

15 Secrets to get your Preschooler to Eat Healthier

Keep your Options Healthy. It's easier to get your children to eat healthy and lots of vegetables if that is the only option. Stock up on fresh fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains and make sure you have some prepped for an easy snack. A bowl of grapes, apples with nut butter, ants on a log, carrots and hummus, homemade oat bars*, and beet & carrot salad*.

Make Eating Healthy Fun. Use cookie cutters or other fruit paring knives to create fun shapes that are appealing to your little ones. You can buy cookie cutters with your child's first name initial and other cookie cutters that your child will love. Your child create their own designs or you can surprise them with fun shapes.

Just Dip It. Adults love to dip. Children love to dip. There are so many healthy options that you can serve with cut vegetables and fruit to encourage your child to eat them – peanut butter, yogurt dip, bean dip, almond butter, hummus, edamame dip. Check out our Blog for recipes for healthy dip recipes.

Don't talk smack about Veggies. Your child hears everything you say and sees all the grimaces and frowns that cross your face. Follow Thumper's advice when it comes to healthy food, "If you can't say something nice, don't say nothing at all." Your child will follow your lead and emulate you. Try to serve healthy meals and vegetables that you love.

Be a Role Model. If you want your child to eat their vegetables and eat healthier then you will need to set the example by eating how you would like your child to eat.

Try, Try Again. It can take your child up to 12 times before they get used to the flavor, consistency, and smell of new foods. For both babies and preschoolers it is important to not get discouraged when your child doesn't like a particular food the first, second or eighth time they try it – keep serving it and most children will like the food once they get used to the new flavor and consistency.

No Thank You Bite. Have a, "No Thank You Bite", Rule. Your child is welcome to say, "No Thank You", after they try one bite. If they like it, great. If not then they can, "Try, Try Again", next time.

Snazzy Snacks. Children need to eat every 3 to 4 hours. Make sure that there are plenty of healthy options on hand throughout the day. Stock up on sliced apples, carrots, cheese sticks and yogurt. These foods will help your child to have a balanced diet and they will be less cranky throughout the day.

Be colorful. Fill your child's plate up with a variety of colors. Color stimulates the appetite and the more appealing the plate, the more inviting the meal. Include carrots with beets or cucumbers with tomatoes. Play around with the arrangement of the food around the plate. Separate the veggies around the edge of the plate or create a pattern or design with veggies.

Sneaky Greens. If all else fails you can hide your child's greens in a smoothie, stir-fry, rice dish, casserole, or sauce. Some children aren't used to eating vegetables so you may need to sneak it into their diet until they get used to them.

Eat your Growing Food First. Some of our teachers encourage their children to, "Eat their Growing Food First". This means to eat the healthy food that will allow them to grow big and strong before they get to eat their dessert food.

Shop together. Have your child help pick out fruits and vegetables in the grocery store. If they can get excited about picking out their own foods, they will be excited to try them at home.

Cook together. Children love to help, especially when gadgets are involved. Have them mash the potatoes or turn on the blender. The more they feel connected to the preparation of the meal, the more they will be excited about trying what they have created.

Eat together! It is so important to eat your meals together. Your child will watch you eat your veggies and will learn from you. This is also a great way to re-enforce table manners.

Persistence. All children are different and require a variety of strategies, effort, and patience. Learning to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet will stay with them throughout life. Stay positive and re-enforce positive experiences around food. Expose them to a variety of options, and most importantly have fun in the kitchen together!

*These recipes are available at our blog and/or on our Pinterest page.