

# Getting Kids to Eat Vegetables and Fruits

**H**ow do you get kids to eat more fruits and vegetables, especially when they may only want to eat doughnuts and french fries and you are not supposed to force kids to 'clean their plate' or make meals a power struggle?

One trick that often works for both fruits and vegetables is to find foods that your kids already like to eat, like smoothies, muffins, yogurt, etc., and find recipes that allow you to add fruits or vegetables to them, like banana or zucchini muffins.

Remember that fruit snacks, even those made with 'real' fruit, fruit drinks and other snacks with artificial fruit don't count as a serving of fruit.

Other helpful tips might be to:

- let your kids pick the fruits they want to eat when you go shopping
- mix fruit pieces in with yogurt, cottage cheese or serve them with a dip
- make fruit smoothies
- offer a fruit salad, with a mix of watermelon, grapes, strawberries, etc. as a dessert or snack
- make a snack mix with raisins, nuts and cereal
- add chopped fruit, especially berries and bananas, to your child's cereal
- try dried fruits

Creative ways to get your kids to eat more vegetables can include camouflaging them in with other foods, like chopping up and mixing vegetables in with pasta sauces, lasagna, casseroles, soup, chili, omelets, etc. or adding veggie toppings to pizza. You can even find recipes for things like banana raisin pancakes, carrot beef meatballs or zucchini cookies that your kids might enjoy.

It might also help to:

- offer chopped veggies with a dip, like ranch dressing
- serve vegetables as a stir-fry
- let your child help prepare the meal
- start a vegetable garden at home so your kids can eat the vegetables they grow or visit a farm or farmer's market.

Getting kids to eat well, and especially eat fruits and vegetables is a challenge for many parents. To help prevent your child from becoming a picky eater, it is a good idea to:

- start early by offering a large variety of foods to your toddler
- make mealtimes fun and don't try to force your kids to eat things they don't want
- look for creative ways to offer your kids fruits and vegetables

It can also help to learn about the serving sizes of fruits and vegetables so that your expectations aren't too high. For toddlers, a serving of vegetables may be as small as a tablespoon per year of age and a 1/2 piece of fresh fruit. Older kids should eat 1 whole fruit, 1/2 cup of cooked vegetables or 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables or salad greens to count as a serving.