

“I Want My Child to Eat More Fruits and Vegetables. So What Can I Do?”

First, let me congratulate you on wanting to help your child eat more fruits and vegetables. That’s great! Although well-intended, many parents use methods that actually discourage children from eating and preferring fruits and vegetables. The purpose of this document is to provide you with the do's and don'ts when trying to increase children's preferences and intake of fruits and vegetables.

DO: 1. Make fruits and vegetables available at meals and for snacks.

<p><i>This is what Not To Do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Rarely cook vegetables for meals➤ Rarely provide fruits for snacks or meals➤ Buy few fruits and vegetables	<p><i>Here’s what you can do instead...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Cook one or more vegetables for the dinner meal✓ Provide fruit during breakfast and lunch✓ Stick an apple in your child’s lunch bag✓ Offer fruit and vegetables as snacks✓ Offer new foods to your child to try
<p>Why?</p> <p>If you want your child to eat more fruits and vegetables, you have to buy fruits and vegetables. Research has shown that repeated exposure to a vegetable improves a child’s acceptance and preference for that vegetable.</p>	


2. Place fruits and vegetables in places where your child can easily grab them without your help.

<p><i>This is what Not To Do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ <u>Only</u> prepare healthy snacks when your child requests them	<p><i>Here’s what you can do instead...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Cut up a carrot or apple, and put it in a little bag in the refrigerator so your child can easily grab it without your help.✓ Place a fruit bowl on the dinning room table so your child can grab a piece of fruit for snacks.
<p>Why?</p> <p>Studies have shown that making healthy food options available and within reach for children helps to increase fruit and vegetable consumption. Simply by placing a bowl of oranges on the kitchen table may help to increase a child’s consumption of fruit.</p>	

3. Encourage your child to eat fruits and vegetables.

<p><i>This is what Not To Do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Give your child fruits and vegetables without talking about them.➤ Require your child to eat fruits and vegetables.➤ Show disapproval when child does not eat➤ Talk about the child's bad behavior (or other negative conversation) while eating dinner	<p><i>Here's what you can do instead...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Congratulate child for eating the vegetables.✓ Say encouraging things like, "Wow, you ate all of your corn! You are such a BIG BOY!"✓ Avoid negative conversation at the dinner table✓ Say something positive about the food✓ Eat more fruits and vegetables yourself. Even take a second helping! And talk about how good it is.✓ Encourage (but not force) the child to try new foods.
<p>Why?</p> <p>Encouragement helps to create a positive relationship between the child and the food. Studies have shown that this child-centered strategy is associated with higher fruit and vegetable consumption in children.</p>	

4. Avoid restricting foods from your child's diet.

<p><i>This is what Not To Do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Limiting your child's access to candy or sweets	<p><i>Here's what you can do instead...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Don't bring the junk food into the house. As a result your health will improve also.✓ Attitude Change: Don't offer sweets as a reward or treat. Instead offer play time, or an activity.✓ Avoid restricting your child's access to sweets. Instead, add new fruits to your child's diet. Since a child can only eat so much in a day, by adding more fruits and vegetables, your child will eat less sweets and candy.
<p>Why?</p> <p>Studies have shown that when parents restrict certain foods from their child diet, the child tends to focus more on the restricted food and want to consume it more. Also when children are allowed to eat as much sweets or junk foods as they would like, such as during parties or events, they tend to eat more if their parents restrict foods from their diets. The children also felt bad about eating the food, and, when asked by the interviewer, said they would be sad if their parents found out.</p>	

5. Avoid pressuring your child to eat.

<p><i>This is what Not To Do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Asking child to ‘Clean his plate’➤ Offer a reward (like a toy or treat) to encourage your child to eat his food➤ Physically struggling with child to get him to eat➤ Showing disapproval for not eating➤ Hurrying child to finish food➤ Warning that food will be taken away if he doesn’t eat➤ Spoon-feeding child➤ Begging child to eat	<p><i>Here’s what you can do instead...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Serve the child less food or allow the child to serve himself. Studies have shown that parents tend to serve children more food than children would serve themselves.✓ Serve age-appropriate food. So instead of serving cabbage, serve carrot sticks instead, or make a tastier version of a plain recipe.✓ Increase child’s participation in the preparation of the meal.✓ Allow the child to select vegetables during the dinner meal.✓ Ask the child to help prepare the vegetables.✓ Lastly, give the child time to eat. Sometimes parents rush during meals because they don’t have enough time. Instead, try slowing down to enjoy the meal so your child can enjoy it also.
<p>Why?</p> <p>Studies have shown that when parent’s pressure children to eat, they encourage children to develop eating habits that are characteristic of overweight children such as eating larger portions, taking large bite sizes, eating when food is presented regardless of hunger, and eating meals quickly.</p>	

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