

## Clever Ways to Teach Your Kids Healthy Eating Habits

How can you get your picky eater to give peas a chance? (As well as other vegetables, for that matter.) How do you make sure your little one is getting all the vitamins and minerals she needs each day?

It can be tough, especially if you have a choosy eater. While it's a known fact that good nutrition provides your child the best start in life, healthy eating habits are not built-in from birth.

To champion healthy eating in the family, parents need to invest their time, energy, resources – and exercise some creative thinking.

### From Picky Eater to Healthy Diner

With an informed, clever strategy, your children will be able to enjoy the advantages of healthy eating. Try the following tips for teaching your kids healthy eating habits that will serve them for life:

- Walk the talk

Lead the way to healthy eating by being a healthy eater yourself. **Children learn best by example**, so make sure you are making good food choices and you have a positive outlook on eating for your little ones to follow.

- Make it easy as pie

Stock your fridge and pantry with nutritious foods. **Prepare meals and snacks where wholesome foods are the star**. The aim is when anyone reaches out for food, the first thing they will be able to grab will be something good for them. Make a healthy option the easy option.

- Try 5 times

Variety in your child's diet is important, so a good rule of thumb is to make sure your little one's meal contains at least three of the five recommended [food groups for children](#). Introducing a new food? **Offer a taste at least five times in various intervals** or when the timing is right. Let your toddler get used to the flavor and texture first, and most likely she will start eating that food without fuss the next time you serve it.

- Make milk a regular

Make it a point to include lots of milk in your children's daily diet especially if they have already been weaned from the breast or the bottle. **Milk is a good source of calcium, which is crucial for optimal bone growth** in childhood and adolescence and for preventing premature bone density loss in adulthood.

- Maximize your milk formula

**PediaSure can be added to a wide range of foods and beverages** to boost both the flavor and the nutrition factor. All-time favorite PediaSure [recipes for picky eaters](#) (that are great for enthusiastic eaters, too) include both sweet and savory treats such as health bars, yoghurt smoothies, sandwich fillings, muffins, mac and cheese, mashed potatoes and more.

- Sneak in the goods

Cultivating healthy eating habits is built on trust, encouragement and understanding. But a little resourcefulness goes a long way. Blend carrots and zucchini puree into your spaghetti sauce. Make smoothies and popsicles creamier with fortified milk. Even chocolate cake batter can include carrots and zucchini. These and more can **add nutrients to regular dishes without affecting the flavor** – it can even improve the taste.

- Bank on rituals

Family rituals are great for strengthening bonds as well as **instilling important life lessons**. Tuesday Taco Nights, BBQ and Salad Weekends and Pizza Nights are gatherings that everybody can look forward to. And they're also a clever way for kids to have fun assembling their own food using fresh, wholesome ingredients that you had handpicked.

- Recruit your troops

It's a time-tested technique: **Empower them to make decisions and get them involved in the process**. Take them food shopping or assign them simple food preparation chores. Your preschooler, for instance, can handle stirring ingredients in a bowl. Your toddler can choose dinner tonight (just make him pick from two healthy options you have pre-selected). By letting them "help," you can make them more interested in eating what they have "made."

- Glammed up or smart and simple – it's up to you.

**Children are attracted to great visuals**. That's why star-shaped sandwiches and unicorn smoothies are popular among parents who want to encourage their kids to eat more. But elaborately laid-out bentos are not a requirement. Good old messy burgers beefed up with veggies or no-cook finger foods can be just as enticing for your kid.

- Minimize cleanup

There will be a mess. It's a fact of life for parents with children learning to eat. So don't let the concept of mess add stress to mealtimes. What you can do is to **manage it with the right equipment**. Use a bib with sleeves or with a food catcher at the bottom. Invest in bowls with suction bottoms. Put a waterproof cover on the floor

under her high chair to catch spills. Those are just some of the ways you can make after-meal cleanup more efficient and less daunting.

**Something to chew on**

It's helpful to remember that teaching your kids healthy eating habits takes **ongoing commitment** (plus a ton of patience and a crazy sense of humor). Moreover, eating well is just one part of the entire package. Regular exercise, stimulating physical and mental activities, time with nature and supportive interactions with people who care for them are all equally important in raising happy, healthy children.