

Nutrition Notes
March 2021

Heavy Metals in Baby Food

A CNN article created a wave of fear regarding heavy metals found in common baby food products. Although a call to action for the FDA to increase regulations on testing and limiting these metals is not unfounded, it is important to note that the levels found in the baby food products were NOT at a toxic level. The heavy metals in question were arsenic, lead, cadmium, and mercury - all of which occur naturally in our soil and therefore are found even in whole foods grown organically. The most immediate question is how parents can ensure a safe, healthy diet for their children. The American Association of Pediatrics' advice is to make sure children are getting a variety of foods in their diets as all foods will have varying levels of these metals whether or not parents are choosing store-bought baby food or pureeing their own blends.

Intermittent Fasting and Gut Health

A Google search on intermittent fasting (IF) leads to countless blogs discussing positive effects on blood sugar control, inflammation, and even gut health. While some studies show beneficial effects, proponents do not fully consider the risks involved for people with GI disorders. IF can exacerbate irregular digestion and lead to worsened nausea and diarrhea, especially in patients with IBS, malabsorption, and gastroparesis. To avoid malnutrition, IF means eating larger volumes over a shorter period of time. The increased volume alone further delays gastric emptying. In IBS, larger meals often lead to a phenomenon known as FODMAP-stacking which can make bloating, diarrhea, and cramping more severe. In malabsorptive states, the higher nutrient load may decrease total nutrient absorption due to rapid transit or insufficient enzyme production/dosing. Healthcare professionals can help patients consider both sides of the evidence and make an informed decision about a diet plan best suited for their individual needs.

Orthorexia: When Healthy Eating Goes Too Far

When people are overly strict focused on eating all-natural, organic, healthy, or clean they may initially seem like "health conscious" people. However, this extreme obsession with having a "perfect diet" may be a sign of an eating disorder with harmful effects. Orthorexia can involve eliminating multiple food groups without medical need, compulsive checking of nutritional labels, and/or having considerable guilt or anxiety about eating any foods not carefully chosen and self-prepared. Malnutrition, loss of bone density, and other physical problems can occur from chronic dietary restriction. Mood swings, anxiety, depression, and social avoidance are mental health concerns that can result from spending excessive amount of time thinking about food, health, and/or body. Working with a registered dietitian can help patients challenge nutrition myths, overcome food fears, and improve their relationship with food/body.