

# Disease-Proof Your Child: Feeding Kids Right

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**Book Review by Peter Sultana, M.D.**

Disease can be a powerful and scary thing. When we, or someone we love is diagnosed with a disease, we wonder if it could have been prevented. We can become extremely motivated. If there was something we could have done differently, we would. If there is something we can do now, we do it now. If there is something we can tell our children to do differently, we will tell them.

Dr. Fuhrman has been on the frontlines of preventive medicine for years, especially in the realm of nutrition, and he has summarized much of his message in his books **Fasting and Eating for Health** and **Eat To Live**. By following his formidable prescriptions for nutrition, people have been able to correct mistakes of the past, and to revitalize themselves. An experience of disease can be very motivating to find truth. Our hope, of course, is to pass on this knowledge to our children, but without the disease experience. In his latest book, **Disease-Proof Your Child: Feeding Kids Right**, Dr. Fuhrman takes on that challenge. In a brief 300 pages, he takes us on a journey tracing nutrition through our past, present, and future.

In the first two chapters, he takes us to the past, showing what has happened to food over the past 100 years. He explains what exactly is wrong with the current typical American diet, and concludes with some tips on changing your kitchen so that it breaks out of this standard model. His model goes beyond just getting enough vegetables and vitamins, but rather motivates the reader to question all foods, avoid processed foods, and seek out powerful foods. He calls this "Nutritional Excellence". A kid who dutifully eats all of his food can grow up big and strong, whereas a kid who eats with "Nutritional Excellence" can grow up free from autoimmune illnesses, allergies, obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancer. He particularly tells a riveting tale of the insidious role of poor nutrition with attention-deficit disorders, and has a chilling diagram showing the cycle of recurring ear infections.

In the third chapter, he travels forward to the future. With standard nutrition, the picture is bleak. Here he reviews the epidemiologic links between diet and cancer. Many of us have seen this before, but what is new is his emphasis on how the cancer process of a 50 year-old, started at the age of 3. By the time the cancer is diagnosed, there has been years of damage built up. Of course, this does not warrant abandoning the good work that can be done to recover from cancer, but it does drive home the responsibility that we have to work with our children now, not after they turn 18.

The fourth chapter takes us into the present-day kitchen. The big task is how to bring Nutritional Excellence into your own home. Here, Dr. Fuhrman imparts his wisdom accumulated over years of practice. This chapter has some real gems on feeding infants, toddlers, school-age kids, and yes – even teenagers. A very entertaining section is “Reforming the Picky Eater”, as he stops just short of inviting the reader to drop their child off at his house for 2 weeks (a tempting thought to many parents). He is also careful to warn that battling with a child (or even a grown-up) is counter-productive. Instead, he offers his “5 Secrets on Getting Your Child to Eat Healthfully”. Finally, he concludes the chapter by breaking out of the silly “vegetarian” vs. “omnivore” battle. Here he gives a fabulous explanation about how such philosophical idealism is peripheral to the issue of good nutrition. Yes, everyone in the family now has permission to choose which kind of eater they want to be – vegetarian, omnivore, lacto-ovo, vegan. From a health standpoint, any one of those is fine, as long as you are carefully following the guidelines of “Nutritional Excellence”. He backs this up with research. Then he addresses the precautions that are particular to each type of diet, lest you get too self-confident about your choices.

The last chapter is the one everyone waits for: the recipes. The wait was well worth it. Don’t be surprised if you and your kids like Dr. Fuhrman’s healthy recipes better than the food you are eating now.

I truly enjoy reading the books by Dr. Fuhrman, because I learn something new each time. In my practice, I work with the same principles applying nutrition to health and disease. In fact, I have often been asked by the parents of my pediatric patients to write a book on feeding kids right. Dr. Fuhrman has done just this, better than I could. I particularly appreciate how he acknowledges that feeding children can be a very delicate balancing act, and the code word is “patience” – patience for the child to keep trying a food they dislike until they develop their new taste for it, and patience for the parents to wait for changes in health that can take six to twelve months to become apparent. This is the first book of its kind to come out in many years. I consider it an essential handbook for parents, teachers, and doctors.

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