

12 Tips to Incorporate Healthy Foods Into Your Kids' Diets

Slow Food members believe every child deserves to grow up knowing where food comes from, how to grow it, cook it and share it, and how to be healthy. These tips were developed by a Slow Food Greater Olympia member based on her family's experience.

- 1. Researchers have found it takes kids seven tastes before they really determine if they like a food. They may like it one day, but not the next. Don't give up!**
 - Make sure you keep putting veggies (and all other foods) on their plates, even if they won't eat all of them (or have proclaimed they don't like them)! You never know when they'll make a turn and like them!
 - Make sure they try the food each time, at least one bite.
- 2. When they're really young and just starting to eat, puree vegetables and mix them in with their breakfast.** This will help them develop a taste for the vegetable. Think outside the box- purple cabbage, turnips, etc!
- 3. Don't believe the hype that kids will only eat "kid-friendly" foods.**
 - Think of what kids eat in other countries – not burgers and fries. They eat the local foods, that reflect their cultures.
 - Create your own food culture at home; our society has established what kids will and won't eat, but set your own path.
- 4. Make just one "family meal" for everyone in your family. Have your kids try everything served in that meal. Then choose one healthy alternative you don't have to cook separately for your kids if they don't like the meal. That is their only choice besides the family meal.**
 - For your healthy alternative, try fruit and yogurt or whole wheat bread and butter.
 - You will likely find that after awhile, they will rarely take you up on the offer of that alternative to the family meal.
- 5. Feed vegetables and fruit as a snack when kids are really hungry, or at the start of a meal. They are more likely to eat them then.**
 - Put frozen peas or corn in little individual dishes for them and call them appetizers.
 - Offer meals as courses, starting with vegetables.
 - Move on to the next course after they've tried their veggies.
- 6. Finish all meals with fruit.**
 - Most kids love fruit, and it's a sure way of getting in three a day if it's routine.
 - They may even start to think it's weird when they eat at someone else's house and aren't offered fruit at the end of a meal!

7. **Take time to prepare veggies. Don't treat them as an afterthought.**
 - Plain, steamed veggies aren't that interesting.
 - Find a few veggie recipes you love, and take the time to make them.
 - Incorporate veggies into your main meal, or have them be a main meal.
 - Focus on veggies they love. For example, if they like tomatoes, make panzanella in the summer.

8. **Add ingredients to the veggies that you know your kids love.**
 - Add their favorite cheese.
 - Make a pizza with veggies – whatever is fresh.
 - Make pasta with pesto – try half basil and half greens, like kale or chard.

9. **Make smoothies and throw veggies into them!** For example, try adding cooked beets for a special purple smoothie!

10. **Go shopping with your kids. Have them pick out what they want to try.**
 - Try setting a goal for them to try one new veggie each week.
 - Ask them if they have ideas on how to prepare it, or find a recipe together, and cook together.
 - Get the best – come to the market!!

11. **Be a good example.**
 - Kids imitate their parents, so fill your plate with healthy foods.
 - Kids listen to their parents too, so be sure to only make positive comments on healthy foods, even if you have not learned to like them yourselves.

12. **Teach them how important vegetables are to make them big, strong and healthy.**
 - Talking about why you like a food and how delicious it is has a big influence on kids
 - Talking positively about healthy foods makes kids feel good about them.
 - Talk about how colorful they are, how funny looking, how they help your eyes, your skin, your hair, your muscles or how they make you fight off germs.

You can do it!!!

**At the very least, you will teach your kids it's important to try new foods,
and it's healthy for them!**

Find other ideas about healthy food for kids under the cooking section at
http://www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/programs/children_and_food_detail/resources1/