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Roni Corbett

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MEETING REPORT

Food for thought

Faced with a vast choice of foods, many parents today are uncertain what to feed their children to help them achieve their full potential. At a recent USANA-sponsored public forum, Dr. Steven Ng, consultant neonatologist and pediatrician, Clemeagles Hospital, Singapore, and Mr Tyson Ng, state-registered dietitian at USANA Health Sciences, told families about the importance of good nutrition to children's physical and mental

development, and how supplements can benefit children whose diets lack essential nutrients.

Eat right to be right

Dr. Ng advised parents on how to give their children a good start in life, and how to avoid some common problems that may diminish the quality of their children's diets. From birth to 6 months, breastmilk is the nutritionally complete gold standard for babies and infants, said Ng. Breastfed

babies are less likely to become obese as they grow up compared with babies raised on formula, and breastmilk also protects against cardiovascular disease, strengthens the immune system, and aids mental development.

He recommended introducing solid foods gradually after 6 months, stressing that parents should instill healthy eating habits from infancy. "As many as 20 percent of 1 to 5 year-olds may be fussy eaters", said Dr Ng, "and

while most grow out of it with time, those who do not may end up having poor growth and development."

To avoid such difficulties, he advocated that parents should:

- Ensure a nutritious, balanced and varied diet. Avoid food fads.
- Eat at home as a family. Discourage snacking and establish well-organized daily meal-time routines.
- Encourage children to feed



Dr. Steven Ng



Mr Tyson Ng

themselves. Discourage "drinking-to-sleep", which can cause tooth and gum problems. • Set clear boundaries. Reward good behavior and discipline children consistently and appropriately for their age.

Look for Completeness, Potency, Bioavailability and Safety — Expert rates children's supplements



Well-balanced nutrition plays a key role in everyone's health, including that of children. And the use of a multi-vitamin, multi-mineral supplement is gaining broader acceptance among the mainstream population.

Physicians who recommend a daily supplement to children have, like parents, to filter through a myriad of information to arrive at a good product.

includes **completeness** (how wide a spectrum of nutrients are there), **potency** (whether the nutrients are in sufficient amounts), **bioavailability** (if the nutrients are in their most bioavailable forms) and **potential toxicity**.

In scoring, he used an objective benchmark — a "blended standard" developed from the published recommendation of seven noted nutritional

general umbrella of food, which means that compliance with pharmaceutical-grade quality controls are not required by law, and adherence to good manufacturing practices is entirely voluntary.

Rigorous manufacturing standards are necessary for purity and potency assurance. According to Dr John Cardellina at the US Council for Responsible Nutrition, "somewhere between 20 to 40 percent of U.S. dietary supplement products fail to meet analyses for label claims."

A Matter of Healthy Taste

Children's supplements are often chewed, so taste matters in ensuring compliance. Some supplements are loaded with sugar and artificial sweeteners to mask the bitter aftertaste inherent with minerals that children, especially "picky eaters", often lack in their diet. Nutritionists,

however, generally recommend children's supplements that use natural fruit powders as emulsifier, even though they may not be as tasty.



Lyle MacWilliam

A former Canadian Member of Parliament, Lyle MacWilliam served at the request of Canada's federal Ministry of Health to help develop a new regulatory framework for natural health products.

The role of nutritional supplementation

Mr Tyson Ng reiterated the importance of a healthy, nutritious and balanced diet from pregnancy onwards, to help children thrive. He looked at how individual dietary components contribute to growth, development and lifelong health, and how oral supplements can help to ensure that children get all the nutrients they need.

“As many as 20 percent of 1 to 5 year-olds may be fussy eaters

Too often, he explained, modern agricultural and food production practices combined with bad eating habits, mean that although children get enough protein and energy, their diet lacks vital nutrients.

For example, figures suggest that only a fraction of children get recommended daily amounts of fiber, vitamins, minerals and trace elements, and conditions such as childhood obesity and diabetes are becoming increasingly common.

Inadequate nutrition and dietary imbalances not only impair children's physical and mental development, but may also greatly increase their risk of serious health problems in adulthood. For example, vitamin B reduces homocysteine, which has been linked to cardiovascular disease, and antioxidants such as vitamin E are thought to boost immunity and protect against cancer.

Supplements should be added to a healthy diet to top up essential nutrients to adequate levels and provide extra protection, rather than to make up for unhealthy eating habits, said Mr Ng. He urged parents to be careful to select supplements produced to high quality control standards, beware of added sugar, and look for products with a balance of vitamins rather than single doses, and which contain antioxidants and essential trace elements such as chromium, copper, molybdenum, manganese, selenium, and vanadium, which are not found in all products.

"Somewhere between 20 to 40 percent of U.S. dietary supplement products fail to meet analyses for label claims"

Dr. John Cardellina
Council for Responsible Nutrition, U.S.

Not All Supplements Are Created Equal

Lyle MacWilliam, Canadian biochemist, nutritional consultant and author of the *Comparative Guide to Children's Nutritionals*, offers a comprehensive way of comparing children's supplements.

In his book, MacWilliam rated over 160 children's supplements in North America on criteria that, among others,

authorities: Phyllis Balch, CNC; Dr Michael Colgan Ph.D.; Dr Earl Mindell, Ph.D.; Dr Michael Murray, N.D.; Dr Richard Passwater, Ph.D.; Dr Ray Straud, M.D. and Dr Julian Whitaker, M.D.

Manufacturing Standards Vary

As is the case in Singapore, health supplements in the United States are placed under the

Top Rated in North America

USANA Health Sciences' supplement for children (called Usanimals) is one of MacWilliam's top rated products in both the United States and Canada.

The company complies with pharmaceutical-grade Good Manufacturing Practices, and its products are laboratory tested to meet USP specifications for potency and uniformity where applicable.

Other children's supplements which receive top marks

from MacWilliam are Douglas Laboratories' "Vita-Big-Kids", and "Basic Preventive Junior"; SISU's "Mini-Vits" and ProThera's "VitaTab Chewable".



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