This Week In Medicine

Energy bars, combined with normal diet, may harm a child's health

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ST. LOUIS (MD Consult) - Energy bars aren't the right choice for children, according to "Energy Bars, Rated 'R'" in the February issue of *Working Mother.*

Mothers see nutrition and energy bars as healthy, convenient snacks. Children view them as cool, chewy fuel. But along with the nutrients comes an adult kick. Many energy bars contain hefty portions of nutrients that, when regularly combined with a normal diet, may harm a child's health and ruin his appetite, according to Debby Demory-Luce, a dietitian with the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

A Zone Perfect chocolate peanut butter bar, for instance, contains about 30 milligrams of vitamin E, or four times the recommended dietary allowance (RDA) for children 8 and younger. Eating plenty of vitamin E-rich foods (such as whole grains) isn't a problem, but taking large doses as a supplement might be, Demory-Luce said. Excessive amounts may lead to nosebleeds.

Other bars, such as Luna S'Mores, contain a full adult RDA of vitamin C. This amount — triple the RDA for children 8 and younger — can cause diarrhea and cramping.

"Kids get their energy from food," Demory-Luce said. "They don't need energy bars."

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