

Healthy Eating: 5 Smart Ways to Raise Children Who Eat Their Vegetables

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.

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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 vegetables (broccoli trees, baby carrots, celery sticks, cucumber 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 vegetables are likely to turn everyone off. When cooking vegetables, keep them brightly colored and crunchy in texture by steaming or microwaving them for just a few minutes.

5. Be adventurous with vegetables.

When children see vegetables 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!

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Active Lifestyles:

5 Fun Ways to Enjoy Free Play with Children

Child experts all agree on at least one thing: Play is vitally important for children. Free play (as opposed to structured sports or video games) is an important way for kids to learn and develop. Here's how to help your kids enjoy the real benefits of child's play.

1. Turn off the television.

Too much television leads to sedentary bodies and minds. The solution is simple: Just turn it off. You can turn off your TV on specified days of the week (no TV on Tuesday or Thursday) or during specific time periods (from 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM). Once TVs, as well as DVD players, video games, and computers, are OFF, kids can get up, get active, and get creative.

2. Go outside with your children.

The options for what to do when you turn off the TV are endless, especially when you open the door and head outside. Give children some time every day for unstructured play and interaction with a daily dose of nature. It will improve their physical health and enhance their emotional well-being at the same time. Learn more at www.greenhour.org/.

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3. Save money with reused items.

Although many families spend tons of money on fancy toys, young children are often just as happy with reused household items. Before you recycle or throw things away, ask yourself: How could a child play with this? Paper towel tubes become bowling pins; cereal boxes and margarine tubs become blocks; and old (clean) socks become puppets.

4. Let imaginations run wild.

Imagination is one of the most amazing gifts of childhood. To cultivate the creativity and innovation that lead to school and work success later in life, kids need time to practice their imaginations. Adults can encourage imagination with simple what-if questions (*What if lions squeaked and mice roared?*) and by pretend play with simple props (boxes, fabric, or yarn).

5. Teach skills during playtime.

Playtime doesn't have to be all dragons, fairy princesses, and super heros. Playtime is a wonderful time for young children to learn basic social skills, such as taking turns and following directions. Indoor and outdoor obstacle courses are great for large motor skills, while scavenger hunts are perfect for language skills as children follow or develop clues.

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Active Lifestyles:
Free Play with Children



Eco-Tips:

5 Easy Ways to Plan Greener Camping Trips

Camping trips are a great way to enjoy inexpensive family fun. Fortunately, the United States is filled with campgrounds. Wherever your camping destination, these five tips can help you plan ahead to take good care of our beautiful environment.

1. Plan to leave no trace.

The goal of eco-friendly camping and backpacking is to leave the outdoor world as you find it. That way, the next family can enjoy their outdoor experience as much as yours did. Plan to take home everything that you bring with you: Pack it in, pack it out. If the previous campers left some trash lying around, be really considerate and pack their stuff out as well.

2. Plan to reduce.

Packing less stuff in will reduce the amount of trash you have to pack out. As you plan your trip, look closely at food and other supplies for ways to cut back on waste and save money too. Plan meals carefully and only bring what your family will actually eat. Reduce your use of disposable plates and cups by switching to washable, non-breakable tableware.

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3. Plan to reuse.

A little creative planning can make every camp item do double or even triple duty. Before the trip, freeze water in plastic milk jugs. These free blocks of ice will keep your food fresh in the cooler and then provide clean water for drinking or washing at your camp site. When you're back home, a little soap and water will get them ready for the next outdoor adventure.

4. Plan to recycle.

Some campgrounds offer ways to recycle cans, plastic bottles, cardboard, and other items. If your camp site recycles, that's great. If not, make recycling easy by setting up small boxes, bins, or bags (maybe the ones the products were purchased in) to take stuff home with you. Encourage everyone to pick up recyclables they find from other careless campers or hikers.

5. Plan to sweat the small stuff.

Small amounts of our garbage can pile up quickly to become eye sores for us, as well as life-and-death matters for wildlife. Be a green role model for children by picking up the smallest pieces of trash, such as gum wrappers and pieces of fishing line. Make certain that there is always a place to put trash and recyclables in the car, in the boat, and in the camp site.

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Eco-Tips:
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Recipe:

Zesty Zucchini and Tomatoes

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons butter (May substitute margarine or olive oil)
- ¼ cup onion (chopped)
- 1 clove garlic (chopped)
- 1 pound zucchini or other summer squash (cut into bite sized pieces or 'coins')
- 2 tomatoes (diced)
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon sugar

Instructions:

- 1) Melt butter in saucepan over medium heat.
- 2) Add onions and garlic.
- 3) Cook until tender, about 5-7 minutes.
- 4) Add zucchini, tomatoes, and seasonings.
- 5) Reduce heat.
- 6) Cook until vegetables are tender without overcooking, about 5-10 minutes.

Yield: 4 servings

Additions/Substitutions

- To reduce saturated fat, use a soft margarine or liquid oil, such as olive oil.
- Add a dash of herbs (basil, oregano, or chives) for a truly garden-fresh side dish.
- For a zestier mix, season with fresh or dried chili peppers.

Nutrition Analysis

Serving Size: 1/2 cup

Calories: 100

Total Fat: 6.0 g

Calories from Fat: 61%

Saturated Fat: 3.0 g

Trans Fat: 0.0 g

Total Carb: 10 g

Dietary Fiber: 2 g

Sodium: 200 mg

Protein: 2 g

Calcium: 30 mg

Iron: 0.6 mg

Recipe Source

Permission granted through Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network (PA NEN)

<http://panen.psu.edu/>

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