

Healthy eating tips for parents

Getting children to eat any fruit or vegetables, let alone five portions a day, can seem very tricky. But setting good eating patterns is easier to do with children when they are very young. It is important to encourage healthy eating habits early because what you eat as a child may affect your health in later life.

Here are some tips for helping your children to eat their five a day and a healthy, balanced diet.



Work with what they like to eat

- Children like crunchy and sweet foods. So try them out on crunchy raw carrots or peppers as a snack.
- Add fruit and vegetables to their favourite foods, like pizzas or sandwiches.
- Give them fresh fruit juice to help them get their 5-a-day. But be careful - too much fruit juice can damage their teeth.

Set a good example

- Eat lots of fruit and vegetables yourself. Your children learn habits by watching you, so if you eat healthily, the chances are your children will too.
- Be consistent. Set standard meal and snack times and discourage other snacking. If your kids insist on a snack, encourage them to wait till their next meal.
- Don't reward your children with food - they'll remember that later on in life!

Keep trying them out on new things

- Try to serve several fruit and vegetable options - kids like to choose and so let them choose between good things.
- They may not like a particular fruit or vegetable at first, but serve it again a few days later. Encourage children to have tiny tastes each time. Research shows that tiny tastes can help children to change their taste preferences.
- Don't force children to eat things - this will only create negative associations and discourage them from trying again in the future.

Make it fun

- Make fruit and vegetables into faces on their plates, or cut them into funky shapes.
- Turn 5-a-day into a game or challenge. You can motivate your children by giving them activity sheets or wall-charts to record what fruit or vegetables they eat.
- Get your children involved in the cooking if you can. Let them choose recipes to try and ask them to help pick fruit and vegetables at the supermarket. They're more likely to try things they've had a hand in preparing.