

## Ask the Experts for May

Written by POC Staff Writer

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### Lots of Nutrition for Little Cost

**I am a busy mom and I want my kids to eat healthy. But I find it hard to hunt for good deals on healthy food. Any ideas for cheap foods that are also healthy?**

I work closely with families to make better informed choices when it comes to nutrition. With family budgets continuing to tighten in today's tough economy, it is not only important to know which foods are best for you, but which ones also give you the most bang for your buck.

It's important to let families know that eating healthy doesn't have to be expensive. While junk food may seem really convenient and affordable, it shouldn't play a big part of the family diet because it doesn't provide the best nutritional value. If you want to get the most return on your dollar and your health, stick to authentic, natural and wholesome foods. Particularly good purchases fall under the super foods category, which are foods that offer multiple nutrients while providing a myriad of health benefits with minimal calories.

I see many food trends come and go, but authentic, natural, wholesome foods have been around forever; think about it. One example is milk. If families really look into stretching their dollar, they can get four, eight-ounce cups of skim milk instead of a sugar-filled can (or two) of soda that has no nutritional value. Milk, a super food, has nine essential nutrients including Vitamin D and calcium for strong bones, muscles, teeth, hair and nails.

The "MyPlate Nutrition Guide" released last year by the USDA recommends that meals consist of at least half fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and are topped off with dairy, such as a glass of low-fat or nonfat milk. Foods, similar to milk, that yield multiple servings and stretch the dollar at the grocery store include:

- **Fruits** Fruits are packed with a lot of essential vitamins, like Vitamin A and C, which can promote proper growth and improve our immune system. There are many fruits that are also a great source of soluble fiber, which may help lower cholesterol. Nutrient-packed fruits that are available for about a dollar include three oranges, three to four bananas or three apples.
- **Vegetables** A diet high in vegetables provides important antioxidants, which may help protect damaging cells in the body. Most vegetables are also low in fat and calories, yet packed with many vitamins, minerals and fiber. Nutrient-packed vegetables that are available for about a dollar include three servings of sweet potatoes or three servings of baby carrots.
- **Whole Grains** Whole grains are an essential part of a healthy diet and are good sources of complex carbohydrates and B-vitamins, which our bodies need for energy. Whole grains are also packed with fiber, which can help you stay full longer. Nutrient-packed whole grains that are available for about a dollar include six servings of oatmeal or 10 servings of brown rice.
- **Protein** Protein is crucial to building and maintaining healthy, strong bones and muscles, which is why athletes make it an important part of their diet. Protein also helps our bodies resist against infection. Nutrient-rich, lean proteins that are available for about a dollar include eight servings of beans or one, four-ounce serving of chicken breast.

Paying closer attention to what you put in your grocery basket and taking simple steps in your day-to-day routine will make a big difference.

—Ashley Rosales, RD

### RIISING TEMPERATURES PROMPT CAR WARNINGS

Summer is quickly approaching and so is the yearly hazard that high car temperatures pose to children. The Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association (JPMA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) are collaborating to reduce and prevent heatstroke in children being left in dangerously hot cars. Current statistics show that one child dies about every 10 days due to being left in a hot vehicle.

A child's temperature can rise up to five times faster than an adult's, which is all the more reason to pay attention when the NHTSA ranks heatstroke as the leading cause of death for children aged 14 and under in non-crash vehicle fatalities. Michael Dwyer, JPMA Executive Director, says, "More than half of all vehicle-related heatstroke deaths in children are caused by a child accidentally being left in the car and more than 30 percent of those are from a child getting into a hot car on their own."

Primary indicators of heatstroke are hot, red skin, no sweat, a rapid or weak pulse, nausea, confusion and odd behavior. If a child exhibits any of these signs after being in a hot car, cool them down by removing clothing, shading them, giving them water and immediately call 911.



The following are ways to prevent your child from having car-related heatstroke.

- 1) Never leave your child in the car, even if the car's windows are rolled down or the AC is running. If you see a child unattended in a vehicle, call 911 immediately. *Tip:* If you find yourself thinking "The baby is asleep and I'll be back in five minutes," remember that one in 10 children dies about every 10 days because they were left unattended in a vehicle, and reconsider.
- 2) Always keep the doors and trunk of your vehicle locked and make sure the keys are out of reach. Some children who died of a car-induced heatstroke were in the car without the parents or guardians knowledge, so teach your children that the car is no place to play. Always thoroughly check the car to make sure your child isn't playing 'hide and seek' with you after a trip to the store. *Tip:* Leave your purse or briefcase in the backseat so you always have to check the backseat whenever you get out of the car.

## What can't my dog eat?

**My kids are always leaving food out and we have a couple of dogs that eat anything in sight. Should I be worried about what they are eating?**

Yes. There are a lot of common human foods that seem harmless but are actually toxic to your pet's health. Both dogs and cats expose themselves to toxins in many ways. Cats have the ability to jump onto high places and get into things that are assumed to be safe and out of reach. They also groom themselves, exposing them to oral toxins. Dogs are usually exposed to toxic household items, such as human foods and medications, accidentally. Think about it; when you are cooking and food hits the floor who is the first one to gobble it up?

Here are 11 common household items that I often get calls about.

- **Chocolate** One of the most common foods that pets consume. When ingested, methylxanthines, which are found in cacao seeds, can cause diarrhea, vomiting, high heart rate and seizures. Note: the darker the chocolate the more toxic it is.
- **Xylitol** A sugar substitute that is commonly found in sugarless gum can cause hypoglycemia, seizures and liver failure in dogs.
- Ingredients most of use to cook with, but when consumed by pets can cause gastrointestinal irritation and red blood cell abnormalities.
- **Avocado** All parts of the avocado are toxic including the leaves, fruit, seeds and bark. They contain Persin, which can cause vomiting and diarrhea.
- **Raisins and grapes** Can cause kidney failure.
- **Macadamia nuts** cause weakness, depression, tremors, vomiting and hyperthermia.
- **Milk** Our pets do not possess a significant amount of lactase, the enzyme that breaks down lactose in milk. Milk and other milk-based products can cause diarrhea and other digestive upset. If you are looking for their Probiotic properties please talk with your veterinarian.
- **Salt** Large amounts of salt can produce excessive thirst and urination, or even sodium ion poisoning. So please don't share your pretzel sticks with your pets!
- **Raw meat and raw eggs** These can contain bacteria such as *Salmonella* and *E. coli* that can be harmful to pets. Feeding your pet raw bones may seem like a natural and healthy option that might occur if your pet lived in the wild. However, this can be very dangerous for a domestic pet. Not only do they have the potential to ingest pathogenic bacteria but can also choke on bones or sustain an injury if the bone splinters and becomes lodged in or puncture their digestive tract.
- **Yeast dough** In the mood for making bread? Make sure it is well out of reach from your pets. Yeast can rise and cause gas to accumulate in your pet's digestive system. This can be painful and can cause the stomach or intestines to rupture.
- **Alcohol** Beer? Yes, they will drink it but alcoholic beverages and food products containing alcohol can cause vomiting, diarrhea, decreased coordination, central nervous system depression, difficulty breathing, tremors, abnormal blood acidity, coma and even death.

I often get asked what kinds of over-the-counter medications are safe for our pets. It is easy to think that if a medication is safe for our consumption, our pets can take them as well. The fact is, over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen can kill your pet. Cats are thought to be at least twice as sensitive to these medications as dogs are.

There are many outdoor toxins that most families are not aware of and often overlook. The mistake of leaving automotive products such as antifreeze and brake fluid on the garage floor can be fatal. Our pets are attracted to the smell and will chew through the plastic container just to get a taste. Even a tiny puddle left behind can have a devastating effect. Another repeat offender I see is Rodenticide poisoning. Think very seriously before placing this type of product around your home. There is no discrimination and your pets are attracted to it just as much as the animal you intended it for; and we know what the end result is.

Another huge mistake: using products labeled for dogs on cats. Permethrin spot on or dip made specifically for dogs should NEVER be used on cats. There are some instances I have seen where a dog just had an application placed on him and a cat, even being near (sleeping together or grooming), negatively reacted by exhibiting neurologic signs. It is always safest to discuss the type of flea control products with your veterinarian.

Some plants are extremely toxic to pets; one little part of a lily can cause acute kidney failure in cats. There is a long list of toxic plants on the ASPCA website that I highly suggest you take a look at. What you have planted in your backyard will probably surprise you.

If you have any reason to suspect your pet has ingested something toxic, please contact your veterinarian or the Animal Poison Control Center's 24-hour hotline at (888) 426-4435.

—Dr. Daniela A. Leumer, M.S., D.V.M.

## Career Counseling for Kids

**My 13-year-old son will be starting high school in the fall and I want him to have a head start by having an idea of what major he might want to pursue. What is the best way to get him thinking about what career he might want?**

*Dancing is my life, I live to Dance.* These are not the words of some 20-year-old professional dancer, but the passionate statement of my seven-year-old nephew who performed for me his own improvised dance to the hit

song "Moves like Jagger."

Ask any child of a young age what they want to be when they grow up. Behind every answer lies a passion that could lead to a variety of rewarding careers. Their answers are precious insights into what might motivate them to succeed as adults. Parents need to know what their child's inner vision is so they can help them develop it, rather than project their own dreams into their child's future.

Starting as early as grade school, parents can begin developing the interests and talents of their children to help turn them toward a possible future career. "What?" you may be thinking. "Shouldn't a child just enjoy being a child, experiencing life, learning new things and playing with friends? After all, what is the rush? Adulthood will come soon enough." Well of course! While grade school may be too young to cement the career aspirations of a child, it is nevertheless the ideal time for parents to observe the interests and activities their child naturally enjoys and gravitates to. Parents can follow and encourage their child's progress with the activities they already are enthusiastic about as they approach middle and high school.

There are many different ways to discover interests and explore careers with children and teenagers. These may include observations, questionnaires and simple structured interviews. Some methods require more formal training than others. Ask about the credentials of the administrator, how the assessments are performed, how they are interpreted, and how many times they can be given. Need more convincing that grade school isn't too young to start thinking about possible careers for children? Read any self-help book on finding a new job or starting a new career. The author usually requires the reader to think and write about the activities they enjoyed when they were young. By doing so, the reader finds the correlation between his or her interests, talents, abilities, values and a satisfying career.

So why not work backwards and start to assess the interests and possible career aspirations as a child, instead of waiting until one becomes a teenager or adult? Parents and their child can use the information to make better academic decisions while in middle and high school. These can lead to better choices for a college major, selection of a college, and, after graduation, a focused, satisfying career. Listen to dreams of your child! He or she may be expressing their passion for their future career to you. **Who knows? Maybe, you have your own future dance superstar waiting in the wings!**

—Elizabeth Venturini

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