

24 ways to get kids to eat their greens.

To be healthy, children should aim to eat a variety of healthy foods every day.

The growth and development of your children depends on it. By eating healthy, your children will have the energy they need to play, learn, concentrate better, sleep better and build stronger teeth and bones.

Go for a variety of healthy food every day

1. Enjoy a variety of foods. Serve up a healthy variety of foods each day. These include fruit and vegetables, legumes (such as dried peas, beans and lentils), wholegrain cereals, low fat dairy, lean meat, fish and skinless chicken. Reduced fat milks are not suitable for young children under two years.

2. Shop healthy. If you haven't got a healthy variety in your kitchen pantry or cupboard, you can't put it on the table.

3. Go for quality, not quantity. Children's serves may be small. It all depends on their age and appetite. Variety is the important ingredient.

4. Stick to three meals and two snacks every day. Growing children need to be fed regularly and often.

5. Begin their day with a healthy breakfast. It improves concentration and builds stamina.

6. Give your children choices. Offer kids a few healthy choices. For instance, ask if they want an apricot or a plum, beans or broccoli, an egg or a tuna sandwich.

2 fruit and 5 veg every day

7. Lunch boxes that go crunch. Skip the chips. Fruit and vegetables in season make a great snack or lunch box addition. Try corn on the cob, carrots, small Lebanese cucumbers, green beans, cherry tomatoes, celery, stone fruit, grapes or berries.

8. Freeze in summer. Frozen fruits make great summer snacks. Try frozen grapes, bananas and mango wedges.

9. Keep warm in winter. Corn on the cob, baked potatoes, hot home-made popcorn, baked beans and stewed fruits can really hit the spot on cold winter days.

10. Go for a dip. Set up a colourful veggie platter with a variety of dips or salsa.

Drink water every day

11. Give them water instead of juices, cordials and soft drinks. These drinks are full of energy and can often take away their appetite for other foods.

12. **Set a sweet limit.** If you do include sweet drinks in your child's diet, set a limit. That could be one small glass of fruit juice a day – around 125ml.
 13. **Make family mealtimes part of your routine.** Whenever possible, sit and eat together as a family and have the TV turned off.
 14. **Lead by example.** If the kids see you eating well and enjoying a wide variety of healthy foods they are likely to join in too.
 15. **Family food - include everyone.** Encourage children to enjoy the family foods and meals from an early age (about 12 months). Children will learn to eat what the family eats if they are given the same food and encouraged to try it.
- Plan to succeed
16. **Be persistent – you can't afford to give up.** It's common for all kids to love a certain food one day and hate it the next. Just keep offering them healthy choices and they'll soon be eating a wider variety.
 17. **If at first you don't succeed – try, try again.** Kids can be stubborn. But be patient. You may need to offer a new food ten times or more before your child will accept it.
 18. **Get the kids in the kitchen.** Encourage kitchen skills by having children make a sandwich or salad. Let them wash fruit and vegetables and make a simple green salad, tabouli or a fruit salad. Being involved will increase a child's willingness to try new foods.
 19. **Be consistent.** If your child isn't hungry for healthy food, refrain from offering unhealthy substitutes. This will only encourage eating for reasons other than hunger.
 20. **Give them an encouraging word.** Try not to force your child to eat. A much better technique is to praise them when they make a healthy food choice.
 21. **Try not to use food to punish or reward a child.** A hug or a book is a much better alternative to food.
 22. **Hungry or not?** Children sometimes eat when they're bored, sad or lonely. Help your child to understand when they are eating for reasons other than hunger.
 23. **Let them make their own decisions.** At the end of the day, it's up to the child to decide whether or not to eat and how much. Your job is to offer healthy foods at regular intervals.
 24. **Call in an expert.** If needed, get professional help to solve problems or keep the family motivated. Simply talk with your doctor, health practitioner or dietitian.

If you'd like any more information, tips or advice on healthy eating visit goforyourlife.com.au