



Veggies: Let Your Child Choose!

Kid's Doctor

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Guess what? Kids like vegetables! Are you kidding?... not my child you say. Let me ask you this. Do you fill their plate with vegetables you like, or give them a choice of what they might like? That one step could be the key to helping your child learn to appreciate the different types and tastes of veggies.

Researchers at the University of Granada found that children will eat 80% more vegetables if given the opportunity to choose their own.

The researchers also found that the bitterness associated with calcium in plants such as spinach, collard greens, cabbage, onions, chard or broccoli may be why some kids don't like the taste.

Paloma Rohlfs Dominguez of the Institute for Neuroscience at the University of Granada, along with Professor Jaime Vila Castelar and other colleagues at the University of Granada and the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands, analyzed vegetable consumption in children age 6. The researchers used "provision of choice," in which children were allowed to choose the vegetables they wanted for each meal, as part of the study.

Children who were allowed to choose their vegetables ate almost 1.6 ounces per day, the study said.

So, what's the best way to help your child get into a vegetable eating routine?

Ehow.com offers some good tips for parents.

- Give your child all types of vegetables to try. She may not like peas or carrots but may enjoy corn, green beans or sweet potatoes. Exposing children to different vegetables gives them a chance to learn which ones they like.
- See if your child will eat fresh vegetables instead of canned or frozen. Cut up and cook fresh vegetables or serve them raw. Sometimes children enjoy the taste and

texture of fresh vegetables instead of prepackaged vegetables, which can be soggy and lacking in flavor.

- Try sprinkling grated vegetables on foods children already love. Grate or chop carrots, peppers, radishes or any other vegetable and sprinkle on salads, pizza or mix in soups. Kids may not even taste them and will eat the vegetables willingly.

Homemade pizzas are a great way to experiment with different toppings.

- Serve a tray of fresh vegetables before dinner each night. Kids are usually hungry while waiting for dinner, so set out a tray of carrots, celery, broccoli, cauliflower, cherry tomatoes or any other type of vegetable with a bowl of salad dressing or dip. Hungry kids will eat these up if there's nothing else offered, and there won't be a fight at dinner to eat their vegetables.

- Try roasting vegetables. Roasting potatoes, carrots, peppers, squash and even tomatoes gives vegetables a different flavor that may appeal to children.

- Add spices to vegetables for additional flavor. Many vegetables taste bland, but adding a little chili pepper, cumin, paprika, garlic, cilantro or sage may bring out flavors your children will enjoy.

- Make your child fruit and vegetable smoothies. Healthy Recipes for Kids suggests adding a vegetable into your child's banana, apple or pear smoothie. With this method, children will eat one serving of vegetables without even tasting it.

- Serve a fruit and vegetable juice. Try one of the many new combinations of fruit and vegetable juices available. One 8-oz. glass contains one full serving of vegetables as well as fruit, and kids won't be able to taste the vegetables.

Another great idea is to start a vegetable garden with your child. The excitement of growing their own food can entice them into trying something new.

And finally, take your child to a farmer's market. More and more farmer's markets are tailoring educational booths for children. They also offer little slices of fruits and vegetables to try.

And of course, the best way to help your children enjoy the great taste of vegetables is to be a good role model and be excited about trying something new yourself.

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