



NUTRITION INTERVENTION

For Autism and ADHD

GETTING STARTED GUIDE



Denise Voight



Hey there!

I am so glad that you found your way to this guide! I can't wait to help clear up some of the confusion and misinformation floating around out there about nutrition, especially when it comes to understanding the nutritional needs of those with Autism and ADHD. Using food as medicine to help overcome some of the symptoms and behaviors associated with ASD has been proven to be highly affective and far less complicated than you might think.

After studying nutrition biochemistry for almost two decades now, I can tell you, **FOOD MATTERS!**

In this guide you will see how easy it can be to start incorporating foods and nutrients that will fuel your child's brain and body and improve their health and behavior..

I know it can be overwhelming to change eating habits, but I am here for you! I want to help make this change as simple and easy as possible, so this ***Getting Started Guide*** is designed to give you the basics and beginning steps to getting your child on an eating plan that will help him/her thrive. So let's get to the good stuff!!!

First, we must understand the autism-nutrition connection. What your child eats directly affects his health and behavior, positively or negatively. We need to make a shift in our mindset about food and start recognizing that many of the items in our diet are not actually "food". In fact, many of the food products on the market today are the opposite of food. Instead of giving nourishment and supporting the body's natural ability to heal and grow, they poison the system and cause inflammation and dysfunction!

Children with ASD and ADHD often have nutrition deficiencies, food allergies, food sensitivities, gastrointestinal disorders, immune system dysfunction, and have decreased detoxification function. It is extremely important that these children get the nourishment that their bodies need to help heal and thrive.



There are quite a few diet options for **ASD** out there, including **Gluten and Casein-free Diet (GFCF)**, **Specific Carbohydrate Diet (SCD)**, **Low Oxalate Diet**, **Feingold Diet**, **Paleo Diet**, **Ketogenic Diet**, **Elimination Diet**, **Raw food Diet**, **GAPS diet**, and a few others.

It can make your head spin trying to figure out which one is best for your child, but I am here for you!! Don't panic...**don't get overwhelmed**....we've got this..one step at a time.

My best advice is to not try to do it **ALL AT ONCE**. Make a change, then when you feel like you've got that one down....make another, and so on. Deep breaths....eating healthy can be simple once you know what works and what doesn't.



TOP PRIORITY.....*Clean out the toxins!* So many food products are toxic to our brains and bodies. Some of the worst offenders are those that are in the products that are intended for children!

Individuals with **ASD** have **detoxification issues**, so it is truly important to **reduce their exposure to toxins**. The first thing we can do for our kids is discontinue letting toxic, **inflammatory foods** sneak into the diet. Here is a list of the worst offenders

Artificial Colors and Flavors

These chemicals are made from **petroleum** (yes, the stuff that is extracted and refined to produce fuels like gasoline and motor oil, YUCK) and there is a growing body of research that indicates sensitivity in children that **impact behavior problems**. Individuals with **ASD** or **ADHD** are particularly sensitive to the high level of **phenols** in these substances and are unable to metabolize them properly, which are then toxic to the central nervous system and **exacerbate autistic behavior**. See table on page 10 for list of names to look for on your food labels



Artificial Sweeteners

Many times sweeter than regular sugar, these chemicals come with the potential for **serious health risks**, including cancer. Don't be fooled by the advertising on the products. The lack of calories does not make them a healthier option than sugar. These chemicals are **neurotoxic** and can **aggravate behavioral symptoms**. See the *Reading Labels* table that follows for list of names to look for on your food labels

Artificial Preservatives

Research has shown that some of these artificial preservatives can cause **various health problems**, such as, respiratory problems and cancer and also **aggravate ASD and ADHD symptoms**. See the table below for list of names to look for on your food labels

Hydrogenated Oils and Trans Fats

Trans fat is the product of hydrogenation where **high heat** and **heavy metals** are used to turn **liquid vegetable oil** into a more **dense fat** that is solid at room temperature. Partially hydrogenated fats are used in products because they are cheap and have a long shelf life. These **toxic fats** raise our LDL (bad cholesterol), lower our HDL (good cholesterol) and may increase our **risk for cancer, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and infertility**. Children with **ASD** and **ADHD** are particularly **sensitive** to trans fats because they can not be broken down and processed well by the body and also interfere with enzyme activity that converts Omega-3 fatty acids into their active form, which ASD kids are already deficient in.

MSG (Monosodium Glutamate)

This flavor enhancer is found in many common food products. **MSG** contains **Glutamate** and is an **excitotoxin** (**substance that can excite the brain cell to death**). Too much glutamate that can not be processed (this is common for many ASD kids) becomes **toxic** to **neurons**, creating **inflammation** in the brain and actually **kills brain cells**. MSG consumption is known to cause **headaches, migraines, hyperactivity, diarrhea, nausea, bloating, depression, and respiratory problems**. It is also quite common for kids with ASD to become addicted to this substance and crave only foods that contain it. See table below for list of names to look for on your food labels.



Pesticides

Children, especially with ASD and ADHD, are extremely vulnerable to these toxins. They are literally designed to **kill cells**. With less than optimal detoxification pathways, these kids can't properly process and excrete pesticides leading to toxic build up in the body that can **impair brain development and function**.

GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms)

Scientists figured out how to change the DNA of an organism by inserting DNA from viruses, bacteria, or any other DNA fragment in order to grow plants that are pest and disease resistant and can also withstand high levels of pesticides. Although the **high level of pesticide** doesn't kill the plant, how about the human who eats this pesticide laden plant???

GMO foods do not need to be labeled, there are no long-term safety studies, and can be altered with DNA from an allergen, like nuts, and cause deadly reaction in those who are allergic. Best way to **avoid them is to eat organic, as they can not have GMO's**.



Refined Sugar

Excessive amounts of refined sugar, such as white sugar or high fructose corn syrup, can have a **negative impact** on **behavior, attention, hyperactivity, aggression, mood, and mental function**. Consumption of sugar causes a spike in blood glucose that is typically followed by a drop in blood sugar that triggers adrenaline and other hormones to raise the blood sugar back up. In some individuals, especially those with sensitive or imbalanced biochemistry, as many ASD and ADHD children do, can lead to symptoms like **nervousness, shakiness, dizziness, fatigue, tremors, confusion, anxiety, headaches, depression, irritability, and craving for sweets**.

Reading Labels

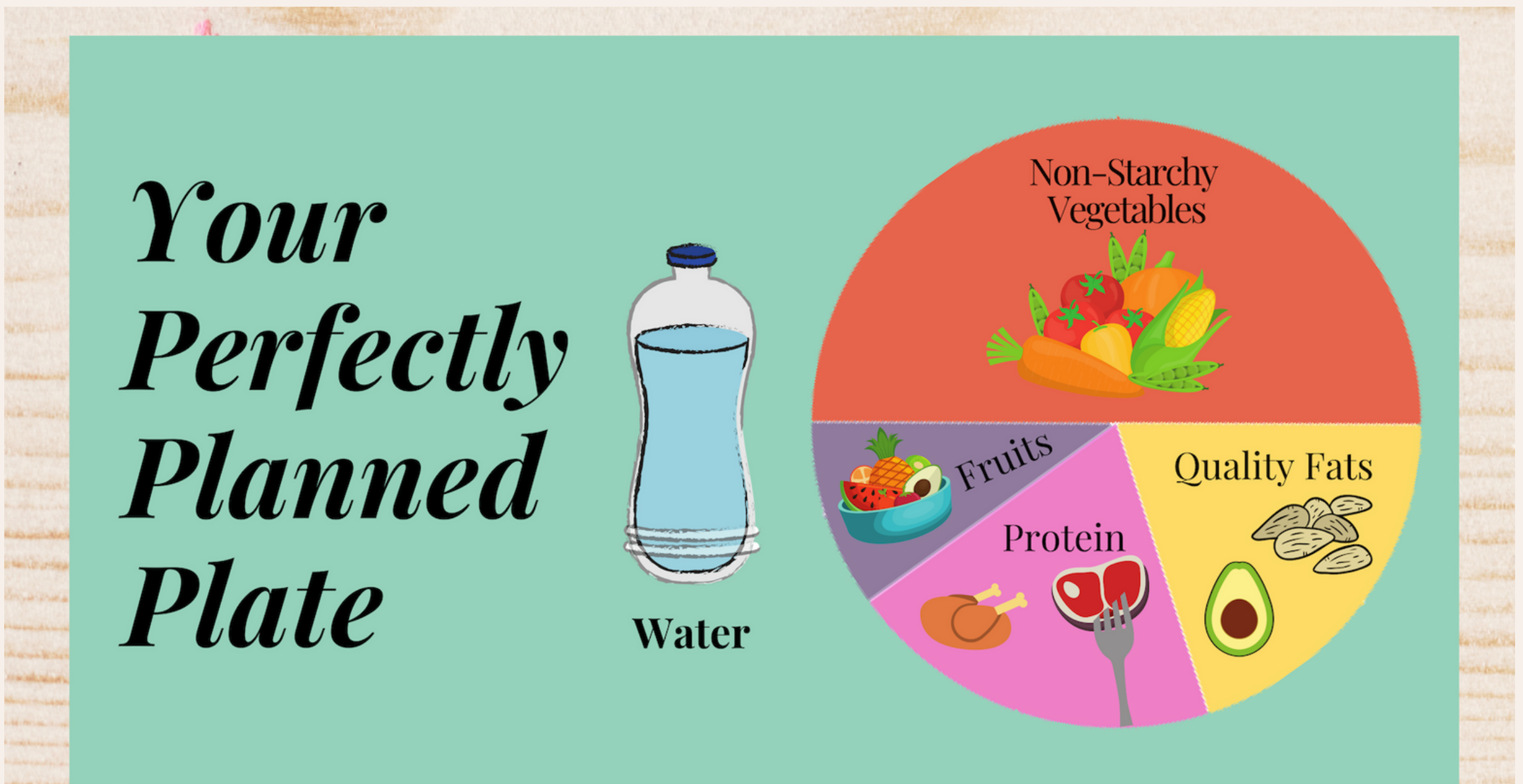
Artificial Colors/Flavors	FD&C, Blue#, Green#, Red#, Yellow#, Tartrazine, erythrosine, caramel color/Disodium inosinate, disodium guanylate, Vanillin, *there are approx.. 1700 artificial flavors	Found in many packaged processed foods and snacks, in some meats (to make look fresh), even in toothpastes, mouthwash, cough syrup *READ YOUR LABELS
Artificial Sweeteners	Saccharin(Sweet'N Low), Aspartame (NutraSweet and Equal), Sucralose (Splenda)	Found in many packaged processed foods and snacks, "diet" drinks, many "No Sugar" "diet" foods
Artificial Preservatives	BHT (Butylated hydroxytoluene) BHA (butylated hydroxyanisole), TBHQ, Benzoates, Nitrites, Sorbates	Found in many packaged processed foods and snacks *READ YOUR LABELS
Hydrogenated Oils/ Trans Fat	Hydrogenated oil, partially hydrogenated oil, trans fatty acid, PHO, TFA *keep in mind that a product can say it is trans fat free can have up to 0.5 grams of hydrogenated oil	Many packaged processed snack foods, margarine, industrial deep fried foods, commercial peanut butter, commercial mayonnaise,
MSG (Monosodium Glutamate)	Monosodium Glutamate, MSG, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, hydrolyzed , hydrolyzed soy protein, autolyzed yeast, hydrolyzed yeast, yeast extract, soy extracts, protein isolate, calcium or sodium caseinate, textured protein, monopotassium glutamate, "natural flavors"	Many packaged processed foods, soups, broths, gravies, imitation meat products, many meats and cheeses, most protein powders, frozen dinners, seasoning mixtures
Pesticides	Not labeled	Fruits, vegetables, and other produce that is not organic, packaged food products that contain plant products that have pesticide residue, cereals
GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms)	No label required	Most products that contain soy, wheat, corn, potato, and much of the produce at the market. *to avoid, buy organic

<p>Refined Sugar</p>	<p>Barley Malt, Beet Sugar, Brown Sugar, Buttered Syrup, Cane Juice Crystals, Cane Juice Solids, Cane Juice, Caramel Syrup, Carob Syrup, Concentrate Fruit Juice (Grape, Apple), Corn Syrup, Corn Syrup Solids, Date Sugar, Dehydrated Cane Juice, Dehydrated Fruit Juice (Grape, Apple), Dextran, Dextrin, Dextrose, Diatase, Diastatic Malt, Ethyl Maltol, Fructose, Fruit Juice, Fruit Juice Crystals, Galactose, Glucose, Glucose-Fructose, Glucose Solids, Golden Syrup, High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS), Lactose, Malt Syrup, Maltodextrin, Maltose, Maple Syrup, Refiner's Syrup, Rice Syrup, Sorghum Syrup, Sucrose, Sugar, Turbinado</p> <p>That's a lot of names for sugar!!</p>	<p>Most packaged processed foods, snacks, candy, cookies, cereals, seasoning, sauces</p> <p>Pretty much everywhere!!</p> <p>*Read your labels</p>
----------------------	--	--

I would like to add that **gluten** and **casein**, as well as a couple of other food allergens, are **problematic** for individuals with ASD and ADHD, but the purpose of this quick start guide is to focus on the top toxic chemicals sneaking into the diet and understanding the basic healthy eating plan. I address gluten and casein, as well as, other allergenic foods elsewhere in materials where we discuss nutrition intervention in detail and protocols to incorporate them. For now, the **priority is to reduce the toxic exposure from these chemicals and additives and increase nutrient dense foods**. You will notice, however, that the recipes and foods I recommend here and anywhere else are gluten and dairy free.

Okay! Now we know what NOT to eat...Let's start talking about what we should be feeding our children to help them thrive!!!

I have created YOUR PERFECTLY PLANNED PLATE to help get you started. This plate illustrates how your ideal meal should look.



NON-STARCHY VEGETABLES	QUALITY FATS	PROTEIN	FRUITS & STARCHY CARBS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artichokes Asparagus Bell peppers Bok choy Broccoli Brussel sprouts Cabbage Carrots Cauliflower Celery Cucumber Eggplant Garlic jicama Kale Mushrooms Onions Radishes Spaghetti squash Spinach Zucchini 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coconut oil Avocado & avocado oil Grass-fed butter or ghee Olives & olive oil Nuts & seeds (not peanuts) Fresh ground flaxseed Chia seeds Hemp seeds Tahini & sesame seeds Almond butter <i>Don't forget fat from fish & meats.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grass-fed red meats (steaks, ground beef, etc.) Chicken Turkey Wild-caught fish/shellfish Pastured pork Pastured eggs (3 eggs) Bison Lamb Organic, grass-fed, raw dairy (rarely, if at all, as many have dairy sensitivities that results in inflammation and gastric issues) High quality plant-based protein supplement/powders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rice (brown or wild) Sweet potatoes Oats (look for gluten free) Fruit (berries are best choice, avoid high glycemic fruits) Beans (preferably not canned) Quinoa Tomatoes Gluten free pastas (brown rice, quinoa, or lentil/beans pastas) Dark chocolate (75% or higher cacao)



Add veggies first!! 2 or more servings of non-starchy vegetables should take up the majority of the plate. They are the **most nutrient dense food** you can find. **Fill that plate up!!!**

Aim for creating a **rainbow of color**. Getting a variety of colors results in a wide array of **phytonutrients and antioxidants**, each with their very own special benefits. It also makes the plate more colorful and **appetizing** for the kids to look at, increasing their likelihood of actually eating it, right?

For example, if you were going to add bell peppers to a meal, how about getting red, orange, and yellow instead of just one color, now add a little spinach and you are pretty darn close to a rainbow!! **SIMPLE!**

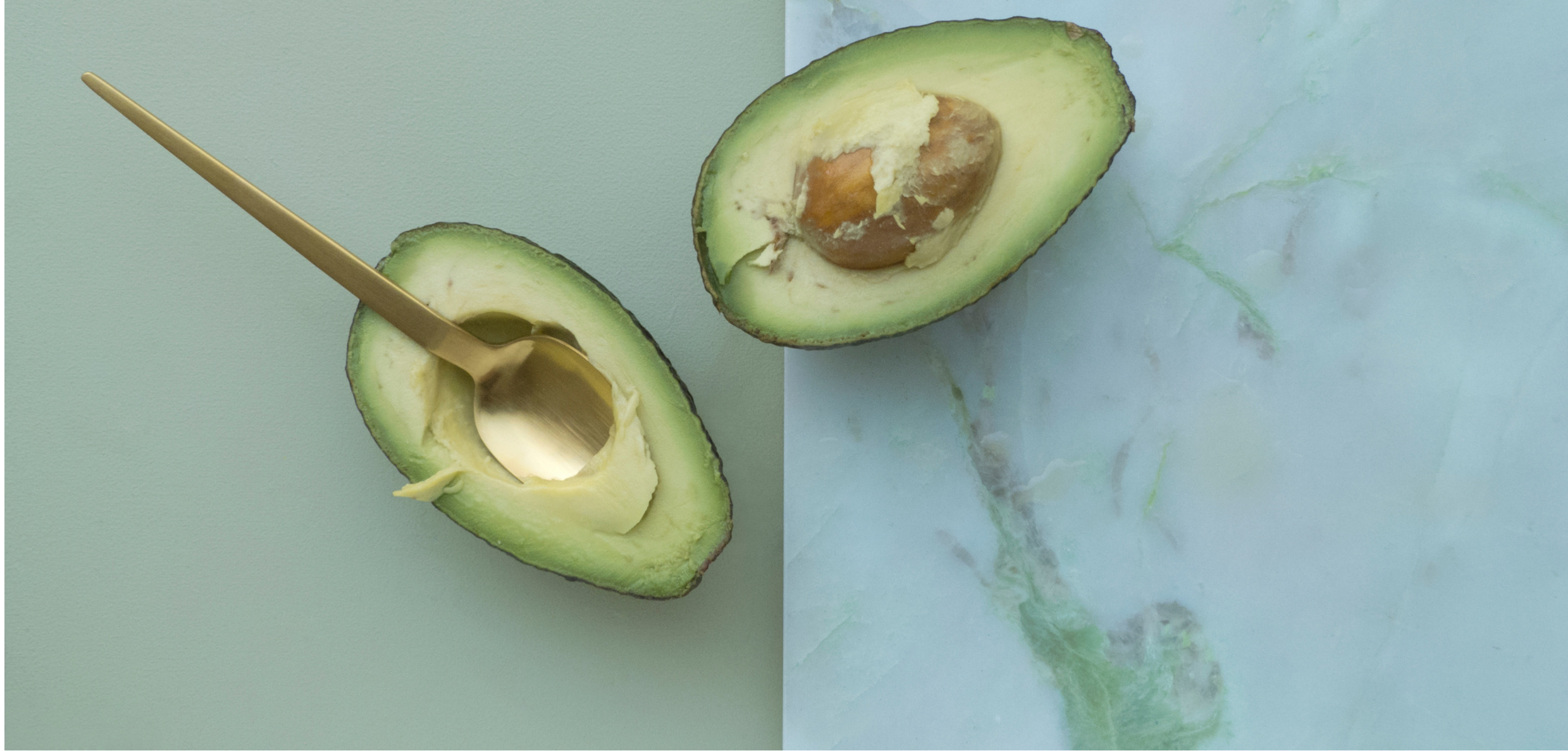
Bake, broil, saute, steam, eat raw...just get em' in! These **super-star carbs** are the most important part of the diet, rich in nutrients that directly fuel our kids' brains and bodies



Then, clean protein. At least one serving of clean protein should be at each meal. It is really more about quality than quantity here. If you're feeding your child **high quality grass-fed, organic, pasture-raised meats**, they will get the nutrients they need from reasonable portions.

Remember, proteins are the **building blocks** to almost everything in the body! **Essential amino acids** (the building blocks of protein) have to come from the diet, as our bodies **can't make them**.

I know texture can be an issue for some of our little ones, so a great alternative would be a **high quality protein powder** supplement. You can find my recommendations for clean proteins on my website, but if you're buying from the store, stay clear of the ones that have artificial colors, flavors, preservatives, and sweeteners!



Quality fat is an absolute must! Your child's **brain** is composed primarily of fat, **every cell** in his body is surrounded by 2 layers of fat that maintain and hold cell receptors and also keep the good stuff in and the bad stuff out of the cell. Their **nerves** are surrounded by a layer of fat that is responsible for the speed of their nerve conduction.

Cholesterol is the building block for hormone production. 1-2 servings of quality fats at each meal is not hard to accomplish. A little avocado, some coconut oil, or nuts will do the trick.

Fat in our food does not make us fat, in fact, quality fat is essential! **Your child's brain, nerves, hormones, and every cell in their body requires fat to function!!** In addition, fat soluble vitamins, such as, **vitamin A, D, and K are fat soluble** and require fat to be absorbed by the body effectively. If you want your child's brain to function at its best, quality fat is absolutely necessary. So **butter up** with some grass-fed Ghee, so delish!



The **starchy carbohydrate** section is the **smallest on the plate**, and here is why. The body best utilizes sugar and starchy carbs after activity/exercise. This is because we deplete our glycogen storage (the sugar stored in our muscles) and now there is a perfect place for those carbs to go...back into glycogen, but if we are not active and the glycogen storage is full, then there is nowhere else for that carb/sugar to go except fat storage.

So, **limiting our starchy carbs/sugars** to when we are most active helps us best utilize them. So if your child has been extremely active, he/she can manage the starchy carbs, but if they have been inactive, we want to reduce these starchy carbs and focus on non-starchy carbs, like those found in veggies! This will help with **blood sugar regulation** and help with post carb "**crashes**" and **mood swings**.

Okay!! We now have a great foundation to help our children decrease the incoming toxins and boost the nutrients coming in to help set our kids up for nutrition success.

So let's recap what we now know and add a few more foundational principles to enhance our approach.

- 1. Always choose quality over quantity;** the quality of your food is far more important than the amount of calories in it. Doing our best to choose the most nutrient dense food with the least amount of inflammatory or toxic ingredients should be the top priority. You want the most bang for your nutrition buck. This means eliminating artificial additives and selecting grass-fed meats, organic, free-range poultry and eggs, pasture-raised pork, and wild-caught fish for our protein sources. Choosing organic produce to reduce our children's exposure to pesticides and GMOs, in addition to selecting whole foods over highly processed packaged foods
- 2. Try to fill at least half of your child's plate with nutrient dense veggies, remembering to try to make a rainbow of colors whenever possible.** I recommend buying organic when possible, but the Environmental Working Group has a list of the most pesticide laden vegetables (dirty dozen), as well as, the cleanest ones (clean 15) that may not require going organic. You can see these lists at www.ewg.org
- 3. Include a serving of clean protein and quality fat at each meal.** Refer to Your Perfectly Planned Plate and table under it for some suggestions on these. Be intentionally when you build your child's meal. It might be a challenge at first, but it gets easier as you make this a habit
- 4. Cutting back on starchy carbohydrates and lowering the sugar consumption is necessary.** Reduce the highly processed packaged foods and increase whole foods and you've already decreased a tremendous amount of sugar carbs.

5. Replace sugary drinks, fruit juices, and/or soda with water.

This can be difficult, but well worth it. Our kids need far more water than the average child is consuming. Water helps flush out toxins, hydrates their cells, improves brain function, prevents headaches, and reduce constipation. There are truly so many benefits to drinking water and it is so simple. If plain water isn't appealing, add some fruit slices or go full day spa mode and add cucumber slices. Essential oils are a great way to add flavor too. My favorite is a drop of organic tangerine essential oil plus a drop of organic lemon, so yummy! Just get that water in!!

6. Plan ahead!! Cooking in batches is a great way to keep the kitchen time to a minimum. I know we are all super busy these days and spending hours in the kitchen does not work for most of us. If you're going to make chicken breast, double or even triple the amount of chicken you cook and use the leftovers during the week. An easy way to add variety is to just add different seasoning or a different cut of the meat. For example, one day slice the chicken in long strips and spice with fajita seasoning, then the next day dice the chicken and season it with your favorite herbs and toss it in a salad.

7. Keep it simple!! You don't need to be a professional chef to eat healthy. You don't need fancy recipes and tons of different recipes. Just get those first few staple recipes down and then add small variations. No need to be a master chef, just keep it simple!



Congratulations!!

You now have your first steps laid out for you!! Start implementing each Foundational Principle, one at a time, until they become habit, then move on to the next.

Want more support. Join my *Nutrition Intervention for Autism and ADHD* Program

[Learn More](#)

Have questions???

Set-up your FREE 15-minute Consultation

[Set up Appointment](#)

Or better yet, email me at info@denisevoight.com

I've got you covered...I love hearing from you and answering any questions you might have.