

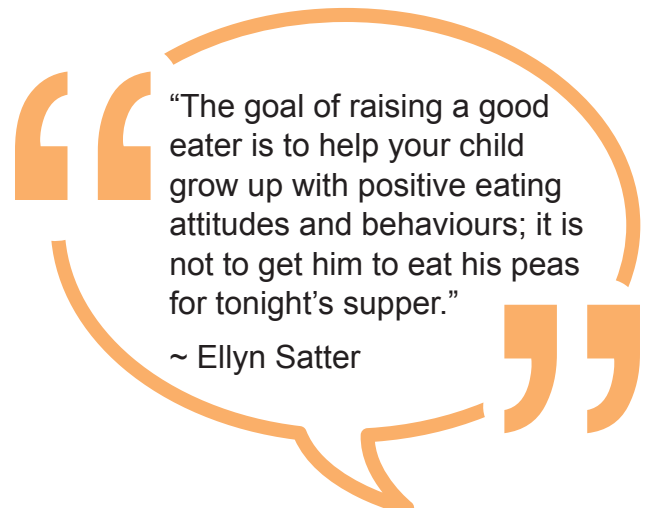


Vegetables: A Kid-Friendly Approach

Are you worried that your kids are not eating enough vegetables? You are not alone! We know vegetables are a recommended part of a balanced diet, along with protein foods, whole grains, and fruit. They offer nutrients, as well as colour, texture, and flavour. The good news is that kids can learn to enjoy vegetables. However, our approach can make their learning easier - or harder.

Learning is a process - let kids set the pace

- Start with yourself. You are a role model; kids look up to you. Aim to regularly enjoy vegetables yourself.
- You can trust that, at their own pace, kids will learn to eat the foods their role models enjoy, including vegetables. It takes time - for some children, it takes a long time.
- Pressuring kids to eat certain foods usually backfires. Pressure can include praise or rewards. This doesn't help kids to learn to like these foods, or choose to eat them when they have the chance, now or later in life.
- With support, kids can develop positive attitudes about food that will shape their eating habits for years to come.



“The goal of raising a good eater is to help your child grow up with positive eating attitudes and behaviours; it is not to get him to eat his peas for tonight’s supper.”

~ Ellyn Satter

“Are my kids getting the nutrients they need?”

While kids are gradually learning to like vegetables, they can get similar nutrients from other foods, such as fruit.

“My child is not comfortable with vegetables. What can I do?”

- The best way to increase children’s comfort is to give them lots of exposure to vegetables, without any pressure to eat or taste them.
- Kids do best with a regular meal and snack routine. Aim to provide food every 2-3 hours, and eat together when possible. Make one meal for everyone, and include vegetables often, whether or not kids eat them.
- Let kids pick and choose from what you have put on the table. Trust that they know how much to eat, and that they will (eventually) accept a bigger variety of foods.
- Be patient. Kids usually need to become familiar with a food before they are ready to try it. It helps if they can see, touch, smell, and see others eating it, often.
- Let kids help to choose, grow, and prepare some vegetables. This can be rewarding; it fuels kids’ curiosity.

“What about vegetable juices?”

- These drinks can be high in salt and low in fibre.
- If you offer them, provide a small amount as part of a meal or sit-down snack.
- Continue to offer whole vegetables as well.



Offer a variety of tasty vegetables

- Prepare vegetables in a variety of ways. They can be fresh, frozen, or canned.
- Add flavour. Try: bread crumbs, butter, cheese, dips.
- Keep kids’ trust – don’t “hide” vegetables in other foods.
- Teach kids to politely pick vegetables out of mixed dishes if they are not yet ready to try them.
- Prepare vegetables the way you like to - they don’t need to be fancy.
- Offering something new? Pair it with other familiar foods.

Involve kids in food preparation

- Have kids choose from a variety of cut-up vegetables for their salad, sandwich, wrap, taco, or pizza.
- Involve kids in washing and cutting vegetables.
- Bake grated zucchini or carrots into muffins.
- Make sweet potato fries or kale chips.
- Make a soup with leftover veggies.
- Prepare veggie kebabs for the BBQ.
- Make a smoothie with spinach or kale.



To speak with a Registered Dietitian at HealthLinkBC, call 811 (or 604-215-8110).