

Encouraging Kids to Eat Healthy Foods ~ Tips for Parents

Child raising is challenging, especially when it comes to teaching children to eat healthy foods! Look at all the advertisement and media attention given to feeding kids! Add in your busy life, and meal time can become, at times, a difficult chore. These ideas will help make feeding the whole family easier!

Consider this:

Parents are responsible for deciding what, where and when to have meals.

Children are responsible for deciding to eat or not eat, and how much to eat.*

It's a challenge to do this, but many studies have shown that when children are provided with a variety of healthy food choices, and allowed to decide what to eat, that children eat a balanced diet...over a few days. Here are some thoughts and easy ideas to help you on this journey!



- 👍 Offer meals and snacks at regular times. Kids have tiny tummies and cannot go more than about 2 hours between meals and snacks.
- 👍 Avoid grazing. If children eat or drink juice all the time, they will not be hungry for meals.
- 👍 Involve children in menu planning and meal preparation. Children of all ages need to feel in control of their eating! Doesn't everybody?
- 👍 Cooking and food preparation is fun and a time of learning, such as talking about food shapes, colors, and textures
- 👍 If you child won't eat vegetables, they most likely will eat fruit. Fruits and vegetables have very similar nutrients!
- 👍 The way food looks is very important to young children. Broccoli "trees" are fun to eat, and look cool, too.
- 👍 Your children need you to be good food role models! When they see you enjoying healthy foods, that is a powerful positive message...even if kids may not eat what you are eating today.
- 👍 Tastes change, keep offering all foods, but don't put pressure on kids to eat! It may take 10 to 15 exposures for a child to accept a new food.
- 👍 Lots of children don't like foods mixed together. Yet they love to dip! Instead of chicken and veggie in a casserole, serve plain with a dip our sauce on the side!



*Adapted from Ellyn Satter's *Nutrition and Feeding for Infants and Children*