

## Special diets may deprive children of essential nutrients

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Carla Kemp, Senior Editor

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**Editor's note:** *The 2019 AAP National Conference & Exhibition will take place from Oct. 25-29 in New Orleans.*

Gluten-free. Ketogenic. Vegan. Parents are trying all sorts of diets to ease what ails their children and keep them healthy and strong.

But some of these diets may be putting children at nutritional risk.

“The problem is there is so much information on the internet. Parents may go down the wrong path,” said Diane L. Barsky, M.D., FAAP, attending physician in the Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and associate professor of clinical pediatrics, Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.

As a result, parents may not realize they are depriving their children of essential nutrients.

Dr. Barsky aims to bolster pediatricians' nutrition know-how during a session titled “Special Diets and Supplements: Are They Safe for Children?” from 2-3:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 28 (I4150) and again from 8:30-10 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 29 (I5041) in room 294 of the convention center. She will be joined by Maria R. Mascarenhas, M.B.B.S., section chief of nutrition in the Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition at CHOP.

Attendees are encouraged to bring cases from their practices to prompt discussions of how specialized diets can put children at risk. Cases might include parents who are using gluten-free diets for children who don't have celiac disease or are trying elimination diets for gastrointestinal symptoms.

Dr. Barsky, for example, recently saw a toddler who had just been treated for a brain tumor and was immunocompromised, and the mom was giving the child unpasteurized milk.

Vegan diets are another source of concern due to questions about whether children are getting enough protein. Drs. Barsky and Mascarenhas will explain how to calculate protein needs of children of various ages.

They also will touch on how to determine whether a child needs a vitamin supplement. “Not all children needs vitamins,” said Dr. Barsky, a member of the AAP Section on Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition and the Section on Integrative Medicine.

Since pediatricians often are strapped for time, Drs. Barsky and Mascarenhas will provide resources where pediatricians can quickly find reliable information to give families.

“Nutrition is really something that comes up every day in a pediatrician's practice,” Dr. Barsky said, “whether it's looking into why a child isn't gaining weight or why they are gaining too much, and then exploring if a child is on some alternative or specialized diet.”

*For more coverage of the 2019 AAP National Conference & Exhibition, visit*

<http://bit.ly/AAPNationalConference19>.

