

Teaching Your Child Diet Management

Start early explaining the diet to your child as “special” or “just for you.” Teach her from the beginning to ask about unfamiliar foods before eating them, and to recognize which foods are acceptable and which are not. Children with PKU need to understand that it’s okay to say no when someone offers them an unacceptable food.



As your child grows older, and is able to understand the concept, explain PKU. Help her understand the importance of always eating her special diet, and the consequences of “cheating.” Also, make sure she knows it is nobody’s fault, and that she has done nothing wrong to “deserve” getting PKU.

Let your young child make her own choices about what kind of food to eat to fulfill a nutrient need. Plan meals that have a lot of variety to make eating interesting. Involve your child in planning meals and shopping to familiarize her with what foods are permitted. Also teach proper food portions so your child gets appropriate amounts of Phe when serving herself.

The Role of Siblings in Diet Management

Mealtime is an important part of any child’s social development. Younger children learn how to feed themselves by watching those around them. Other children in the family, as well as the child with PKU, should learn about the diet as soon as they are old enough to understand. Older siblings should be encouraged to feed the child with PKU so they become familiar with what foods are acceptable for their sibling to eat. They need to understand the importance of the diet for the baby’s health and learn to not feel sorry for her. Siblings should be involved in making the low-Phe diet acceptable for the child with PKU, so that she doesn’t feel left out.



Support for Others Who Care for Your Child

As your child grows, there will be many people who take part in his care including relatives, friends, neighbors, teachers, day-care providers, and baby-sitters. Explain PKU to everyone who will care for your child. They should become familiar with what foods are acceptable and understand the importance of the diet. Give a food list to each person who will be feeding your child, as well as the exact menu you have planned and explain it to them. Show them how to measure and record what the child eats. Make sure to emphasize that the child is not to have even “a little taste” of prohibited foods, and what can happen if your child doesn’t remain on the diet.

