



# THIS MAMA COOKS! ON A DIET

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## An interview with Dr. Susan Mitchell, Target's Nutrition Expert

Dr. Susan Mitchell is an advocate of nutrition education and believes in integrating nutrition and exercise into busy lifestyles to achieve better health, increased energy and creativity. As a self-proclaimed chocoholic, she believes that realistic amounts of almost any food can be part of a healthy diet, too. She also has a [fantastic blog](#) where she writes about everything from weight loss to gluten free diets to greening your kitchen.



She's now bringing her industry expertise and fun, informative philosophy to Target in her role as their health and nutrition expert, which is how I got the opportunity to interview her.

### How to get your family to eat healthy both at home, at school and on the go



*This Mama Cooks!:* A lot of people complain that healthy food is expensive and that it's cheaper to buy a burger off the dollar menu than to make your kids a healthy sandwich with whole grain bread and lean meat. What's do you say to that?

Dr. Mitchell: It's a little more than simply comparing apples to apples. It's a trade of time and low cost for a refined white bun, higher fat (and more saturated fat) meat, fillers and additives plus a higher salt/sodium content. On extremely stressful days, this option can be the easier route and an occasional treat for kids. On a regular basis, it makes for a nutritionally bankrupt

diet. The good news is that most fast food restaurants now have apple slices to substitute for French fries, chocolate or white low fat milk for sodas.

*This Mama Cooks! : Getting kids to eat a healthy but quick breakfast each morning is a struggle. I can barely get them to brush their hair? Do you have any tips on quick meals (to prepare and to eat) that pack a nutritional wallop?*

Dr. Mitchell: Breakfast can be a challenge to get children to eat, healthy or not, so the younger you begin the breakfast routine, the better. Breakfast doesn't have to be a huge production. It can be as simple as yogurt or soy yogurt with added chopped fresh fruit and/or granola such as Archer Farms blueberry granola. Lower sugar, higher fiber cereal with fruit and fat free/low fat milk or soy milk. Whole grain English muffins with peanut butter or low fat cream cheese topped with raisins, microwave scrambled eggs rolled in a whole grain tortilla (with salsa if desired), or an under-5-minute-smoothie are all easy yet very healthful ideas. Even grapes and cereal tossed in a plastic bag or container work...to eat as you go.

My publicist, Terri, says she leads by example. Her young daughter likes hard boiled eggs because she sees Terri eat them. She also doesn't buy foods high in sugar so her kids have never been used to them.

### Simple PB&J Smoothie Recipe

- 1 cup apple juice
- 2 T. peanut butter
- ½ cup strawberries (frozen are fine)
- 1 banana
- 1 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt
- ice

Blend all together and serve.

Breakfast doesn't have to be traditional foods either. Left over cold veggie pizza is often a kid favorite. Add cut up fruit and it's very simple. Pre-sliced fruit is also available if time is really an issue. A fun idea is to buy fresh pizza dough and have kids make their own pizza...you provide the sauce, cheese, and the healthy toppings. The leftovers are great for breakfast.

*This Mama Cooks! : While I put healthy food into the kids' lunches, I often find it untouched while the pudding and snack bars are gobbled up. Do you have any suggestions for healthy school lunches?*

Dr. Mitchell: Most kids go for the goodies first. They also get bored from the same ole, same



ole... Changing lunch up a bit from the traditional sandwich helps too. I like to include 4 items: fruit in season, cut veggies with a small container of dip, string cheese or yogurt or a sandwich, muffin such as pumpkin or blueberry or whole wheat pita bread if no sandwich.



Wraps are always a hit. These can be made ahead of time and cut into pieces. Include various lean meats or low fat cheese with lettuce and slice green/red peppers. Spread on a little mustard, low fat mayo or salsa...whatever your child likes.

Also wrap lean ham or turkey around a slice of granny smith apple for a change and stick a toothpick in it. Put peanut butter in a celery stick. Dip has a 'cool' factor and kids love to dip so send small containers of low fat ranch, hummus or honey mustard dressing along with cucumber slices, baby carrots or snap peas.

Keep in mind the color of the items you are packing, we all eat with our eyes so try to make the lunch eye-catching.

My friend Petra who has children ages 6 and 3, sets the tone by sending only healthy food for lunch and then has a treat ready when she picks them up from school or when they get home.

*This Mama Cooks! : My family is on the go a lot. What are some quick, but convenient foods to keep in the house so I can throw them into an insulated bag before running out the door?*

Dr. Mitchell: One trick I use when I work with motorcycle cops is to have them keep five or six baskets in their pantry and refill them every weekend with healthy snacks. This includes healthy snack bars, boxes of raisins, packets of dried fruit or nuts, trail mix, baked chips, 100% fruit bars, etc.

Also include grapes, string cheese, mini cheese, or snack bags you premix with items such as nuts, raisins, whole grain goldfish, dried fruits such as cranberries or blueberries and even small chunks of chocolate or a few mini M&Ms. Or try the Archer Farms blueberry nut blend.



*This Mama Cooks! : We all have those days as parents when we run out of time and can't put a healthy meal on the table, let alone get to the grocery store to buy food. What are some tips to getting kids to eat healthy when you eat outside the home?*



Dr. Mitchell: Kids will always see how far they can push you so it's smart to set some ground rules before you go such as...everyone eats a salad first (a regular adult salad will provide a nice portion for several children) and then their entrée. Or, choose a salad or soup (tomato or broth based)

first. The children's menu typically contains a high amount of fat so try to choose from the adult menu and split portions. If eating out is an infrequent treat, allow them to choose from the kid's menu but have them eat their salad first.

Many restaurants offer several healthy options. Let children choose...they like the power of choice and to make their salad their own. Chick-fil-A has healthy options and even Taco Bell now has their new fresco menu with less fat. When parents lead by example and guide their children yet give them some freedom for choice, healthy habits grow.

### More from Dr. Mitchell

You can listen to Dr. Mitchell's [podcast](#) on WDBO.com, her radio segments on Orlando's AM580 WDBO News-Talk radio or read [her blog](#). Dr. Mitchell is also a co-author of three books: [Fat Is Not Your Fate: Outsmart Your Genes and Lose the Weight Forever](#) and [Eat to Stay Young: The Anti-Aging Program](#).

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