

# Feeding Tactics

## *Tips to help kids enjoy eating every veggie from avocado to zucchini*

- Start at the beginning! Introduce vegetables as your child's first foods—first as puree, then as finger foods. For finger foods, steam or sauté veggies until they are very soft, let them cool and then cut them into tiny pieces (yet big enough to pick up, about the size of a pea). Frozen peas are easy to thaw in hot water. Fresh yellow squash and zucchini are very quick to sauté stove-top. Also, beets, carrots, yams and even cauliflower will become soft enough for them to “gum” in lieu of chew. Ripe, raw avocados are great too, because you can take them on-the-go and cut them up when you're ready to serve them. Note: some vegetables can cause some babies to become gassy or constipated. Start with small, trial-size portions.
- If a child starts off eating vegetables in lieu of cereals, teething biscuits and other foods with higher sugar content, then s/he is more likely to develop a taste for vegetables.
- Toddlers and young children usually respond well to encouraging phrases like, “ballerinas love broccoli” and “firemen eat lot's of beets.” Or, select a favorite friend or relative: “Cousin Katie loves squash!” Or, try statements like, “I'm fixing you Cinderella's favorite breakfast this morning. This is what princesses eat.”
- Bring it to your child's awareness that the foods s/he eats have specific effects on him/her. That is, if a child who is intolerant to dairy has some milk or cheese and is subsequently sneezing or has increased mucus, you can relate the symptom back to the food (i.e. “Milk can give you a runny nose”).
- If a child won't eat a food today, try re-introducing it in several weeks. Keep trying every couple of months, if necessary.
- If a child refuses a food when it is prepared in one manner, try preparing it in a different manner the next time it is introduced. For example, try slicing zucchini in rounds and then in long sticks or puree it; or try sautéing a vegetable in butter then roasting it with herbs in the oven.
- Children seem to eat more variety when they routinely eat at the dinner table with family members who are modeling good eating habits.
- If “junk” food is not in the house, then children will eat less of it. A child can't be expected to eat healthy foods if that is not what is modeled in the household. Children are surprisingly adaptable to changes in their diets. We have found that it is actually more difficult for parents to change their eating habits than it is for the children to do so.