

Helping Your Kids to Eat More Veggies

By Karen Crawford, MS, RD, CSP

Working more veggies into your child's diet can be a challenge. A child's acceptance for veggies develops at a very early age and may affect their liking of vegetables long term. For example, babies typically love the taste of veggies if they are introduced first. This is precisely why your pediatrician encourages you to start with veggies and then move onto fruits when your little one begins eating solids. The hope is that they will have such positive experience with the green stuff that it won't be rejected once they discover the sweet taste of pureed fruit! Stealth health has its place, no doubt, but kids need to know that veggies are great for their little bodies but can taste great too. Below are 10 ways to get more veggies in. Some are a little sneaky and others are totally transparent.

1. Offer raw veggies (carrots, red and yellow peppers, cucumbers) with light ranch dressing as a dip.
2. Add steamed veggies such as broccoli and squash to marinara sauce or pizza sauce.
3. Puree acorn squash and add to cheese sauce for steamed broccoli- making it a double veggie!
4. Let your kids build their own salad. Kids are more apt to try new things when they take part in the preparation.
5. Experiment with new fun veggies like purple cabbage, orange cauliflower, baby micro greens.
6. Add shredded cabbage to shredded lettuce when topping sandwiches or tacos.
7. Add cauliflower to mashed potatoes.
8. Add shredded carrots to hamburger patties.
9. Let your kids build their own personal veggie pizzas.
10. Make sweet potato fries out of fresh sweet potatoes.

Hopefully these veggie ideas will help to increase your child's consumption and also spark creative ideas of your own to try with your kids. Remember that it is important for us adults to model the behavior that we want our children to adopt, so eat your veggies too. Also, getting them involved in the preparation is great fun for most kids and truly increases their excitement to enjoy the fruits (or veggies!) of their labor.