



Expose children to more vegetables

With school starting soon, I want to pack some fresh vegetables in my children's lunches, but I'm afraid they'll just throw them away. Any ideas?

My advice: Try it. In fact, try a whole slew of vegetables — carrot sticks, pea pods, grape tomatoes, celery sticks, green (or red or yellow or orange) peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, zucchini — anything that looks good to you.

Try one kind a day or mix up a variety. Sure, your children might not eat them all. But research shows that the more exposed students are to fresh vegetables, the more vegetables they tend to eat. It's the exposure that's key. While that research was done on school-sponsored snack programs, you can do something similar by including fresh vegetables in a snack bag in your child's lunch.

Depending on their activity level, children between ages 9 to 13 need two to 2.5 cups of vegetables a day, and boys that age need 2.5 cups a day. Older active teens need up to 2.5 cups (for girls) or 3.5 cups (for boys) each day. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, only 20 percent of 6- to 11-year-olds and 27 percent of 12- to 19-year-olds consume that many vegetables.

Unfortunately, adults don't do much better. According to a 2007 analysis of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, only 33 percent

of adults consume two or more fruits a day, and just 27 percent eat vegetables three or more times a day.

Consumption of fruit should be less of a challenge. Let's face it: Fresh fruits, such as bananas, apples, peaches and grapes, are tasty snacks and are easy to grab and go. But, for whatever reason, many families need a boost in both fruit and vegetable consumption. Here are some tips to help children eat more produce from www.fruitandveggiesmatter.gov:

- Keep a bowl of fresh fruits on the counter.
- Serve fruits and vegetables at every meal. Add grated or cut vegetables into entrees, side dishes and soups and add fruits to cereal, yogurt and smoothies.
- Challenge family members to reach their daily fruits and vegetable goal. Reward the winner with a prize.
- Let children choose which fruits and vegetables to serve and how to incorporate them into their favorite meals.
- Offer new fruits and vegetables in combination with old favorites.
- Vegetables can be added to a whole grain pasta dish or pizza.
- Serve at least two vegetables at dinner.
- Keep trying. For some foods, it may take multiple times before a child acquires a taste for it.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

**For the week of
August 17, 2008**

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