Podcast: Imagine This

Episode: Why do we need food?

Duration: 8’45

Bri: Hello. My name's Bri and on Imagine This today, we're going to be finding out about something that we all need to do every day. And if we don't do it, our tummies can make this sound.

[Drums rattle]

Kids: Rumble, rumble, rumble.

Argh.

Bri: I think our tummies want to tell us something. What do you think they want to say?

Kids: I'm thirsty.

It says I'm hungry!

I hungry. I hungry.

Bri: And if our tummies are letting us know that they're hungry, what do you think they want?

Kids: Food, like chicken and rice and fish fingers.

Bri: Yep. When our tummies rumble, our bodies want food. Today's question is about food and it comes from five-year-old Milo.

Milo: Why do we need food?

Bri: I wonder this too, Milo. Every day we need to stop what we're doing and eat food, but why?

Kids: Because otherwise our tummy will be starving!

So then, we can stay alive.

Bri: Ah, yes. We need to eat to live. So when your tummy tells you it's hungry, what food do you like to eat?

[Curious pizzicato strings]

Kids: I like corn.

Bri: Oh, why do you like corn?

Kids: Because it's crunchy and when I eat it goes crunch, crunch.

Cereal.

Bri: What does your cereal taste like?

Kids: It had its own taste. It tasted sweet.

Eggs.

Bri: Yum. Who makes your eggs for you?

Kids: My mama.

Bri: And how does she make them?

Kids: In a bowl.

Bri: Delicious. I know someone else who likes eggs. Dr. Amanda Divine is a food scientist from Edith Cowan University, and she knows all about how our bodies use food. Hi Amanda.

Amanda: Hello.

Bri: So did you have an egg today?

Amanda: I did. I had a poached egg on a slice of toast and I washed it down with a glass of water.

Bri: Yum. So what happens when we put food into our body?

[Playful pizzicato strings]

Amanda: Okay. So when you put food in your mouth, you use your teeth to crunch and chew the food into small pieces.

Kids: You crunch it like.

Bri: So you crunch it.

Kids: Crunch.

Bri: And you munch it.

Kids: Munch.

Bri: And you chew it.

Kids: Chew.

Chew.

Bri: And then what happens?

Kids: It gets smaller and smaller and it goes into your stomach.

Amanda: That's right. Once we swallow the ball of food, it moves into a tube that goes all the way from your mouth right the way through your body, to your bottom.

Bri: We have a tube that goes all the way from our mouth to our bottom?

Amanda: Yep.

Kids: Goes into our tummy, out of the bottom, into the toilet, poo down the way. That goes all the way to the sewers.

[Music stops abruptly]

Bri: But I thought our food went into our stomach?

Amanda: Yes. A part of that tube is a small pocket that we call the stomach.

Bri: What does our stomach do?

[Dramatic adventurous music]

Amanda: The stomach churns the food.

Kids: Gurgle.

Amanda: And the stomach mixes the food.

Kids: Banana.

Bread.

Carrots.

Broccoli.

French fries.

Amanda: And helps break down the food into smaller pieces.

Bri: So our stomach turns our food into mush.

Amanda: Yep.

Bri: So once our food is all mushed up, where does it go?

Amanda: Into the next part of the tube called the small intestine.

Kids: It goes into your little intestine then your big intestine.

Amanda: Yes.

Bri: How do you know that?

Kids: I have a body book.

Bri: Cool. So what happens in the little intestine?

Amanda: Because the food is so small at this point, the body can start to absorb it.

Bri: Our body can soak up our food?

Amanda: That's right.

Bri: So what's in our food that the body wants?

Amanda: Nutrients that have been released from the food and they can enter the bloodstream.

[Heartbeat]

Bri: Whoa. The nutrients from our food can go into our blood?

Amanda: Yes.

Bri: And our blood can help to move it around our body?

Amanda: Yes.

Bri: So how does our body use all the food?

Amanda: The cells like our muscle cells, our brain cells, our skin cells need energy to grow and repair themselves and do all the things you want them to do.

Bri: So the food that we eat goes to all of the cells that make up our body? [Magical chime]

Amanda: Absolutely. Food helps to recharge us so we can keep going and do all the things we like to do. Run, play, and think well.

Bri: Food even helps us think?

Amanda: Yep! Food even affects our brain.

Kids: Yeah and keeps your muscles strong and your heart beating.

Bri: So what kinds of things does food help you do?

[Playful sting]

Kids: Play trains.

I like racing.

Playing hide and seek.

Lifting heavy stuff off with my strong muscles.

Bri: And what body parts help you do them?

Kids: My legs. I can do it with my legs.

My hand.

Your legs and your foot.

My eyes.

Bri: So all the parts of our body need food. But what about the food that we don't use. Where does that go?

Amanda: If the food hasn't been digested and the body doesn't need it and can't absorb it, then this is our body's waste and we need to pass it out of our body. And that usually happens as poo in the toilet.

[Dramatic classical music]

Bri: And we know where it goes when we flush the toilet, right?

Kids: To the ocean.

To the ocean.

To the ocean.

Bri: So Milo, the reason you need food is because it keeps you alive. And every time you eat, your food starts in your mouth and travels through a long tube inside your body, where it gets broken down into tiny pieces called nutrients, that are so small they can even go into your blood. And all of the cells that are in your body, all of the parts that your body is made up of, use the food to help you grow, and move, and think, and keep you alive. And this whole process is called digestion.

Kids: Digestion.

Digestion.

Digestion.

Bri: Our body digests our food and our food becomes part of our body. So it's a good idea to try lots of different types of food, so our body gets everything it needs. Even if it's a new food that you haven't tried before.

Amanda: Try it, you might like it!

Bri: And instead of your tummy saying, I'm hungry, your tummy might say something else...

Kids: This is delicious.

Yum, yum.

Oh, that is so very good.

[Music concludes]

Bri: Imagine This is produced by me, Brianna Peterson, and is a co-production between the Conversation and ABC Kids Listen. Additional sound and mastering for this episode is by Bryce Halliday. To hear more episodes of Imagine This, plus a range of stories and music for young children, download the ABC Kids Listen app.