

Helping Kids Learn To Make Healthy Food Choices ...in 5 Easy Steps



1 Let Them Learn by Serving Themselves.

Kids will learn many useful life lessons when you let them serve themselves at meal time:

- They learn to make decisions about which foods and how much to put on their plates.
- They learn to be more aware of when they are hungry and when they are full.
- They further develop their fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.
- They learn to share, take turns, and be responsible for their choices.



IDEAS! Try these tips to make serving themselves easier

- ✓ Use small bowls so your kids can see the food. Use serving utensils they can hold easily.
- ✓ Hold the serving bowls for them to make it easier to scoop up the food.
- ✓ Be patient! Your kids are learning, so be ready to wipe up a few spills.
- ✓ Encourage and praise your children when they serve themselves.

2 Help your child learn to love a variety of foods.

Sometimes new foods take time. Kids don't always take to new foods right away. Offer new fruits and vegetables many times, served a variety of ways. Give your kids just a taste at first and be patient with them.

Kids learn to like new foods by:

- Having them offered over and over
- Having them served with familiar foods
- Seeing friends, older kids, and grown-ups eating these foods
- Tasting them prepared in different ways
- Choosing foods to try themselves
- Starting with small amounts



IDEAS! Try offering new foods prepared in different ways.

- ✓ Serve fruits and vegetables raw with a dip.
- ✓ Steam, roast, and bake vegetables—even some fruits.

For example, try warming fruits like apples, pears, and peaches for about a minute or so for a softer texture. Try it with canned, frozen, or fresh fruit – just look for canned or frozen fruits without added sugar or packed in 100% fruit juice

3 **Make meals and memories together. It's a lesson they'll use for life!**

Kids like to try foods they help make. It's a great way to encourage your child to eat fruits and vegetables. They feel good about doing something "grown-up." Give them small jobs to do. Praise their efforts. Their smiles will light up your kitchen.



Cooking Together Activities by Age:

2-year-olds

- Make "faces" out of pieces of fruits and vegetables.
- Scrub vegetables or fruits.
- Tear lettuce or greens.
- Snap green beans.

3-year-olds

- Add ingredients.
- Stir.
- Spread peanut butter or other spreads.
- Shake a drink in a sealed container.
- Knead bread dough.

4- to 5-year-olds

- Peel and mix some fruits and vegetables.
- Peel hard boiled eggs.
- Wipe off counters.
- Mash soft fruits, vegetables, and beans.
- Measure dry ingredients.
- Measure liquids with help.

4 **Enjoy each other while enjoying family meals.**

Keep meal time relaxed to nourish the body and help your family make stronger connections. Let your little ones select which foods to put on their plates and how much to eat from the healthy choices you provide.



How to make family meals happy

- Focus on the meal and each other. Turn off the television. Take phone calls later.
- Talk about fun and happy things. Try to make meals a stress-free time.
- Encourage your child to try foods. But, don't lecture or force your child to eat.

5 **Listen to them when they say they are full.**

Young kids will eat the amount they need. Toddlers have a strong sense of hunger, appetite, and fullness, so they are likely to stop eating when they are full rather than when the food is gone. And, children's appetite can vary - sometimes they won't eat much and other times they will want seconds.

