

Top Ten Ways to Get Kids to Eat Vegetables

- 1. Set an Example:** If vegetables and healthy foods are relegated to an afterthought in your household, it's tough to expect your kids to take to them. Kids eat what they know, and they won't ask for a special meal if they do not know it is an option.
- 2. Reward Good Behavior:** On the other side of the coin, creating positive food experiences can decrease picky eating tendencies. Research has shown that rewarding a child for trying one bite of a rejected food with things like stickers makes it easier for them to try the food.
- 3. Make Food Fun:** Kids love to play make believe. Broccoli can be intimidating to a kid hoping for macaroni and cheese. But if he is a

dinosaur who needs to eat five miniature trees in order to outrun a tyrannosaurus rex, suddenly those florets are a lot more interesting.

Relating healthy food to fun things the child already loves and turning it into a game is a great way to get a few bites of greens down the hatch.

4. **Offer Diverse Food Colors:** One thing you have working in your favor is that children like colorful foods. You can expose them to more colors by adding more vegetables to their plates. While adults tend to like flavors mingled together, children often prefer them separate.

5. **Arrange Food Patterns on the Plate:** Another reason to cook different vegetables separately is that children love when their food is designed into patterns

on their plate. Unlike adults, who prefer foods clumped near each other in the center of the plate, kids like their food separated into piles around the perimeter. If you shape it into a heart or smiley face, they'll like it even more.

6. Make a Schedule: Children need to eat every three to four hours: three meals, two snacks, and lots of fluids. If you plan for these, your child's diet will be much more balanced and he'll be less cranky, because he won't be famished. Try putting a cooler in the car when you are out with the kids and keep it stocked with carrots, pretzels, yogurt, and water so you don't have to rely on fast food.

7. Make Mornings Count: Most families don't eat enough fiber on a daily basis, and

breakfast is an easy place to sneak it in. Look for high-fiber cereals for a quick fix.

8. **Sprinkle Some Sugar:** Some kids might try carrots with a bit of brown sugar or try to sprinkle a little bit of sugar on their fruit. They will eventually outgrow this need for extra sweetness, but in the meantime, they're eating fruits and vegetables.
9. **Adjust Your Attitude:** Realize that what your kids eat over time is what matters. Having popcorn at the movies or eating an ice-cream sundae are some of life's real pleasures. As long as you balance these times with smart food choices and physical activity, your children will be fine.
10. **Allow Treats:** Having less healthy foods occasionally keeps them from becoming forbidden -- and thus even more appealing. Call candy, soda, and cookies

"sometimes" foods. Try to buy only healthy cereals such as Cheerios and Raisin Bran, but let the kids have sugary cereals every so often or on special occasions.