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MEALTIME/APPETITE SUPPRESSION

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Appetite suppression is a common side effect of stimulant medication therapy. In a sense, your child's "fuel gauge" is not working properly and he/she does not feel hungry. If our car's gas gauge were broken, we would make sure to fill up regularly, even though the gauge read "full." We want our child to use the same approach when it comes to nutrition.

There are a number of simple things that might help:

1. **TIME MEALS TO FIT THE MEDICATION SCHEDULE.** Encourage your child to eat when he takes his first pill in the morning. Allow snacks in the evening after the medication effect has worn off.
2. **CONSIDER HIGH CALORIE, NUTRITIOUS FOODS.** Drinks such as Carnation Instant Breakfast are quick and easy. Butter or cheese can add calories to a meal.
3. **TRY SMALLER MEAL PORTIONS.** Your child can always ask for more if he or she is hungry. The psychology of smaller portions is much more positive and helps limit the power struggle over finishing meals.
4. **TRY NOT TO PUSH FOOD TOO HARD.** Children usually resist things that are pushed upon them. A heavy emphasis on rewards and consequences for eating can create a negative attitude at mealtime. Your child might learn to resist eating if you battle with him or her.
5. **ARRANGE SNACKS.** Almost everyone does better with smaller amounts of food, eaten throughout the day.
6. **ENCOURAGE GRAZING.** When your child is watching TV, drawing, or playing with a friend, have some simple foods for him or her to eat (peanuts, raisins, grapes, cheese, etc.).
7. **DEVELOP SOME "MINI-MEAL" HABITS.** There are some times during the day when your child can get in the habit of having a bite to eat. When you pick your child up from school, for example, he or she might get into the habit of eating half a granola bar. Even if they are not hungry, you can encourage eating at least that much. After awhile, this will become part of a routine.

8. **BE FLEXIBLE.** If your child is willing to eat a turkey sandwich or slice of pizza for breakfast, allow him or her to do so.
9. **ESTABLISH NUTRITIONAL EQUIVALENTS.** Sometimes your child may not like what you are serving for dinner. If he or she asks for, or you offer, an alternative, make sure it is one of similar nutritional value. You might substitute chicken, peanut butter or yogurt for fish because they all contain protein. You would not want to offer a bowl of cereal as an alternative.
10. **BREAKFAST IS THE PRIORITY MEAL.** It is very important that your child have a good breakfast with lots of protein (milk, yogurt, breakfast meat, eggs, peanut butter). Beware of a high carbohydrate and sugar combination (waffles and syrup) without an additional protein source.
11. **HAVE A LUNCH BUDDY.** Your child may be rushing off to recess without eating lunch. Consider working out a "deal" with some of your child's friends or the lunchroom monitor to check and make sure that your child has eaten lunch. In some instances, it is appropriate to have recess contingent upon finishing lunch.
12. **MAKE A CONNECTION.** It is important for children to understand the importance of properly fueling their bodies. It is not healthy or safe to play baseball or ride a bike without having eaten properly. You can consider restricting some of those activities if your child is refusing to eat.
13. **MAKE A LIST OF PREFERRED FOODS.** There are lots of foods we could all eat even if we had just finished dinner. Help your child come up with a list of foods that he could eat even if he were not hungry. Include them in your child's meals, particularly for lunchtime.
14. **COUNT CALORIES.** Some children respond very well to an incentive program which offers energy consuming activities (swimming, skiing, trampolining, go-cart riding) as a reward for eating well.
15. **BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL.** It is important that you eat well, finish your meals, and have healthy snacks.
16. **BE POSITIVE.** Avoid threats of punishment as a means of getting your child to eat more. It will set up a power struggle that is best avoided.