

Excite Kids About Fruits and Veggies

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Summer is a great time to access affordable, great tasting fresh produce, but purchasing that produce for your children or grandchildren without letting it go to waste can be tricky. Establishing a love for fruits and vegetables while your children are young will benefit their health now and in the future. A diet high in colorful fruits and vegetables will provide a variety of vitamins, minerals and fiber that children need to grow. Studies show that eating fruits and vegetables can help your child maintain a healthy weight, keep bowels regular and decrease the chance of diseases like heart disease and cancer.

However, getting kids excited about fruits and vegetables can be a challenge. You may offer fruits and vegetables at mealtimes but your child refuses. If you have a picky eater who won't touch a plate with leafy greens or an unfamiliar vegetable, you may be wondering what to do. Try these tips:

- At the grocery store, let children pick their own fruit or vegetable.
 - For variety, try a different color each week.
 - Or fill the shopping basket with a fruit or vegetable from every color in the rainbow.
- Let them play with their food. Use slices, dices, pieces and whole fruits and vegetables to be creative.
 - Make colorful, funny fruit and vegetable faces. Make a game out of it (who can make the funniest face) and then eat them together.
 - Make an edible landscape. For example, use a banana slice as the sunshine, broccoli as trees, leafy greens for grass, etc.
 - Give fruits and vegetables a funny name.
- Let children help prepare fruits and vegetables. They can:
 - Wash fruits and vegetables before cooking or eating
 - Snap the peas or break apart the broccoli
 - Tear the lettuce for salads and sandwiches
 - Measure the vegetables before cooking
 - Peel fruits and vegetables
 - Slice soft vegetables with a plastic knife
- Read books about fruits and vegetables with your child.
- Introduce children to gardening to teach them how fruits and vegetables grow. Plant seeds together and watch them grow.
- Set a good example — eat and enjoy fruits and vegetables with your child.
- Have your child eat with another child who loves fruits and vegetables.

Start now to establish a lifetime of healthy eating habits for your children!

Source: University of Missouri Extension, *Getting Kids to Eat Fruits and Vegetables*. For more information on nutrition, food safety, health, or family and child development contact the Marais des Cygnes Extension District Paola (913-294-4306) or Mound City (913-795-2829) offices, or write to fmeastwo@ksu.edu or check out our website: www.maraisdescyignes.k-state.edu