



### 5 FOOD TIPS FOR HEALTHY KIDS

*'My kids won't eat vegetables!' 'How can I get my toddler to eat new foods?'*

Do the above phrases sound familiar to you? Do you have kids that are fussy, or unwilling to try new foods? Try the following tips to help keep you sane and your kids healthy.

#### 1. Surround them with healthy food messages

- **Books:** read books that convey healthy food messages. Some classics are: *Jasper McFlea will Not Eat his Tea* by Lee Fox; *Vegetable Glue* by Susan Chandler; *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr Seuss and; *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle.
- **Activities:** provide healthy art and craft activities e.g. look for healthy food colour-in pages or books; get children to cut out fruit and veg pictures from the supermarket brochures. They can then paste these in a food scrapbook.
- **Songs:** some classics are *Hot Potato* by The Wiggles, *Watermelon* by Justine Clarke.
- **Pictures:** hang up bright healthy food pictures in the kitchen.
- **Fruit bowl:** always have a readily supplied fruit bowl in easy view and within reach on the kitchen table or bench. Put the cookie jar out of sight!
- Have only healthy choices available in the fridge and pantry. Strategically place healthiest choices within eye view of children.

#### 2. Be a good role model

Children learn from those around them. If you eat healthy foods regularly with and in front of your children then they will be more likely to eat the same foods. Encourage other family members and close friends to do the same.

#### 3. Think variety

Ensure meals and snacks contain food from the 5 food groups. Offering a variety of foods from each of the 5 food groups will help to ensure children receive a greater range of nutrients. Also offer variety within each food group. Different coloured fruits and vegetables contain different vitamins and antioxidants.

#### **4. Don't make a fuss**

It is the parent's responsibility to provide children with food and the opportunities to eat it. Children should decide how much to eat and whether to eat at all. Allow children to eat according to their appetite. It is normal for children's appetites to change dramatically from day to day. Trying to find a possible reason for a low appetite can help parents understand why their children may not want to eat. If children have large appetites then ensure their appetite is satisfied with healthy food options. As long as healthy foods are regularly offered then it doesn't matter if children decide not to eat particular meals. They will make up for it at their next meal.

#### **5. Include them — in the kitchen, garden and at the shops**

Children who are more actively involved in food choices are more likely to be interested in the food they eat.

Allow children into the kitchen to watch and help with cooking. Set kitchen rules early and ensure children are aware of the dangers within the kitchen. Set simple tasks for children such as mixing salad, cracking eggs or pouring ingredients.

Set up a vegetable patch or pot with some easy to grow vegetables. Fun and easy vegies that kids love to grow are snowpeas, beans, carrots, cucumber and zucchini.

Take children grocery shopping and allow them to place fruits and vegetables in the trolley.

Author: Nutrition Australia ACT Division, 2013