



MIDDLESEX COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

TIP SHEET

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Ten Ways to Get Kids to Eat Their Veggies

Everyone wants their kids to eat more vegetables, right? Here are 10 tried and tested ways to do it.



- 1. Convince yourself first.** Learn more about vegetables. Why do I want my kids to eat vegetables? How will it make their lives better? The short answer is that vegetables are really, really important for getting all the minerals and vitamins that you need and are often difficult to obtain elsewhere.
- 2. Get them while they are young.** Introduce vegetables and fruits early in your child's eating career. La Leche League recommends the following foods for introducing solids to babies; raw mashed banana, boiled or baked sweet potato, and raw mashed avocado. Also put all the vegetables that you serve on their plate. Do not force your kids to eat the vegetables. Slowly you will see those vegetables find their way into your children's mouths, and they "just" might like them.
- 3. Grow your own,** or make friends with someone who does grow their own. In the absence of those choices, go to a pick-your-own farm each season. Kids will more readily eat a vegetable if they pick it themselves, and once tasted are more likely eat it again.
- 4. Have them delivered.** Get the local vegetable specialty store to deliver to you. They will pick out only the best and that will encourage your kids to eat them. Kids are picky like that – you may be perfectly willing to eat a mushy vegetable but if your kids see a single blemish that is the end of that food for them.
- 5. Keep things discrete.** Some kids hate having their favorite vegetable mixed in with other foods. If your kids like only a couple salad vegetables and you feel like you are being deprived, then cut up all the vegetables that you want for the salad and serve it like a salad bar – with each individual vegetable in a separate bowl.

6. Mix things up. Vegetables are varied and different but while some kids will try any vegetable, some prefer to think that it is not necessary to eat any vegetables. Therefore, you have to disguise the vegetables with “creative” preparations. When you make a vegetable soup, puree it. Zucchini haters won’t know what hit them if you keep the potatoes in big chunks and puree the rest, passing it off as potato soup.

7. Allow your children to play with sharp, pointed objects. Yes, that means kitchen knives, under guidance, of course. If children help to participate in the preparation of the vegetables, they are more likely to eat them. When they help to prepare the vegetables or salad, you will notice that a lot more gets eaten.



8. Give vegetables the exposure that they deserve. If everyone is just sitting around and talking, use this as an opportunity to cut up vegetables or fruits. Kids, adults and even teenagers will keep taking pieces until you are tired of cutting. Offer them at lunch raw, and cooked at dinner. Keep them in the fridge cut up on a dish. If you do the cutting, they will do the eating. But remember Tip #7. If they do the cutting, they also do the eating.

9. Make them taste good. If you usually serve your veggies plain, raw or steamed, you can experiment with different dips, dressings and sauces. If you get your kids to be lifelong vegetable lovers, the nutritional benefits will outweigh the small amount of fat in the dressings.

10. Ask your friends for suggestions. Lots of people have ideas for tasty vegetable tidbits that kids like. Try someone else’s suggestion – it opens new food choices for you too!

