ultimately, that's not really helpful because as they grow older, when they feed themselves, they will never ever choose those foods because they have no idea they've been eating them.

It's [00:40:00] also something I think that really breaks down. So a cookbook by a chef or a person, a cook that you like. Is worth checking out with your child. I'm gonna be honest with you and you won't like this answer. I've tried many cookbooks. I don't think they're very good. This is where I really need education.

I need education because I bought in all the beautiful cookbooks where everyone's like, Oh, the recipes are so great. And I don't want to name any authors there. And I really don't think they're great. I really don't. I think it's fun.

**Delphine:** [00:40:28] Some of the recipes are just too many steps. It's too much stuff. Like I just, I need it like done in quick.

**Nish:** [00:40:33] Yeah, yeah. Or I find the recipe is sort of like it doesn't taste good. You know, there was a really popular Canadian cookbook author that makes very whole food. And, I was like, of course, I'm going to love these recipes. And they just, they didn't work. It didn't come together. So I spent, 30 minutes cooking and it didn't come together.

So the truth of the matter is. I grew up with an intuitive set of parents as cooks, who did not use recipes and used and just intuitively cooked and yeah. [00:41:00] It might be like playing music by ear. It's probably not the right way to do it, but that's probably why I don't rely a lot on recipes myself. I do provide families with recipes.

There's one website. I'll say, I do think has great recipes consistently, which is eating well.com. That's a recipe website from the U S it's run by dieticians in the U S unfortunately has lots of ads on there, but the recipes they test and they're delicious. Really anything that you're interested in making, that's easy for you to make.

Go ahead and try it with your kids, because it's much more important for you to be interested in the idea. I would also say, because then you'll make it and you won't, you'll be interested in eating it. So it won't feel like I made this whole meal for my children and they need, they didn't need it. And then keeping it simple.

I think you're right. I think that, you know, recipes that have eight ingredients or less, that's a rule that I would try and follow. And the principles of a recipe, a stew, a casserole, a stir fry occurring, you know sauce. Those are very simple things to make and you can make endless versions of any of those.

[00:42:00] So it's another reason why food literacy is a really important part of starting to shift to eating more whole foods, because you really do need to know a little bit about food prep skills and how to just work with food to, to be able to make like whole food that everyone's going to eat. I hate saying that, but I really don't.

I don't have a lot of things that I think are great.

**Delphine:** [00:42:19] Well, I only just discovered the idea of cooking everything on a cookie sheet. So the other night I did like chicken and I think it was potatoes on the one end and then right near the end to put the broccoli in the center. And I took it into the oven and I said to my husband, I'm like, why haven't I been doing this for the last however many?

It was just so easy. And there was a bit of a sauce at the bottom of it. And it was just, everybody ate everything. And I was like, okay, this is what I need to do. I just need to put it all in a pan, throw it in. And it wasn't. Yeah. I, there were a couple of steps. I had to cut some vegetables, but it was no big deal.

**Nish:** [00:42:49] Yeah. And I think that's the way to go. It's like at the simplicity is really in when you're raising kids is what it makes it easy. It's fast for you as a parent to cook it, doesn't have a lot of ingredients [00:43:00] and you get to You get to relax a little bit and actually enjoyed the food instead of feeling like it's a labor, the real pitfall of eating whole food is when parents feel overwhelmed.

If you start to feel like I bought this cookbook and it takes like 40 minutes to prepare something, it's just. Like forget it, right. Or if you start, this is a big problem. People think food's supposed to look beautiful. Sure. It's nice. If food has color and it's appetizing looking, but it certainly doesn't need to look like an Instagram post for your family.

And my food does not look like an Instagram post. It's just, you know, so just let it be what it is. And simplicity is key. Okay, well, thanks so much for taking the time to chat tonight. It was so much fun and I've learned a couple of things. So that was really great. And I'm always up for learning anything from you, cause it's always really useful.

So where can people learn more about you and what you do?

Yes. Well, anyone can certainly head to my website now, truthfully, it's being done as we speak. Speak, it'll be probably up [00:44:00] in new and different in about two weeks, but it's simply vibrant nutrition.com and that's a cow tells you a bit about me and the services I offer.

I do work with families in many different ways. I do a lot of talks all over the country for groups of parents You know, just helping with feeding, whether it be starting solids with your baby or helping you with picky eating. And then as you know, I do a lot of national media work, helping people with knowledge, translation on nutrition, and what's actually real.

What are the nutrition studies you should be paying attention to in the media? And then the last piece is I work with families one-on-one for those that need extra support, had lots of families that I've been honored to work with that have children. With a whole variety of exceptionalities and differences because I'm a clinical dietician.

I do have the ability to work with people and see the holistic approach that they may need to help support their child. So you can find me on my website. You can email me@nicheatsimplyvibrantnutrition.com. The easiest way to get to meet truthfully is on Instagram right now. I don't know why I'm on there, but I am.

Family dot meals dot [00:45:00] nutritionist, or you can just search by my name, niche to Savannah and a DME message me. I'm happy to have a conversation with you at any time. If you want to call our contact just to discuss what your needs are and how it can help. I would be more than happy to be of service to any families that are listening.

**Delphine:** [00:45:14] That's great. Thanks so much, Nish. Thanks again for the chat.

Thank you very much, Delphine. It was fantastic to be on.