



How can I encourage my child to eat vegetables?

Be a good role model. Children copy the behaviour of those around them so if they see their parents and other grown-ups eating lots of vegetables, then they are more likely to follow suit. Siblings and friends can also be effective role models.

If your child eats all sorts of things at nursery or school that they refuse to eat at home, it's probably because they've been watching their friends!

- Tell your child that vegetables taste good. Focus on the good taste of vegetables rather than their health-giving properties. Lots of children think that things that are good for them are going to taste bad!
- Eat together. Try to sit together for meals as often as possible with everyone in the family. Mealtimes are a great opportunity to show your child that you enjoy healthy foods.
- Give small amounts at first - large portions of disliked food can be overwhelming to young children. Always offer a tiny taste at first and let them spit it out if they really don't like it.
- Be persistent and don't give up too soon. Most parents give up if they have offered a food 3 or 4 times without success, but researchers have shown that young children may need as many as 10-14 tastings before they will accept an unfamiliar food. Recent studies have shown that giving a tiny taste every day for 2 weeks increases liking and intake of vegetables in young children. You can get more advice about offering 'tiny tastes' to encourage healthy eating habits at bit.ly/1p9t4ly
- Avoid using food as a reward. Offering sweets or pudding for finishing a main course can be counter-productive. Research shows that children like foods less if they have been rewarded with other foods for eating them.

[More information on Page 2](#)

For additional Parent Tips see www.ihv.org.uk

The information in this resource was updated on 20/09/2019 and will be reviewed again in 09/2021 and when new evidence becomes available.

© Institute of Health Visiting 2019

How can I encourage my child to eat vegetables?

- Praise is rewarding to children. Give your child lots of encouragement to try vegetables and then lots of praise if they do. However, the fussiest children may need a bigger incentive, so offer stickers or similar if necessary.
- Make healthy foods available and accessible. It sounds obvious, but in homes where there are lots of vegetables available, children eat more of them. Accessibility is important, too. Just as having a fruit bowl within reach will encourage your little one to eat fruit, having carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes or sticks of celery close to hand will boost their vegetable intake.
- Give vegetables as snacks. A colourful plate of chopped-up raw vegetables, such as cucumber, cherry tomatoes and sticks of red pepper, with hummus or a plain yogurt dip makes a great snack and goes a long way towards the magic 5 or more a day. Make sure that you give food in sizes and textures which your child can manage safely. The NHS advises to cut small, round foods, like grapes and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces (bit.ly/2m6G8Qv). Don't give too many pieces to the child to feed themselves, they may cram too many into their mouth! Avoid very hard foods and avoid nuts. Never let your child throw food up in the air and try to catch it in their mouth. See the iHV Parent Tip: Preventing choking - bit.ly/2m1NVPK
- If all else fails, vegetables can be hidden in other dishes or sauces, but do try to give tastes of individual vegetables to your child too, so they become familiar with the real taste.

For more information, see:

Visit **First Steps Nutrition Trust** for helpful tips on eating well from birth to five years old:

bit.ly/2kSdpP1

Visit **Healthy Start** for information on getting vouchers for healthy foods and vitamins for your family here:

bit.ly/1jusLvR

To try the 'tiny tastes' method of encouraging healthy eating habits in your little one, visit the **Weight Concern website**:

bit.ly/1p9t4ly

The **Start4Life Information Service for Parents** provides free information and advice. Find out more at:

bit.ly/1iC4rrO

For additional Parent Tips see www.ihv.org.uk

The information in this resource was updated on 20/09/2019 and will be reviewed again in 09/2021 and when new evidence becomes available.

© Institute of Health Visiting 2019