

Getting Kids (and Picky Eaters) to Eat Veggies

Supports: Building Block 6 — Portions & the Balanced Plate

Why It Matters

Getting more vegetables onto the table — and into the people you love — is usually a gentle, gradual project rather than a battle to win. Kids and grown-up picky eaters alike tend to warm up to new foods when there's no pressure, plenty of choice, and a little fun involved. The good news is that your own habits carry a lot of weight; when veggies are a normal, low-drama part of your meals, they become normal for everyone. Think of this as planting seeds, offering again and again without forcing, and letting curiosity do the work.

What to Know

Keep it pressure-free

Forcing a food someone dislikes can backfire and create lasting resentment, so aim to stay positive and easygoing. A picky eater may turn a vegetable down many times before trying it — that's normal, and it doesn't mean you should stop offering. Keep putting it on the table without a fight, and let repeated, friendly exposure do its slow work. A simple "take a polite bite if you'd like" invites without demanding.

Make it easy to say yes

- Be a role model — when kids see you enjoying veggies at meals, they're more likely to follow.
- Offer a choice of two or three vegetables; there's real power in getting to pick.
- Put out fruit and veggies as snacks — berries, grapes, baby carrots, and sweet peppers are great grabbing sizes.
- Bring on the dips: ranch, hummus, or guacamole make carrots, peppers, and broccoli a lot more inviting.
- Sneak them in — blend spinach into a fruit smoothie, or fold diced veggies into soups, pasta, meatloaf, and casseroles.

Get them involved and make it fun

People eat with more enthusiasm when they help create the meal. Take kids to the store or farmers' market to pick a vegetable that catches their eye, and let them wash, stir, or assemble at home. A build-your-own bar — omelet, taco, salad, or grilled-cheese — lets everyone choose their own colorful add-ins, and you may be surprised by what they reach for. A little playfulness, like fun shapes or silly names for a dish, can turn resistance into curiosity.

Think the rainbow. Set out lots of chopped, colorful options and let people build their own plate. Variety and ownership do more to encourage veggies than any rule ever could.

Try This

Pick one low-pressure idea from this page to try with your household this week, and keep it light — this is about offering, not winning.

- ? Which vegetable could you offer again this week, without any pressure?
- ? How could you invite the people you cook for into shopping or prep?
- ? What build-your-own meal would your household have fun assembling?