

My Child won't eat Vegetables



This is a very common problem for children. Vegetables and fruit are part of the same food group and contain similar vitamins and minerals. As long as your child has a good intake of fruit (at least 2 serves a day) she/he should not miss out on any of these essential nutrients.

Most children consume some vegetables

You can overlook the fact that your child may be eating some vegetables e.g. potatoes, sliced tomato in a sandwich, frozen peas. Remember, some intake is better than none.

Give positive messages

Children often pick up messages that vegetables aren't enjoyable but must be eaten because they are "good for you". Bribes reinforce this message. E.g. "you won't get any dessert until you have eaten your vegetables". This tells your child that vegetables are something to be endured while dessert is something special. This will not help long term!

Force-feeding also needs to be avoided. This sets up a battle of wills and young children have very strong wills! It is usually a no win situation.

Be a great role model

Children learn by example and by being involved. This may be by:

- Watching adults or children eating - children cannot be expected to eat vegetables if they never see other people eating them
- Growing vegetables e.g. radishes are easy to grow in a shoe box, try sprouting alfalfa beans or growing some baby carrots or cherry tomatoes
- Helping to choose vegetables at the shop or from the garden
- Selecting vegetables for the evening meal
- Helping prepare vegetables or salads

Offering vegetables in a variety of ways

- Using different cooking methods e.g. potatoes, roasted, mashed, as wedges, etc
- Serving them raw – carrots, cauliflower, celery, tomatoes - individually or on a platter
- partially cooked - stir fried
- in recipes e.g. soups, rissoles, meat loaf, mashes

Keep offering new vegetables every couple of weeks even if your child doesn't seem to like them. Children's tastes are still developing and eventually they are likely to give things a try.

Research shows that repeated exposure and role modelling are the two key ingredients for getting your child to eat a variety of vegetables.

Your role is to provide the healthy food options for your child to eat. If the healthy food isn't eaten don't be tempted to offer biscuits or milk. Keep offering the healthy options. Be strong – it will not harm a child to go hungry once in a while!

This information is not intended to replace the advice of your doctor or individual consultation with a Registered Dietician. This information may only be used in its entirety.

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Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Pōari Hauora o Waiānae