

DR JENNIFER BARHAM-FLOREANI

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



DR JENNIFER BARHAM-FLOREANI, CHIROPRACTOR AND AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLER "WELL ADJUSTED BABIES", "TICKLISH — NEW WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN, LOVE & PLAY" AND "LUNCHBOX SOLUTIONS", IS A PUBLISHED AUTHORITY ON PAEDIATRIC HEALTH AND HOLISTIC PARENTING.

Well Adjusted Babies is now referred to as "the new bible for pregnancy, childbirth and beyond" for families across the globe. She regularly writes for various parenting and health magazines and appears on television and radio. Jennifer's career has been dedicated to encouraging the "health literacy" of families. Due to her tireless efforts in this area, she has been awarded Victorian and Australian Chiropractor of the Year (2009) and Woman Chiropractor of the Year (WCWC 2010). She also serves on the Editorial Review Board for the Chiropractic Journal of Australia.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: WWW.WELLADJUSTED.ME

INTRODUCTION

I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW OFTEN I'M ASKED, "JEN WHY ARE YOUR KIDS NEVER SICK?" OR "JEN, WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH MY CHILD?"

Firstly I am not claiming to be, "Mother of the Year" — far from it. I share this with you because as an author of health and parenting books and as a chiropractor, it is not surprising that my approach to nutrition and parenting is incredibly different to the norm. If we consider that most children today have allergies, developmental challenges or are clinically obese — as parents, we need to have a radically different approach to health, don't you agree?

Secondly let me state that occasionally my boys do indeed get sick but they typically bounce back within a day. So in an effort to answer these questions that I am thrown daily, with this post I'd like to start to explore how we can boost the health of our children.

WHEN IT COMES TO RAISING HEALTHY CHILDREN HOW WOULD A CHIROPRACTOR AND A MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL PROCEED?

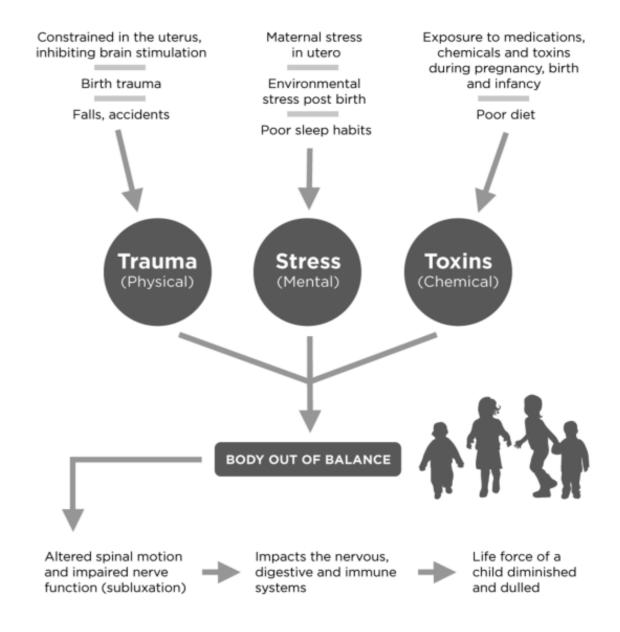
There are two major differences that exist between the 'chiropractic wellness' approach and the 'medical approach' to health as each sets a

different goal and a different course of action.

Firstly the medical profession views the human body as a conglomerate of chemical and mechanical functions, so that when a health challenge arises doctors look specifically at the problem area and take a "we've got to fix it" approach. This might be through eradicating germs which they credit with creating disease or through offering drugs or surgery. The focus being to alleviate symptoms and to address health issues in a disease- oriented model.

Wellness chiropractors see the body as a whole, acknowledging that the body works synergistically together, so that when one area of our body is taxed or compromised other areas can in time, become vulnerable. Most of us are aware that our nervous system controls and coordinates every function of the body but we may not appreciate that there a great number of stressors that accompany our modern lifestyle which tax our spine and nervous system.

These lifestyle factors move a body out of balance and compromise our health. Chiropractors ask questions like, "How can we help the body recreate balance and good function?" and "What part of this person's environment is taxing their health?" Chiropractors take a vitalistic view of the human body, respecting the body's innate or inner intelligence and adjust the spine to stimulate the body's natural ability to recreate balance, order and healing. While current health issues are addressed, wellness chiropractors are most excited about helping clients become proactive about all facets of their health.



For more information about "Signs Of A Body Out Of Balance" please take a look at my book: Ticklish — New Ways to Help Your Child Learn, Love & Play

A GOOD QUESTION WORTH ASKING AT THIS POINT IS, "HOW HAS THE CURRENT DISEASE-BASED MODEL OF HEALTH CARE (MODERN MEDICINE) SERVED US COLLECTIVELY?"

Realistically shouldn't Western cultures should be the healthiest in the world as we:

- 1 Spend the most on healthcare,
- 2 Have the best medical technology at our fingertips.

Wouldn't it be logical to assume we would be healthier than more impoverished nations?

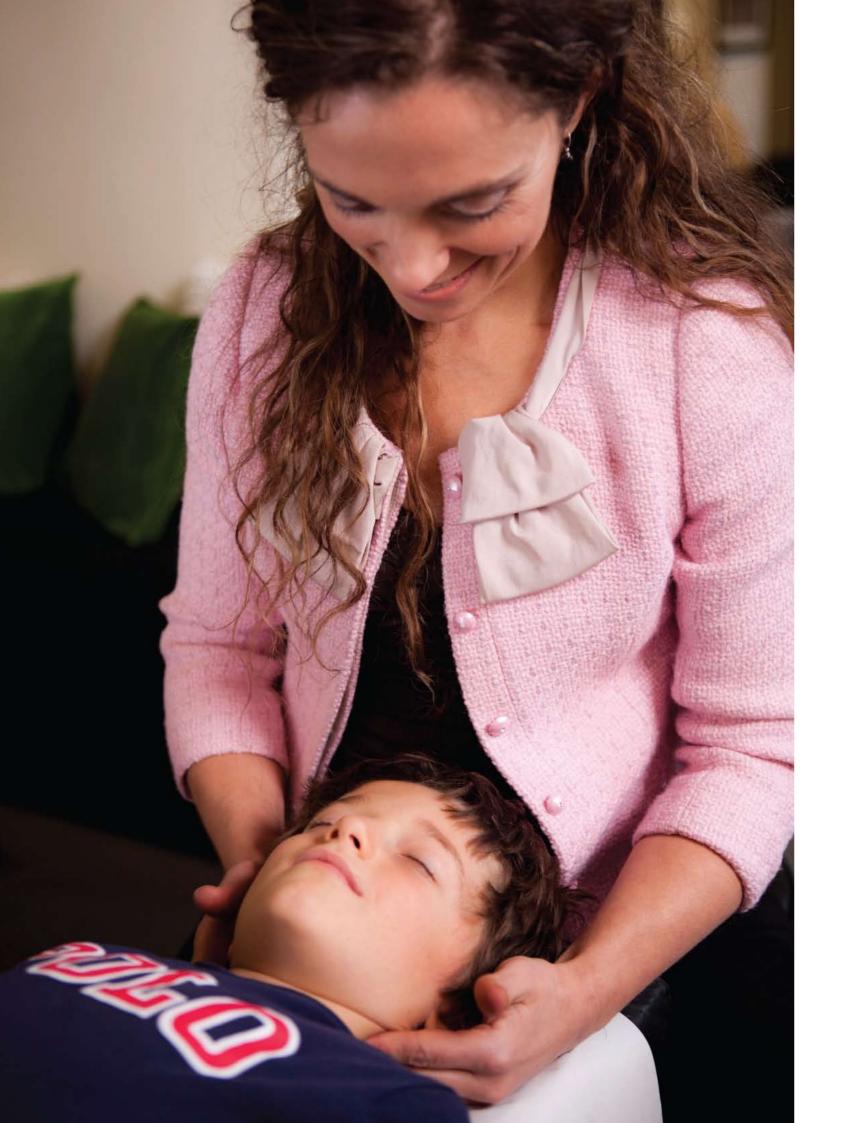
Well I hate to be "Captain Obvious" but it's no secret that western health statistics are appalling and reveal a very sobering tale of how we are not so 'advanced' after all. Chronic disease, health care budgets and superbugs are all — at an all time high. Clearly, the current disease-oriented health-care system is not serving us or our children very well at all.

While there will always be a place for conventional medicine particularly with emergency and critical care, and there will always be some folk who prefer to take drugs and have surgery, when it comes to setting a new goal for "health and wellness" then wellness chiropractors play an integral role.

I am blessed to work with families all over the world and I know that regardless of their status or title, parents all have a similar goal: they want to raise healthy, happy children. Parents contact me for advice and referrals to wellness chiropractors and other integrative practitioners typically for three main reasons:

- 1 Their child may be perfectly healthy but they are eager for more tips and ideas to secure their health. They know other children who are "really thriving" and they are curious about what to do differently.
- 2 Their child may NOT be autistic or developmentally challenged but this youngster is driving them crazy because they whine and moan all day long. They have a pale complexion with dark shadows under their eyes. They seem tired and listless, they catch every cold and flu in town, they suffer with ear aches and they self-limit their diet and gravitate towards sugar filled tomato sauce sandwiches and packets of potato chips. Most days these parents may feel inclined to sell their child on "ebay" but innately they know there's something compromising their child's health. These parents are tired of being given prescriptions or being told that "there's nothing wrong with your child" or "they'll grow out of it."
- 3 Their child may have a particular health issue such as colic, asthma, bed wetting and they'd like assistance or they may be looking for ideas on how to support their child's brain and nerve development or gut integrity.

The following pages include five important tips for parents to raise the health status of their children...





FIND AN INSPIRING, RECOMMENDED WELLNESS CHIROPRACTOR

MY NUMBER ONE TIP OR PROACTIVE STEP FOR RAISING THE HEALTH STATUS OF YOUR CHILDREN IS TO FIND AN INSPIRING, RECOMMENDED WELLNESS CHIROPRACTOR AND HAVE YOUR CHILD'S NERVOUS SYSTEM REGULARLY CHECKED.

I'm a chiropractic baby and cannot emphasis enough how chiropractic adjustments with a wellness chiropractor are a parent's secret weapon when desiring to raise strong, healthy children. If you have never seen a chiropractor or have any questions regarding safety and effectiveness please read my post on The Legitimacy of Chiropractic.

Chiropractic for babies and children is evidenced to be gentle, safe and effective and in the spectrum of all health professionals – chiropractors have an extremely enviable safety record and more and more parents world-wide use their chiropractor as their trusted health resource.

While chiropractic may be able to help with a number of health issues, chiropractors do not treat colic or asthma for example — chiropractic adjustments free-up the nerve "communication channels" and the body is then better able to address and clear health challenges.

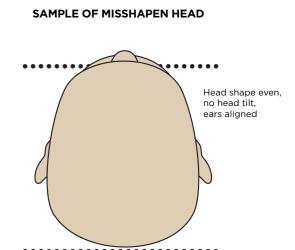
Unfortunately most of us do not realise that the way our children enter the world may have a direct effect on their health. Spine and nerve distress can at times arise from restricted or abnormal positioning in the uterus and also from the journey through the birth canal or potentially during the delivery process itself. In my book *Well Adjusted Babies* 2nd Edition I discuss that there are many factors that may cause birth trauma, including:1

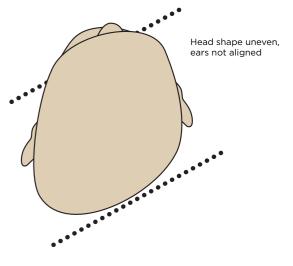
- 1 False labour
- 2 A long or very short labour
- 3 Poor positioning of the infant's head and neck as they journey through the birth canal with a natural vaginal delivery
- 4 Failure of the mother's cervix to dilate
- 5 The use of drugs to increase contraction intensity
- 6 The use of vacuum extraction or forceps
- 7 Caesarean section delivery because of lack of progress
- 8 Cord around the baby's neck
- 9 Foetal distress.
- 10 An awkward position within the uterus prior to birth

Left unresolved, this spine and nerve dysfunction may place further stress on the communication systems of the body. Birth trauma has the capacity to effect a baby's nervous system, which in turn (amongst other things) may then effect digestion and an infant's capacity to breast feed or sleep well.² The Journal of Neuroscience (2008)³ states that, although the first year of life may be a period of developmental vulnerability, it may also be a period in which therapeutic interventions would have the greatest positive effect.

Sometimes children have nerve and spinal distress that results in their head being tilted to one side so that one ear sits higher than the other (refer to picture below). At other times a child's head may be rotated or turned more to one side, so that they display a preference for having their head turned this way.

A misshapen head is not merely a cosmetic issue; it is a brain stem issue.⁴ If your child's head looks uneven or you notice flat areas, this can indicate restrictions between the skull and the soft layers that cover the brain and spinal cord. A healthy brain requires good movement of the skull and spine; when this movement is impaired, brain and nerve function are also impaired. ⁵





There is a myth that an odd-shaped child's head is of no concern and

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will 'right itself' with time, however, anomalies of shape can be the first indication that your child is susceptible to developmental delay. *Tick-lish – New Ways To Help Your Child Learn, Love & Play* gives parents countless ideas on how parents can monitor and assist their child's development (see **www.welladjusted.me/ticklish**).

For older children, nerve interference may play out as developmental delays, digestion issues, asthma, behavioural problems, low energy, inability to concentrate, headaches,⁶ etc – the list is endless.

By the age of seven, a child is likely to have had hundreds of falls and while children seem to have a "bounce-back" resilience, left uncorrected the body tries to hide subtle damage that potentially leads to poor postural and neurological function. We need to keep in mind that each seemingly insignificant slip and fall our child has does ADD up, and that as the branch bends, so grows the tree. With a subluxated spine (where misaligned vertebrae may affect the function of the nervous system), our child's "communication highway" no longer functions at 100%, potentially altering the way they are able to think, feel and behave.8

I often explain to patients that having a subluxation is like driving a car with the hand brake on. You can certainly still drive the car but you don't get anywhere — very effectively. And after a period of time, all sorts of engine issues arise. A chiropractor's focus is to increase the neurological function of your child's body by removing nerve interference which may be hindering nerve communication.

I encourage parents to have newborn babies checked by chiropractors very soon after birth and special techniques have been developed to carefully correct any subluxated areas of the spine. Many chiropractors have a special focus on family health and work with babies and young children. If you haven't had your child checked by a chiropractor then find a recommended family wellness chiropractor in your area.

If you are already taking your child to a chiropractor but feel that they are not thriving in a manner that you hoped then consider if you are only seeing your chiropractor sporadically, — investments in health work best when they are made consistently and regularly. I believe that children do well to be checked each fortnight, your child may not need to be adjusted each time but a quick "check-up" is an important health ritual. Most chiropractors have fee systems that make regular care viable.

People see chiropractors regularly not because they are told too, people see chiropractors because they feel and experience how adjustments add vitality, immune strength and clarity back into their lives. It's like eating clean, healthy food — every cell in your body tells you, "this is a good thing." Ask other parents who take their child to see a chiropractor about their experiences — world wide, typically parents delight in the results they notice in their children.

If your child is seeing a chiropractor but not thriving in the manner that you hoped then please keep reading — the subsequent sections outline other factors that may be effecting the results you are achieving.





CONDUCT AN AUDIT

MY SECOND TIP FOR PARENTS WANTING TO MOVE TO-WARDS GREATER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IS TO TAKE AN AUDIT.

Whenever we want to set ourselves a new goal we have to know where we are starting. This allows us to look back in 6 and 12 months time and celebrate how far we have come. It's hard work being a parent and it's harder again to a parent who's committed to healthy habits and rituals, so its important to take stock and appreciate your efforts.

So lets begin the audit.

Q: How Much Sugar Do You Each Consume Daily

Without realising it, most adults and children alike eat refined sugar for breakfast,lunch and dinner via highly processed cereals and grains. Most of us consume an average of 53kg of sugar each year (approximately 29 teaspoons of added and natural sugar each day), and 75 percent comes from the packaged and convenience products we eat and drink.

I'd encourage you to investigate the health risks associated with eating too many sugars (in Lunchbox Solutions I discuss the dangers of sugars and outline what are healthier ways to sweeten recipes, so that's a great place to start). There are several reasons sugars should be avoided including that they raise our insulin levels. Insulin is a hormone that our pancreas produces and its main function is taking up blood glucose (sugar) into the cells for energy. High insulin levels are thought to contribute to multiple health issues but for this post where we are focused on raising the health status of our children — lets keep to three main issues.

1 High insulin levels can depress the immune system weakening our ability to fight disease.

This occurs because white blood cells need stacks of vitamin C to kill bacteria and viruses so our white blood cells work to accumulate and store vitamin C within the cell. The problem is that vitamin C and glucose have similar chemical structures so they then compete to enter the white blood cells. Guess what happens when we have lots of glucose in our blood from eating lots of foods that contain natural or processed sugars? Glucose wins and our white blood cells become deficient in vitamin C compromising our ability to fight bugs.

2 Too many sugars also upset the integral balance of good and harmful bacteria in the gut.

When we consume too many sugars we can create an overgrowth of harmful yeasts and bad bacteria which override our helpful "disease fighting" helpful bacteria — hindering our immune system.

3 Refined sugars also provide us with no vitamins or minerals.

In order for them to be metabolized, they draw on the body's reserves of vitamins and minerals, depleting our body's nutrients.



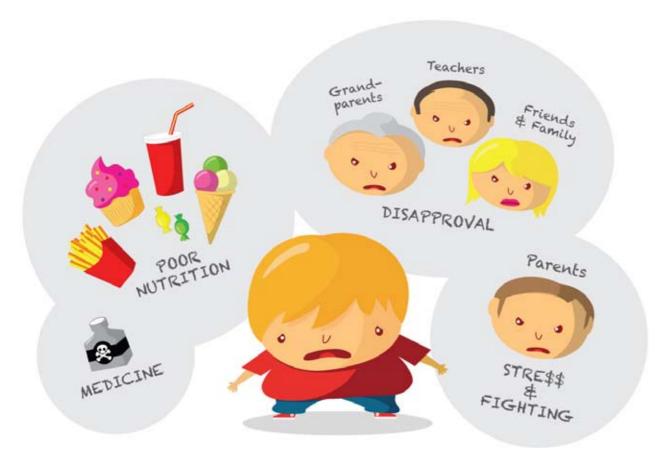
ACTION: Start a food diary and observe just how much sugar find there way into your daily diet. Here's a tip for when looking at products and packaging — sugars tend to be any ingredient ending in "ose" — sucrose, fructose, dextrose, lactose etc. Try it — you'll be shocked.

Drastically reducing sugar (initially this is not an easy task) not only lightens the load on your child's immune system it also allows your

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children to get off the 'blood-sugar rollercoaster' and you may even find that you actually start to like your children again — which is always a bonus :) Here's a graphic from Lunch box Solutions that demonstrates the impact poor diet can have on our children and their relationships...



Here's another tip — if you cut back your own sugar and sweetener intake... life just gets better and better. Sugar highs and lows, make us all irritable and grumpy.

For more information about sugars and sweeteners, please read the following blog post on my website: www.welladjustedbabies.com/tackling-the-sweet-beast

Q: How many processed foods are in your pantry, fridge and child's lunch box?

Literally count the number of packaged items and take an audit. If a food item has more then 5 or 6 ingredients you can bet it's refined, altered and damaged. If you can't pronounce the names of the ingredients in the food item, mostly likely it's full of chemicals.

I'd encourage you to become a food critic and learn what all those numbers and complex sounding ingredients really mean. *Please see* "Become a Food Critic" and the "Poor Choice, Better Choice and Fabulous Choice" Table in "Empower Their Choices" in Lunchbox Solutions (see www.welladjusted.me/lunchboxsolutions).

Q: How many pieces of fresh fruit and vegetables are you all currently consuming each day?

Q: How many glasses of water do you drink?

Q: What sort of water do you drink?

And I don't mean the wet kind. One of the simplest and most important things you can do is invest in a water filter to protect your family against chemically-treated water. Most of our drinking water today contains chlorine and chlorination by-products, as well as numerous other contaminants. Drinking good quality water via a high quality filter system — promotes detoxification, enhances nutritional uptake and ensures optimal hydration.

Help your children develop the habit of drinking water throughout the day rather than juices and soft drinks. A mere two per cent drop in our body's water supply can trigger signs of dehydration: fuzzy short-term

memory, trouble with basic math and difficulty focusing on smaller print, such as a computer screen. Many children are frequently dehydrated, suffering with concentration issues, constipation and digestive problems.

Q: How many prescriptions has your child had in the last twelve months and over their lifetime?

With regular chiropractic care and addressing these other tips for raising healthy children, many parents delight in no longer relying on antibiotics and instead being able to rely on their child's own immune strength.

Q: How many sessions of sweaty exercise would each family member perform each week?

Ideally each of us should be raising our heart rate 5 times a week in *Ticklish — New Ways To Help Your Children Learn, Love & Play* I outline the ideal forms of exercise for families and the health benefits.

Q: How many harmful chemicals are in your personal care and cleaning products?

Source brands that are genuinely wholesome — free of nasty chemicals and toxins which are readily absorbed through the skin and tax our body and its defence system.

It can be a "reality slap" to take an audit and look at where you currently sit along the "healthy" and "not so healthy" scale. Where you sit on the "fresh" and "disastrously preserved" scale. Remember though that every moment we make choices and have the opportunity and capacity to influence both our child's — short and long-term health.





TOUGH LOVE

MANY PARENTS LAMENT THAT THEY CAN'T GET THEIR CHILDREN TO EAT CERTAIN FOODS OR MEALS THAT THEY PREPARE...

Despite their best intentions, many parents today arrive at a stand-off with their children; the children dictate what they will and won't eat, and then the parents become distressed when their kids fall ill with frequent colds and flus, ear infections and asthma, to name but a few repercussions of poor diet. Or in ever-growing cases, children acquire seemingly mysterious behavioural disorders with long labels which require medication. Even then, the link is often not made between diet and health.

Sometimes it seems a whole lot easier to just give into children and throw into their lunchboxes that vegemite, peanut butter or jam sandwich, packet of chips or a cupcake. There is no doubt that this type of approach to lunches is quick, simple and easy. But the question is: *Is life simple and easy when we have hyperactive, angry or unwell children?*

NO, it isn't...

...Life is draining physically, emotionally and financially.

We cannot pour soft drinks or additives onto a potted plant and expect it to survive... the same applies to our body.

There is a direct relationship between what we eat and our quality of life and health. In *Lunchbox Solutions* I discuss a variety of approaches to retraining fussy eaters. Every family must negotiate guidelines and boundaries around many facets of lifestyle and behaviour, but there are none as important as diet, because what your children eat has an ENORMOUS IMPACT on the whole family. It's exhausting when they are chronically unwell, when they are irritable and friends and family don't want to spend time with them. So I'd encourage you to pick your battles and be clear that the "food battle" is one you want to win!

Even if your child appears quite healthy, remember that the impact of poor food choices may have a long-lasting effect on their health as adults. The accumulative damage of refined sugars and processed foods can be an enormous contributor to illnesses including diabetes and heart disease. It is our role as guardians to empower our family with proactive and positive habits. (For more ideas on how to moderate food choices and still enjoy yourself, see Kerr Power — the 80/20 Rule in Lunchbox Solutions).

Since my boys we're very little they learnt that they need to eat primarily wholesome foods and at times "sometimes foods." It is vitally important that children learn how they can strengthen digestive power through eating foods that are as close to their natural state as possible including a wide variety of fresh organic vegetables and fruits, free-range, grass-fed or better again organic meats. Additionally organic

eggs and dairy products, small, locally caught fish, raw or organic nuts, whole grains; you get the idea.

Foods are meant to nourish and heal the body. Eating foods in their most natural state ensures we receive the highest nutritional content. Whole foods contain naturally occurring vitamins, minerals, enzymes, essential fatty acids, amino acids and more.

Consuming food shouldn't be a toxic event. By eating "whole foods" we also help our family to reduce their intake of harmful chemicals such as preservatives, synthetic nutrients, and other additives that are considered non-foods (which are added to most all processed foods.) If you can — try to eat organic foods whenever possible. This will help to ensure you avoid harmful toxins such as antibiotics, synthetic hormones, pesticides, herbicides, GMO's, and synthetic fertilizers.

Purchasing organic food is not a luxury but rather an integral step in securing our health. Pollutants in our modern environment—for example pesticides, heavy metals, herbicides and fumigants—have been linked to abnormalities in behaviour, perception, cognition, and motor ability during early childhood, even when exposure is at so-called harmless levels.¹⁰

For the latest health news on pesticides, please see the following post on my website: www.welladjustedbabies.com/pesticides-early-puberty-behavioural-problems

Where possible encourage children to help you shop and prepare meals and take the opportunity to highlight the pros and cons of different foods and false foods.



For a heads up on additives and colours, please see: www.welladjustedbabies.com/how-clean-are-you

Encourage your children from a young age to also be open to having supplements or "vitamin boosts" from time to time. For example smoothies and home made juices are a great way to add fish oils, multi-mineral powders and probiotics into their weekly diet. High quality probiotics can provide the necessary bacteria for a healthy gut, and they are an essential aide to digestive health for all children — I would recommend taking these a few times a week. It's also a great habit to encourage them to randomly have zinc and vitamin C powder drinks or multi-mineral drinks particularly if they have been really busy or had a few late nights.

Additionally, involving kids in making homemade yoghurt and fermented probiotic rich foods is another winning formula — this way they are much more open to experimenting with recipes and different types of foods.

I thought I'd share with you all the Health Culture we have fostered with the boys over the years. Here are some of the pledges we have made — obviously these have been adapted as the boys mature and we explain the essence of the principles to our four-year old Arlo so that he understands.

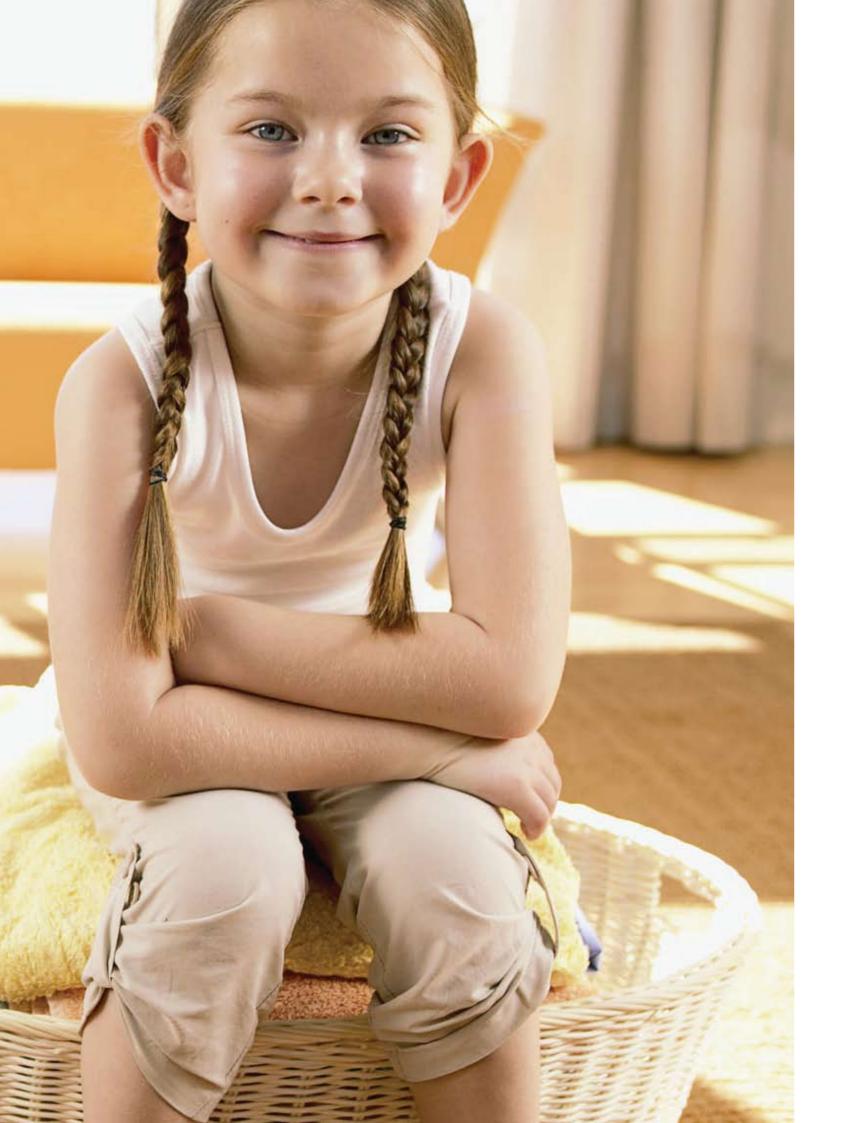
These kinds of habits are easier when children are very little, as they are often questioned, squeezed and argued as older children discover their own opinions. At this point you all find a new groove and a new way to honour everyone's needs, but the beauty of having being very firm about "healthy eating" when the boys were little has been that, without a doubt, they are now delightful and willing 'healthy food' connoisseurs. They are also pretty in tune with how cheap ingredients or poor food choices make their bodies feel.

HEALTHY PLEDGES IN OUR FAMILY:

- 1 Meals are a social event—we eat together, free from distractions, creating a time to connect and communicate.
- 2 We all commit to learning how to look after our minds and bodies better. Considering what we eat, drink, put on skin and hair, what we watch, listen to and read. How much time we spend on digital devices. We consider 'who' we take advice from and we FOCUS ON talking ourselves and other people "up."
- 3 We feel most centred when we stay grateful for all the blessings we share, when we have a chipper attitude and when we look for what's RIGHT in our world.
- 4 Food is not eaten in boredom and it isn't for soothing, nor is it a bribe or a reward.
- 5 Eating healthy foods is as much about how, why and when we eat, as much as it is about what we eat.
- 6 We all remain open to trying new things and parents are in charge of food education.
- 7 Kids eat what adults eat no short order cooking. All foods need to be tried and explored.
- 8 Our drink of choice is water. Commercial juice is consumed sometimes, soft drinks on very rare occasions and cola or any other caffeinated, 'hyped-up' drink is for those that have finished growing.

- 9 We focus on eating organic, real foods in their natural state as much as possible.
- 10 We minimise refined sugar, low-fat products and processed foods those that are high in trans fats and salts as much as possible.
- 11 We strengthen our bodies regularly with adjustments, exercise, rest and vitamins. We also prioritise stretching.
- 12 We aim to leave the world a better place than we found it. We do this by remembering that kind words and courageously being different, lead others through example.







GET DIRTY

MANY OF US HAVE BEEN LEAD TO BELIEVE THAT GERMS ARE THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL AND THAT WE SHOULD GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO AVOID THEM...

Anti-bacteria hand creams, sprays and wipes, fill our handbags and counters and yet compelling researching tells us that we have gone too far and that some exposure to pets, dirt and other children for example are vital for stimulating the immune system to work effectively. In experiments where animals are raised in completely sterile (germ-free) environments, their immune systems do not develop normally and they develop serious immune diseases including allergy and autoimmunity.¹¹

When our "microbiome" (our internal network of helpful and harmful bacteria) becomes imbalanced, our digestion, immune function, state of mind and general health and wellbeing in time become compromised. An imbalanced microbiome is now believed to be one of the primary causes of chronic infection, inflammation, autoimmunity, cardiovascular disease, chronic fatigue, cancer and neurological problems such as Alzheimers, autism and schizophrenia.¹²

The Canadian Medical Association Journal just a few months ago¹³ stated that "the disruption of the gut balance has been linked to an increasing number of diseases, including inflammatory bowel disease, diabetes, obesity, cancer, allergies and asthma."

Studies now tell us that exposure to dirt and germs is incredibly important. In fact we need regular exposure to bacteria and germs to strengthen our immune system. In our own homes, among our own family, we want to take the opportunity to build up our immune systems. Here's a few quick tips:

- Letting children crawl on the floor is fine, playing in the dirt is a good thing, having family pets is encouraged and sharing a spoon with your sister is, again, fine.
- Cleaning away visible dirt or grime on any surface sinks, floors, or door handles with thorough washing and cleaning products that are free of harsh chemicals is usually enough without constant sterilizing and using disinfectants such as bleach (which probably kills everything in the air around it, too!).
- Washing our hands with simple soap dislodges and removes surface particles without stripping everything on the skin. Antibacterial soaps kill both good and bad bacteria, and strip the skin of the environment it needs to sustain good bacteria.
- Be less concerned about germs but instead focus more on considering how strong is your child's digestive power and immune system.

For more information please see Research Reveals We're Only 10% Human — www.welladjustedbabies.com/research — and the post Eight Reasons So Many Of Our Children Are Unwell — www.welladjustedbabies.com/8-reasons





SLEEP

POOR SLEEP HABITS CAN ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO UNNECESSARY STRESS IN THE HOUSEHOLD...

If a child does not wake up easily and with energy each morning, this could indicate they are not getting enough quality sleep. This in turn will affect their personality, their learning and their health in general. When children are tired they cannot concentrate, learn tasks or play sports well and just like adults typically tired children crave sugary foods that leave them prone to yeast imbalances.

As parents we often miss our child's 'tired cues' and then we have great difficulty trying to put them to bed when their brain has moved back into fourth gear. If your child consistently wakes up tired or is slow in the morning, then try getting them to bed an hour earlier for a period of time and watch how this can transform grumpy or emotional behaviour. Over the years I have learnt that a set routine for dinner and bedtime makes life easier for everyone. This means aiming to feed children early—well before they are tired. Plan an ideal time for bed and give yourself plenty of time for baths and the reading of evening books, etc. Some nights you will be able to have luxurious, long baths and other nights you will need to be drill-sergeant.

It is a good idea to limit the number of late nights that children have in a week. With social, school and family activities, bedtimes can gradually become later and later for older children; however, sleep requirements remain just as vital for teenagers as when they are younger. It turns out that teenagers may actually need more sleep than in their younger years. Here's a chart from *Ticklish — New Ways to Help Your Child Learn, Love & Play...*

HOW MUCH SLEEP DOES YOUR CHILD NEED PER DAY?			
AGE	TOTAL	NAP TIME	NIGHT SLEEP
Newborn	17hrs	8hrs	9hrs
2 months	15-16hrs	5-6hrs	10hrs
4 months	15-16 hrs	4-5 hrs	11 hrs
6-9 months	14-15 hrs	3-4 hrs	11 hrs
12 months	13-14 hrs	2-3 hrs	11 hrs
Up to 3 years	12-13 hrs	1-2 hrs	11 hrs
3-6 years	11-12 hrs	(every 2-3 days)	11-12 hrs
7-12 years	11 hrs	-	11 hrs
12-15 years	10-11 hrs	-	10-11 hrs
16-18 years	9-10 hrs	-	9-10 hrs

"Man shapes himself through decisions that shape his environment."

—Rene Dubos

CONCLUSION

Yes, there is much to consider and implement in order to raise vibrant, robust children, and parenting with "tough love" and healthy rituals requires consistency and hard work. However, when we make the commitment to the small little things, to the daily and weekly habits, in the long-term... everyone benefits.

As Buddha once said "Every human being is the author of his own health or disease." Allowing your child the opportunity to independently strengthen their immune system is one of the greatest gifts you can offer them.

You may even find that soon other parents will start saying to you, "Oh, you're lucky! Your kids are never unwell and they are really good eaters. I have to deal with kids who won't eat vegetables and who are always sick!"

When other parents say this to you then you will know in your heart and mind that health has nothing to do with luck—health happens by choice, not chance. And by the choices you make each and everyday.

I wish you every success.

"The man who thinks he can and the man who thinks he can't are both right. Which one are you?"

—Henry Ford

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