

5 Smart Ways to Raise Children Who Eat Their Veggies

Believe it or not, it is possible (even easy) to raise kids who enjoy eating a wide variety of vegetables. The secret is to never bribe or threaten them about eating green or orange things. Just follow as many of these simple steps as you can:

1. Enjoy a variety of vegetables yourself.

The most important thing that parents, grandparents, and other caregivers can do for children's eating is to model healthy habits. If you enjoy eating a wide variety of foods, including vegetables, children will see it as the normal thing to do. There's no need to make a big deal about your enjoyment, just make vegetables a tasty part of every meal.

2. Grow a small (or large) vegetable garden.

Savvy adults know that the taste of freshly picked vegetables can't be beat. Kids love to pick and eat almost anything that they have 'grown themselves.' Deliciously fresh vegetables can come from a container on the porch, a backyard plot, or your local community garden. **Bottom line: If they help you grow it, they will eat it.**

3. Cut vegetables up for meals and snacks.

Children usually prefer the taste and texture of raw vegetables over cooked ones. Make a small plate of bite-sized veggies (broccoli trees, baby carrots, celery sticks, cucumbers slices, sweet pepper pieces, or sugar snap pea pods) a standard offering at every meal. Add some low fat Ranch dip and kids will naturally get into a crunchy, healthy habit.

4. Serve bright, colorful vegetables.

Everyone eats with their eyes first. When vegetables are bright and colorful, they are naturally more appealing to children and adults alike. Overcooked, mushy veggies are likely to turn everyone off. When cooking vegetables, keep them brightly colored (and crunchy in texture) by steaming or microwaving for just a few minutes.

5. Be adventurous with vegetables.

When children see veggies as tasty and fun, they are much more likely to enjoy eating them. Buying new items, trying new recipes, and playing games are easy ways to make nutrition fun for children. Need ideas for making vegetables more adventurous in your kitchen? Visit www.foodchamps.org/ for recipes, games, coloring sheets, and more!