

Tips for Getting Kids to Eat More Fruits and Vegetables

The following tips offer a number of tried and true techniques for getting kids to eat more fruits and vegetables.

Trying is believing.

There are so many great tasting fruits and vegetables, and kids realize this when they get to try ones they've never tasted before. Sometimes a child will love a new fruit or vegetable the first time he tries it. Other times, it may take two, three or even ten tries before a child gets used to the taste of a new item. Ask kids to try one bite. If they don't like it, that's fine. Allowing them to stop at one bite makes trying new foods less scary. If, after trying a new fruit or vegetable two or three times, your child still does not care for that food, move on to other new fruits and vegetables. Forcing a child to eat something he truly does not like will only create a bad association with that food. However, it's important to keep offering new fruits and vegetables. Despite repeated refusals, a child may suddenly decide to try a new food.

Seeing is believing.

Children learn many of their behaviors by watching what older siblings and grown-ups do. Modeling healthful eating habits is a great way to make sure your kids develop healthful eating habits. When it comes to eating fruits and vegetables, the actions of older family members will definitely influence how kids react to fruits and vegetables. So watch what you say and do, kids are watching and quickly will mimic your actions and words. The next time the tossed salad is passed to you, take a large helping and say, "I love salad!" Soon the kids around you will be eagerly eating it and saying they love it, too.

Offer choices.

When it comes to serving fruits and vegetables, offering kids two to three fruit or vegetable choices is a smart idea. Choosing between orange juice and pineapple juice for breakfast lets kids make decisions and exercise power. Likewise, choosing between baby carrots or celery sticks for lunch lets kids know their opinions matter. Also, asking kids to pick the fruits and vegetables for a meal allows them choose their favorites or suggest new ones to try.

Make it easy.

When kids come racing home hungry for a snack, chances are they'll grab the most convenient item. Make fruits and vegetables convenient by placing them in spots where kids will see them first. Fill a large basket or bowl with fresh fruit and place it on the kitchen counter or table. Put bottles or boxes of 100% fruit juice on lower shelves where kids will see them when they open the fridge looking for a cool drink. Have "grab and go snacks" in small plastic bags (cut up raw vegetables, peeled and segmented oranges, seedless grapes, etc.) ready and waiting in your refrigerator.

Make it fun.

Capturing the imagination of kids can make eating fruits and vegetables more exciting. Present young kids with cut up fruits and vegetables, and then let them create funny faces or animals. While creating their masterpiece, they're likely to snack on the tasty building blocks. Mashed potatoes and broccoli florets can become "Trees in a Broccoli Forest" and a fun way to let kids use their imagination while preparing and eating something healthful.