

Fill Up With Fruits and Vegetables!

Getting your family to eat enough fruits and vegetables is probably difficult all year, but it may be especially challenging during the winter months, long after the farmers' markets have closed and the backyard gardens are empty. Since vegetables are the food group most often rejected by kids, it can take some creativity to incorporate them into their daily diet. In fact, there are several books on the market now that teach parents the how-to's of sneaking pureed fruits and vegetables into children's meals and snacks. While this may sound unconventional, it is a way of ensuring that your children don't miss out on the essential nutrients that fruits and veggies provide. By making and freezing fruit and vegetable purees, you can quickly sneak them into foods that your kids already love such as smoothies, muffins, soups, pizza and pasta sauces, and even macaroni and cheese. Here are some more tips to encourage fruits and vegetables all winter long:

1. Make hearty soups and stews chock full of winter vegetables. Freeze in individual containers for a quick supper.
2. Print the fruit and vegetable chart from www.dole5aday.com, hang it on the refrigerator, and have kids take turns choosing a new fruit and vegetable to try each week.
3. Put cut up vegetables with low fat dip out before dinner to encourage healthy munching.
4. Take your child to the grocery store and let them explore the produce aisle. Ask them to pick out a new item to try that week.
5. Let children help out in the kitchen. If they are part of the meal preparation, they will be more willing to try new foods.
6. Color your plate! Make a game out of eating different colored vegetables, changing the color each week. This will encourage your children to try a variety of new veggies. Here are some examples: Green – lettuce, peppers, broccoli, beans, peas, cabbage, green apples, honeydew, kiwifruit; Orange/Yellow – carrots, butternut squash, winter squash, cantaloupe, oranges, sweet potatoes, lemons, peaches, mangoes, papayas; Red – tomatoes, peppers, red onions, red apples, red grapes, strawberries, cherries, raspberries, cranberries; Blue/Purple – eggplant, purple grapes, plums, raisins, blueberries, blackberries, figs; White – cauliflower, bananas, jicama, pears, potatoes, turnips, garlic, onions, mushrooms;

Remember, children need 2 ½ cups of vegetables and 1 ½ cups of fruits each day.! Look for some of these winter specialties to appear in your school cafeteria:

- Beets
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Artichokes
- Kale
- Mushrooms
- Onions
- Sweet potatoes
- Winter squash
- Apples
- Pears

