



## Episode 30 Transcript

Dr. Yami Cazorla...: In our country, children are deriving 70%, seven zero, 70% of their calories from ultra-processed foods. So really if we could just get people to just eat a little more fruits and vegetables, we're going to be headed in the right direction.

Mary Purdy: Welcome to The Good Clean Nutrition Podcast. I'm your host, Mary Purdy, integrative dietician and nutrition educator. Today we are talking about child nutrition, from fostering a healthy relationship with food to creating good habits to plant-forward eating.

So I recently looked at kids' menus at about five different restaurants and what was on them. Chicken fingers, cheeseburger, pizza, grilled cheese, chicken taco, and of course mac and cheese. Not one menu had a plant-based protein on it. And for the most part, there was nothing that we might put in that category of really healthy supportive meals. And this is not to say that those foods are bad or that these are foods that, as some parents have told me, are the only things that my kids will eat. But I just need to ask why and how do we get here? Why are there so few plant-based options out there?

Why are meals in restaurants, and schools, and in commercials usually showcasing ultra-processed foods? And why do we sometimes assume that kids don't want plant-based minimally processed foods and or meals, and that they aren't as appealing, or yummy or healthy, especially when there are so many cultures that are eating a predominantly plant-based diet?

I remember seeing a patient whose kid was struggling with constipation. And the parents were trying to sneak beans into the smoothie at my suggestion which, side note, actually works really well. But why do we feel we have to sneak things into kids' diets? How can we help kids, and parents, and practitioners understand the many benefits and the yum factor of incorporating more plant-based proteins into kiddos diets for their health? And why would we would not love it?

So here to shed some light on these issues and offer some solutions and someone who might be almost as passionate or as passionate about beans as I am, Dr. Yami. We are joined by Dr. Yami Cazorla-Lancaster. Dr. Yami is a board certified pediatrician. Author of, *A Parent's Guide to Intuitive Eating: How to Raise Kids Who Love to Eat Healthy*, host of the Veggie Doctor Radio podcast and champion of plant-based nutrition for the prevention of chronic disease. She provides a fresh approach to feeding children, beginning at pregnancy and continuing through the teen years. And as a pediatrician, mother and health coach, Dr. Yami aims to reassure, support and guide parents by teaching the principles of intuitive eating for children.



Welcome, Dr. Yami.

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: It's such a pleasure to be here with you, Mary.

Mary Purdy: Yes, it sure is. It's great to see you. And I'm curious, I think people would love to know a little bit about you. As a pediatrician, what made you decide to make plant-based nutrition for kids a real focus in your professional practice?

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: Well, I grew up on the standard American diet. I'm a child of the '80s, so you know exactly what that's like, right?

Mary Purdy: Yeah.

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: I mean, microwave, burritos and sugary cereal basically were my staples growing up. But I became really interested in nutrition, mostly because I went through several decades of disordered eating and all of that. So that's why I wrote the book on intuitive eating.

But then I became a parent myself. And being a practicing pediatrician at that time, I realized how complicated nutrition was. We were just trying to give all these different recommendations and I was like, "I can barely follow this myself, much less my families who are working multiple jobs, maybe low education level, low socioeconomic status. This doesn't seem possible."

So I actually transitioned to a plant-based diet myself, mostly out of curiosity. But then once I tried it, I realized, wow, it just changed my life. I had had chronic constipation that I thought was genetic, which resolved speaking of constipation, after I transitioned to a plant-based diet. Both of my boys were also affected by constipation and theirs resolved as well.

And I started looking into the research about plant-based diets for children. And I realized that not only is it something that's possible and safe, but it's something that can help children thrive. And to me talking about eating more plants and incorporating more whole plant foods into the diet simplified everything. So now it was more about just talking about how do we just eat more foods that increase our intake of fiber and antioxidants in the just simplest form? Eat more whole foods. My push is not to make people vegan or completely plant-based. It's really to help children and their parents eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grain, beans, nuts and seeds. Because you know the reality of the situation.

In our country, children are deriving 70%, seven zero, 70% of their calories from ultra-processed foods. So really if we could just get people to just eat a little more fruits and vegetables, we're going to be headed in the right direction.



Mary Purdy: And the idea of keeping it simple, oh my gosh, that is just music to everyone's ears. People hear simple and they're like, "What? Something simple. Sign me up, sign me up, break it down. Keep it simple."

So you talked about kids, 70% of their calories are coming from ultra-processed foods. What kinds of chronic acute health issues, conditions are you seeing kids working with right now?

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: Well, constipation is one of the number one reasons that children come to the doctor's office. And of course, chronic abdominal pain, which is very limiting for children. So children sometimes when they get to the point where they're having daily, all day long abdominal pain, they're not wanting to do their activities, they're not wanting to play with their friends, they're having tummy pain when they're going to bed at night. So you just think of the life of a child. We want children to be free. We want them to be able to play and do their things, and not worry about their bodies hurting, and not behaving the way that they want to.

And then as far as some of the things that we see for adults, yeah, children are starting to get those, but fortunately kids are pretty resilient. So we may not see them when they're children. But believe me by the time I'm transitioning to the adult doctors around 21, 22, some people are starting to get hypertension, high cholesterol, and of course I see high cholesterol in children already. But it's not the majority of my patients because it's going to take a couple of decades before it really starts to set in. But that's very early still.

And so my focus is not on treating. I didn't come into pediatrics to treat hypertension and high cholesterol. My goal is to prevent and to help these children live long healthy lives with body confidence, with food confidence. I want them to just be able to play, and live, and hang out with their friends, and do their sports, and live their passions as long as possible, disease free.

Mary Purdy: Yeah, and I love that you bring the play into it. Because as adults, we don't often think of that though. We eat in order to blank, and kids really maybe perhaps eat in a way that supports the body so they don't have pain, so they can do the fun things that they love to do. That's such a wonderful incentive for kids and for parents to understand that connection. And you've got this nutrition philosophy, which I would love for you to share with our listeners.

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: This I developed because I wanted parents to have a framework. Because like we mentioned earlier, we tend to overcomplicate things and parents are super stressed out. I think that's one of the main reasons parents have a lot of difficulty feeding their children is because of the anxiety that they're doing



something wrong. Their child is not eating enough of something, they're going to be deficient in something, they just need to eat whatever. I don't care what they eat, they just need to eat. And so this leads parents to develop behaviors that actually backfire.

So I developed this to help guide. Of course, there's no absolutes and nothing is set in stone, but it helps guide parents. And the first principle is to honor hunger and satiety. That is so important.

Going back to the play issue when parents start seeing problems or thinking that there's problems with feeding children is around toddlerhood when children, their biggest drive in life is to play and explore. So they don't want to sit down and have luxurious five course meals with their parents. They just want to eat enough to satiate their hunger so that they can go back to the most important work, which is play. So, honoring hunger and satiety is very important. Parents need to learn to trust the child when the child has had enough. But also to trust the child when the child needs more, and to provide adequate food for those situations. But not get stressed out when a child may only have a bite or two. That might be normal at that stage of the child's development.

The second principle is going to be to emphasize whole plant foods. So fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds as much as possible. It doesn't have to be 100%. And then knowing that at each stage there's going to be different focuses. So when they're little babies we're mostly getting breast milk or formula, and then we're starting the complimentary foods. Toddlers, they're not going to eat big salads because that would leave them with too few calories. So we may need to incorporate some more moderately processed or more processed foods that are part of a healthy balanced diet. Taking some of those factors into account, but from the beginning, once we start feeding our children is to really emphasize those whole plant foods, diversity of flavors, especially those leafy greens, helping the child acquire the flavor of those kinds of things.

Another principle is going to be to follow the 80/20 rule, which means that 80% of the time, try to stick as wholesome as you can, knowing that life has the 20%. So once our kids start going to school, we go on vacation, travel, holiday season, celebrations, to be celebratory food, there's going to be blue cupcakes. There's going to be all kinds of things that some parents get stressed out about, but it's part of our society, it's part of our life. And knowing ahead of time that that's going to be part of the deal, I think helps relax parents as well, which is also one of the principles, is to relax and have fun.

Mary Purdy:

Yes.



Dr. Yami Cazorl...: To not take it so seriously and know that you're doing an excellent job and your kids love you, and just do the best you can. And then know that there's also going to be time for editing. Each season brings different challenges just like summer vacation can be hard because kids are asking for snacks all day. The school year can be hard because suddenly there's a birthday party every single day. There's different things that are going to challenge you, but just take a deep breath and do the best you can, and you're going to do great. I think I forgot one principle, but that sums up the majority of them.

Mary Purdy: That's great. Those are amazing principles I'm hearing, honor the hunger and satiety. I'm focused on whole foods, go for 80/20, relax, have a good time. And I think about my own childhood. I ate a lot of cotton candy, a lot of gummy bears. I ate a lot of, my goodness, fried dough, Oreos, Combos. I'm doing okay right now. So it allows for us to understand just because there are moments when you feel like, "Oh my gosh, kids are not eating well." If we go by that 80/20 rule, if most of the time they're doing okay, we're doing okay.

And what about the ways that kids are talked to about healthy foods from parents, from healthcare practitioners? What is your guidance around how to begin those conversations about food nutrition, why it's important?

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: That was the other principle actually. Thank you, Mary.

Mary Purdy: I read your mind.

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: Okay it's perfect. Which is to create a positive environment. So that's the tricky thing, is that we are not raising our kids by ourselves. They go to school, they watch TV, they're exposed to media. And unfortunately we have a society that's very focused on a particular body type and body size. We also have a society that has in some ways started to become healthist, almost like blame the individual if something bad happens to them health-wise. For some children that can cause a lot of anxiety, could potentially lead to eating disorders, things like that.

So what we want to do in our household is to make sure that our actions and our words are staying positive. So we're not talking about dieting because we don't fit into our bathing suit for summertime. Or we don't say, "Oh yeah, we don't eat hamburgers because that gives people heart attacks." Like having these black and white statements, or having these habits and behaviors that emphasize just a particular aesthetic or body size can be difficult for children. Because they don't have the ability to separate subtleties, or to really look inside themselves and understand, "Yeah, if I try to look a certain way that might lead me to develop disordered eating."



So we just have to be very careful about that in our household. And mostly by what we model, we're able to protect our children from those things. So the most important thing for parents to know is that being a role model is so important to their children. The studies show over and over and over again that children will role model what their parents are doing. I have parents that come in like, "Oh, I really want my kids to eat vegetables, yet they don't eat vegetables." I tell parents that the way that adults learn to like foods is the same way that kids learn to like foods is by consistent and repeated exposure.

So unfortunately if a parent still doesn't like vegetables, they have to do the hard work of eating more vegetables until they like them and role modeling that for the child. They have to walk the walk so that the child can see that. But also parents to check themselves if they're having disordered eating, eating disorder, body image issues to seek help, seek therapy, and try not to say those things out loud in front of their children. Don't have weight loss magazines lying around. Try to avoid advertisements that are fostering that image which can be difficult. But those are the ways that we can maintain a positive environment so that we can help a child and their brain absorb these healthy habits and behaviors rather than thinking of things as black and white.

Mary Purdy: Yeah, I'm so glad that you're talking in this way because it empowers parents and it also takes them off the hook. Creating these positive messages, these positive environments that also serve the health of the parent. And I'm curious, Dr. Yami, you are talking about talking to parents, the words of philosophy, the words of wisdom you are giving now feels very, very empowering to parents. We have healthcare practitioners as well who are listening in.

And as a healthcare practitioner, how do you, I'm curious, talk to kids. How do you have conversations with kids about their nutrition, their eating habits, the foods they like? How do you start those conversations?

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: Exactly the same way that I'm talking to you about now. I am very careful not to talk about body size or weight with children. That's very important to me, and I just don't think it's relevant to the conversation. Because there's children of all body types and sizes that could improve their diet as we know. So I talk about those things, especially when kids are in sports. That's an easy one because a lot of kids are in sports, they're passionate about their sports. So we talk about performance, we talk about recovery, feeling good while they're playing the sport, being able to play their sport longer, having more fun.

And I also help them understand that if they don't like vegetables now, it doesn't mean that there's something wrong with them. It doesn't necessarily have to last forever. Just keep



trying you will eventually like them. You just got to put the work in to keep trying.

And I tell stories about myself and learning to like certain foods. And so that way they know it's not like, "Just eat your vegetables. It's going to taste horrible for the rest of your life." It's more like, "No, it'll eventually get better. You just have to put the work into it." And try to just get down on their level to have those discussions.

And I think most kids want to feel good. They want to feel good, and so they're interested in that. We don't talk about, "I'm trying to decrease your risk of diabetes, or heart disease, or Alzheimer's." I don't talk that way because that's meaningless to a child, but also it can really scare them. It's more about the here and now. How can you feel good now? And how can you do the things you love for a long time? I think they identify with that as well.

Mary Purdy: Yes, feeling good, doing the things you love, tapping into their passion.

I'm Mary Purdy and you're listening to The Good Clean Nutrition Podcast. We're on with Dr. Yami Cazorla-Lancaster, discussing feeding children.

Next, we're going to dive into plant-based nutrition for kids and how to establish a healthy eating pattern there. But first, a word from the sponsor of this podcast.

Speaker 3: Thanks, Mary.

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Now back to you, Mary.

Mary Purdy: Now let's get back to our conversation with Dr. Yami.

So Dr. Yami, we've been talking a lot about health issues with kids establishing just general healthy eating patterns as it relates to relationship to food. I want to dive into some of the brass tacks as we say sometimes about plant-based eating. How does a family get started, let's say, with incorporating more of plant-based proteins and plants in general into the diet, especially if they don't have a lot to begin with?



Dr. Yami Cazorl...: Well, I think one of the easiest ways is to take the meals you already love and start swapping out some of the animal products for plants. So an easy example would be if you like to have a pasta night where you make your pasta with red sauce and it has ground beef in it, you can switch that out for lentils or even a store bought plant-based protein if you want to start there. Because those are so similar now that a lot of people can't tell the difference. Even if you feel like you can't go all the way, just do 50%. So instead of doing the full pound of ground beef, do just half a pound and put in some cooked lentils for the rest of it. Start swapping that out and you're going to start adding more fiber, more antioxidants, and just great things for your gut microbiome to feed on. And then just take it little by little.

Another way that I find has been very approachable for families, because now I think families are starting to learn more about dairy, and some of the non-benefits of dairy might I say, there's a lot that I find in my practice, is to just switch out their milk for a plant-based milk. And start to use that in their cereal, and in their smoothies, and in their cooking. So that's an easy one too, where people can start. Or just start with one meal at a time. Say, "We're just going to have plant-based breakfast for a week." See how that goes, and maybe add a lunch. Really, it doesn't have to be all or nothing. That's something that's really important for me to convey to parents is I don't want them to feel like, "Oh my gosh, this has to be this huge overhaul, overwhelming change." Just start little by little, get used to that, and then go to the next level and add more.

And just find ways that, "How can I replace the animal products that I'm using with more plants that is going to substantially increase my fiber and antioxidants?" And it's probably going to make you feel better too.

Mary Purdy: So that idea of replacing. And also what I'm hearing which I have found worked in my practice as well, is to keep the food the same, the flavors the same, and just to swap. So it's not a completely foreign body of something that's landed on someone's plate. It's familiar. You understand it's spaghetti or it's lasagna except it just has little something different in there.

I understand, Dr. Yami, because I know you a little bit that you have passion for beans and I think we need to talk about it. Because I do not understand why there are not more beans in the world in general being consumed, and lauded and praised, and marketed. So how do people who feel like, "Beans, what the heck do I do? They have no flavor." How do we get more beans into people's diets?

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: And I think it's just our culture because there's other cultures around the world that eat tons of beans we just aren't familiar with. It's just sheer familiarity. That's the issue. People just... And when you don't know how to do something,





you're just not going to do it at all. And so I think part of it is just being educated that beans are good for us, so that's good.

And then knowing that actually nothing bad's going to happen. You can experiment with beans and they're very inexpensive. They're relatively inexpensive, so it's okay if your experiment goes wrong. But that they're really delicious and there are so many different ways that you can use them, and they're so versatile. But just like animal products, just like meat, you have to season it. People don't just eat it without any season. Beans are the same. Tofu is another one that people are really afraid of because they don't know what to do with it. They try to eat it plain. They're like, "Oh, that's disgusting." Well, you don't eat it plain. You season it.

And so beans are the same way. Make sure that they're well cooked, season them, put them into dishes you already know and love, and you're going to start to grow to love them.

Another caution that I have for people, because there are people that never eat beans at all, like zero bean consumption, and then they get really excited about beans. And then they try to eat a lot of beans and they don't feel very good. And that's because it takes just a little bit for your gut microbiome to adapt to all of that fiber and resistant starch. So if that happens to you, pull back and then ramp up slowly because you have to let your gut bugs adapt. They have to form colonies to help you break down all that resistant starch, which is actually very health-promoting. But it might take a little time for you. So just know that it doesn't mean that you're allergic to beans or anything like that, it just means that your gut's not used to it.

Mary Purdy: Yeah, I've tended to recommend start with a quarter cup. That is something that people can actually digest is a quarter cup of beans, and that's just three and a half grams of fiber ish. Something around those lines.

So I think the other question that I get a lot, and I'm sure you get a lot, which is, "If I put my kid on a plant-based protein, are they going to get the nutrients that they need from a protein perspective, from a calcium perspective, from an iron perspective?" How do you help parents, and kids, and maybe even adolescents since you work with them, navigate eating more plant-based foods in a way that really supports their health and where they get everything they need?

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: I think in general if you're just a typically developing kid who does an average amount of activity, I'm not really concerned. They don't need to count anything. I just want to make sure that they are getting a variety of sources. Now if it's a child that recently declared, "I'm going vegan," for ethical environmental reasons, and they're just eating Lay's potato chips and Diet Coke, obviously



that's not going to be health promoting. So I just want to make sure that they are eating their beans and their nuts and seeds in addition to the fruits and the veggies, and of course, whole grains as well. And just making sure that they're getting access to adequate calories and not being undernourished calorically, which can happen if a child by themselves makes a decision to transition and isn't aware of. They have to make sure that they're getting from variety of sources.

But for families in general as long as they're including those beans, those whole grains, those nuts and seeds in addition to the fruits and vegetables throughout the day, and the child is eating enough to support their hunger and satiety, I'm not concerned about protein. I'm not concerned about iron, I'm not concerned about calcium really, and especially if they're eating or consuming fortified sources of calcium such as plant milks and calcium-set tofu and those kinds of things.

There are a couple of nutrients that I do talk about for exclusively plant-based eaters but also people living in certain parts of the country. And that's going to be vitamin B12 and vitamin D. So those are some that probably should be supplemented in all people that are exclusively plant-based. And then also some people that may not even be exclusively plant-based but live in certain parts of the country and have certain lifestyles. So there are certain things that we do need to think about as far as supplementation. But the majority of things that people worry about, which is protein, I'm not concerned about.

Mary Purdy: Yeah, it really is about variety. As you mentioned, as long as people are getting this huge variety of different foods, plants that's including vegetables, fruits, as you mentioned, your classic mantra, which is more grains, nuts, seeds, beans, all of that can really add up to a sufficient amount of protein. And then you're talking about supplements, maybe vitamin D, B12 as being important to add in depending on the person.

Are there any other supplements or any other guidelines that you might give beyond food for somebody who is incorporating more plants into their diet as a mainstay?

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: Yeah, the only other one that we still don't really have any good guidelines on is going to be omega-3. So I tend to recommend omega-3 for all of my patients actually, even if they're not fully plant-based, just because the majority of little kiddos aren't eating salmon, or anchovy, or sardines two to three times a week. So that's another one.

And then I would say we have to also be mindful of special populations. And there are going to be some children that are high achieving athletes and they're getting ready to play college sports. They're exercising a lot, and they're using up a lot of calories. And some



of those children may not have time or the ability to consume large quantities of food. And so when that happens, they may actually start to lose weight, their performance may go down. And so in those cases, we may want to be thinking about using protein powders or making some smoothie that is high in calorie density, and we can put more things into so that they can have a smaller volume of food that's more powerful for all of the sports that they're doing.

But these are case by case situations, depending on the lifestyle of the child and what they're involved in. And of course, there's children that may have extreme food allergies, so they may not be able to have nuts or seeds or certain beans. And so we just need to be a little bit more careful about how these children consume their calories. So always we've got to be thinking about that. We have to individualize the approach as well.

Mary Purdy: And that's why it's so great to work with a practitioner like yourself, or somebody else who's a dietician, or a nutritionist, or some healthcare provider who can really tailor those recommendations to make sure that they are appropriate for that person.

So what are some of your favorite foods and food tips, and ways to get kids into the process of cooking or the process of shopping? What are some tidbits that you have for us?

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: Well, it's really helpful to get your child involved from the beginning since they're really little, in helping you cook, helping you pick. I have to say, I understand that you don't want to take your kids to the grocery store because I definitely went through that phase. So once you feel like you can handle it, or maybe just take one child at a time that you can manage at the grocery store and have them help you in the produce section, picking out the food, and or pick out a new fruit that they've never tasted, or a new vegetable that they've never seen before.

You can garden at home. Even just doing window sill gardening or watching your little green onions grow from the little roots and growing microgreens, those are all fascinating for children and they start to feel that connection with food. But most importantly, studies show that when we do that, they actually eat more fruits and vegetables. So that's our ulterior motive.

Of course, from toddlerhood, they can help with the cooking, even though of course, yes, it's going to take longer and it's probably going to make more mess, but it's totally worth it to have the children exposed. And you'll see that dinnertime goes easier. They're more curious, they're more willing to taste things, and it's just really fun.



And then as far as favorite foods, if we're going to talk about beans, my favorite is the chickpea. It's so cute. I actually have a little chickpea back here, my little cute chickpeas.

Mary Purdy: Oh my goodness.

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: I use it in everything. And have you used the Ninja CREAMi yet? Have you familiarized yourself?

Mary Purdy: No, talk to me.

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: So it makes ice cream at home.

Mary Purdy: Ooh.

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: And it's really cool because everybody loves ice cream. Ice cream and pizza are America's top favorite foods. I was thinking about this the other day. It's like we eat more pizza and ice cream than anywhere.

And this machine is able to take your ingredients and make it into this delicious ice cream. But I just made a base last night that had chickpeas, and had soy milk, and dates, and banana, and cocoa powder. Because my younger son, he is a chocolate guy. And the consistency and the flavor, everything was just right on par. So you can eat what you love, but still be able to put those plants in there. And beans are so versatile. Actually, chickpea ice cream is my very favorite ice cream. There is a company that they make chickpea ice cream. It's so amazing and delicious. So just do not underestimate beans.

Mary Purdy: I am so excited about that chickpea ice cream because I am freezing bananas in my refrigerator right now to make banana ice cream. And I am all over the chickpeas. I actually have some leftover chickpeas. Yes, and there's a cookbook called The Chickpea Revolution. I feel like chickpeas might just change the world in terms of providing health benefits, and environmental benefits, and so much to love about these little gems of the earth.

So Dr. Yami, I am sure there are folks out there who are listening who would love to learn more about you, what you do, how they can find you. Where can listeners go to get more of your wisdom and joy?

Dr. Yami Cazorl...: Well on social media, you can find me @thedoctoryami. I'm primarily on Instagram, but also on Facebook. And then my website is dryami.com, spelled out D-O-C-T-O-R-Y-A-M-I.com. And then my podcast is Veggie Doctor Radio. So I do release weekly podcasts about all lifestyle medicine stuff, a lot of plant-based nutrition, but also other ways to help us live long healthy lives and be bursting with wellbeing. So that's primarily what I spend my time talking about. So those are the places that you can find me.



And then you already mentioned my book, which is available at all major booksellers online. Lots of families have requested it through their library. That would be fantastic if you do that so that the library can share it with lots of people. And yeah, that's where I share all my stuff.

Mary Purdy: Well, Dr. Yami, you are bursting with wellbeing, and I imagine after this episode there will be many kids, parents and practitioners also bursting with wellbeing. That's a great quote.

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