Busy Parents Look for Fast (Healthy) Food

By ACSH Staff — April 11, 2006

An April 11, 2006 article [1] by Melissa Rayworth about parents seeking quicker, easier meals for kids notes the organic trend and an ACSH dissent:

"We certainly have seen an increase in the number of convenience products that appeal to families," says Amy Schaefer, a Texas-based spokeswoman for Whole Foods. New parents, Schaefer says, often choose organic processed foods.

But according to Ruth Kava, director of nutrition for the American Council on Science and Health in New York, there's little research to suggest they are healthier. "I'm not a big fan of organic foods," says Kava. "As far as pesticides go, the amounts that are on conventional foods are so tiny that honestly I don't know that it makes a difference."

So what should time-starved parents put in their grocery carts?

--Frozen, canned, and prepared vegetables and fruits:

Bagged salad, peeled baby carrots and pre-sliced apples are all good options, according to Kava: "The important thing is to get the child used to eating these things and not to expect them to love everything the first time."

Canned vegetables, which may go from the field to the processing factory within hours, may offer more nutrients than fresh vegetables left sitting on store shelves for more than a week. But all cans are not created equal: Make fruit salad from refrigerated grapefruit sections and other pre-sliced fruits, Kava says, rather than buying canned fruit salad packed in syrup...

Still, parents shouldn't feel guilty about allowing selected processed foods into their children's diets.

"It's really more a matter of the whole diet," says Kava. "While I wouldn't want to feed a child macaroni and cheese every night, once in a while that's not a problem."