

What's a Parent to Do?



How to get your kids to eat right!



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It doesn't have to be a battle to get them to join the "5 A Day for Better Health Program" by eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables. You know it's good for them - and you too! And you can make it fun, make it quick and make it easy!

Getting five servings of fruits and vegetables daily is not as hard as it seems. Rather than limiting vegetables and fruits to their traditional role as side accompaniments, try the following suggestions to make them the primary focus. Adults can use these tips, too. Currently, adults in America average about three servings of fruits and vegetables a day, rather than the recommended five. Remember, you can set the example for your children by getting your "5 A Day the Florida Way."

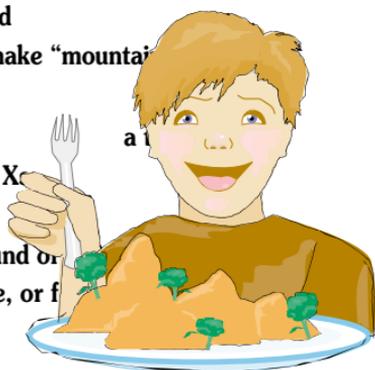
Make it Fun

Mountains of carrots - cook carrots (or potatoes) with a small amount of water in microwave for 5 to 10 minutes, depending on how small you cut them. Puree, season with salt and pepper, dollop onto plate, or use a pastry bag or pipe to form "mountains."

Mountains and trees - make mashed potatoes and stick broccoli florets into them to make "mountain ranges."

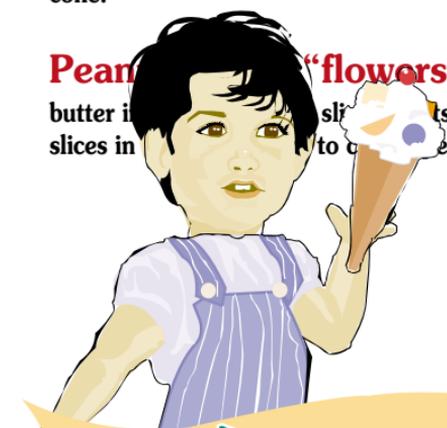
Tic-tac-toe - place celery sticks in a 3x3 pattern; use carrot "coins" for Os and sticks for Xs.

Cool it - for tropical coolers, puree one pound of mango or pineapple with a little sugar and club soda. Serve over ice, or frozen in an ice cream cone.



Cone head - serve fruit with cottage cheese or yogurt in an ice cream cone.

Peanut butter "flowers" - start with a tablespoon of peanut butter in an ice cream cone. Slice strawberries or celery thinly on diagonal and place slices in the cone to look like petals. Add a drop of blue food coloring to the peanut butter "flowers."



Make it Quick

Look for pre-peeled citrus fruit in your produce section. Serve fresh out of the jar or combine in fruit salad, or broil with honey and cinnamon.

Don't forget to top hot cereal with fruit.

Add finely grated cucumber to dressings and dips.

Puree strawberries or a mango with a little honey or sugar and serve 1/4 cup over yogurt, cut fruit, or waffles.

Layer fresh fruit with low-fat yogurt and serve in a parfait glass.

Use flavored yogurt for quick salad dressings (pineapple yogurt with thinly sliced cabbage or grated carrots).

Substitute avocado for sour cream on tacos or burritos. It's similar in fat and calorie content, but richer in nutrients.

Get two servings simply by slicing up bananas, strawberries or other fruit over a bowl of cereal and drinking a glass of 100 percent orange juice. Three-fourths of a cup of fruit juice constitutes a serving, as does 1/2 cup of fruit.

Use mashed avocado for topping on a baked potato instead of butter for a great taste with lots of potassium and other nutrients.

Add chopped vegetables - such as broccoli or spinach - to your favorite rice or pasta mix.

Saute Italian-seasoned breadcrumbs in a little margarine for topping on green beans, broccoli, cauliflower or squash.

Don't forget mushrooms for that steak - just 5 medium mushrooms make up a complete vegetable serving.

Bake or microwave root vegetables - like carrots, parsnips, turnips or onions - with honey.



Make it Easy

Microwave sliced red peppers and onions (at a 3-to-1 ratio) with a little olive oil, basil, salt and pepper. Puree mixture and use for colorful sauce over pasta, grilled fish or chicken.

Saute 1 teaspoon of garlic in a little butter or margarine; add grated rind and juice of 2 oranges. Bring to a boil and simmer 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper; serve over cooked vegetables - such as broccoli, cauliflower, brussel sprouts or green beans.

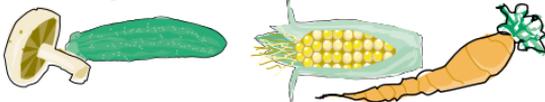
Combine equal amounts of pureed mango and chicken broth, a little lime juice, and jalapeno, if desired, in a saucepan. Cook over medium heat for a few minutes. Serve with stir-fried vegetables or grilled meats.

Whip up a fruit smoothie for a quick breakfast or snack. Blend 1/2 cup non-fat or low-fat yogurt and 1/2 cup skim milk with one of your favorite fruits (bananas, blueberries, strawberries, melons or mangoes). If using unflavored yogurt, add a dash of vanilla extract and a pinch of sugar for extra flavor. Garnish with a strawberry or slice of carambola.

Combine orange juice with raisins or currants and a cinnamon stick in a saucepan. Simmer for a few minutes and add a few sliced bananas; simmer 2 minutes more. Top with yogurt and serve for breakfast or as a dessert.

For “star” pancakes, start with your favorite pancake batter. Place a slice of carambola on prepared griddle, then pour batter on top. Remember to serve 6 ounces of orange juice with this to get two servings of fruit at the first meal of the day.

Add pureed cooked vegetables - such as carrots, corn, or zucchini - to ground meat dishes like meatloaf and burgers.



Put chopped vegetables into canned chicken or vegetable broth to turn those vegetables into soup. Getting children to eat vegetable soup is often easier than getting them to eat vegetables alone.

Add pureed or shredded vegetables and fruits - bananas, carrots, pumpkin, squash, prunes - to homemade muffins, cookies, cakes, and quick bread. Substitute 1/2 cup of vegetables for 1/4 cup liquid, or 1/2 cup of pureed fruit for 2 tablespoons of margarine or oils.

Don't be stuck on tradition when cooking greens - such as collards, turnips or mustard greens. Just saute quickly in a little olive oil. Season with chopped garlic, salt and pepper. There's no need for long cooking times, which deplete vitamin and fiber content.

School Lunch Ideas

The average school lunch time is about 21 minutes. Consider the time children take to visit, and take restroom breaks - they may have as little as 10 minutes to eat lunch. So remember to make those lunch foods convenient.

Be sure vegetable snacks are portable. Keep carrot and celery sticks and peeled orange and tangerine sections packed in snack-size, zip-seal bags so kids can eat them on the go.

Slice a carambola for boxed lunches. Your child will be a "star."

Get your child involved in preparing and packaging lunches. Just one medium fruit, or 1/2 cup of chopped vegetable, equals a complete serving.

Five A Day can be fun and your children can participate in creative ways to attain better eating habits.

