

CHOOSE TO BOOST VEGGIES & FRUIT



Early Exposure and Role Modeling

Food preferences are set early in a child's life meaning that families and childcare settings have a big role to play. Continued exposure to healthier foods leads kids to a greater acceptance and preference for these foods. Children learn about food by watching others and are more likely to meet the recommended vegetable and fruit intake when they see adults eating these foods often.



1. Be your family's best role model. Choose healthy, whole foods for yourself and eat meals together.
2. Offer a variety of vegetables and fruits often and at every meal starting when children are infants.
3. Keep offering new foods and don't give up because they don't like it the first time!

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Turn off screens for family meals

Make time for family meals. Families that eat together, away from the TV, eat more vegetables and fruits. Choose to make family meals a priority to create life-long, healthy behaviours.



TRY
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- 1. Work with your family to create a household rule that screens are off during family meals.**
- 2. Choose to make healthy eating with your family a priority. Plan ahead to have meal ingredients in the fridge. Make double batches and freeze leftovers for busy nights.**
- 3. Get children involved with making meals. They will be excited to sit down as a family to eat what they have created.**

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Get children involved in making meals

Children who help prepare meals at home tend to eat more vegetables and fruit and are better at choosing and eating healthy foods themselves. Let children help with meal planning and cooking. Teach them about Canada's Food Guide and making healthy choices.

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1. If weeknights are rushed, make a point of cooking something together on weekends.
2. Children of all ages can be involved in different ways starting with setting the table, filling pots, stirring and eventually cutting. Encourage children to help in any way that they can to instill an interest in cooking and preparing food.



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Getting the community onboard

Community events are often settings where unhealthy meals, drinks and snacks are offered or purchased. Get involved in your community to find out where there are opportunities for change. How can we work together as a community to make healthy choices available everywhere?

Around the Community

Talk to your children's school council about how small changes around the school will help all students to be healthy and learn better. Can junk food fundraisers be replaced with healthy options like freshfromfarm.ca? Can the school offer apples instead of freezies as rewards?

Are poor snack and beverage choices being offered at sporting events? Speak with sports organizers about healthy sideline snacks. Visit WaterDoesWonders.ca for resources.

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Vegetables and Fruit: Building healthy behaviours

Healthy eating helps children concentrate and perform better in school, sports and other activities. Additionally, it can promote better sleep which, in turn, is associated with increased physical activity and better academic performance. Work as a family to turn healthy behaviours into habits.

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1. Pack healthy snacks made from the four food groups when heading out the door. It is much easier to have healthy choices with you, then to find places to purchase them. Limit snacks from the 'other' food group including chips, chocolate bars and pop.
2. Make sleep and physical activity a priority. Take a family walk after dinner to improve digestion and promote healthy sleep.

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Marketing to children

Vegetables and fruit must compete with heavily marketed, often unhealthy and highly processed foods. Unhealthy foods are often promoted as delicious, cool, cheap and are easily accessed. Be aware of how marketing affects children's choices and help increase your family's knowledge about food.



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- 1. Read food labels and ingredient labels at the grocery store with your child. Choose whole foods first. Look for foods that are lower in sugar, with no artificial sweeteners and are made with whole grains. Visit Canada.ca/Nutrition/Facts to learn more about food labels.**
- 2. Avoid treating unhealthy foods as a reward for good behavior. Instead, spend time together trying a new activity or playing a game. Teach children that food is for nourishing our bodies and giving us energy and to treat our bodies with care by choosing healthy foods.**

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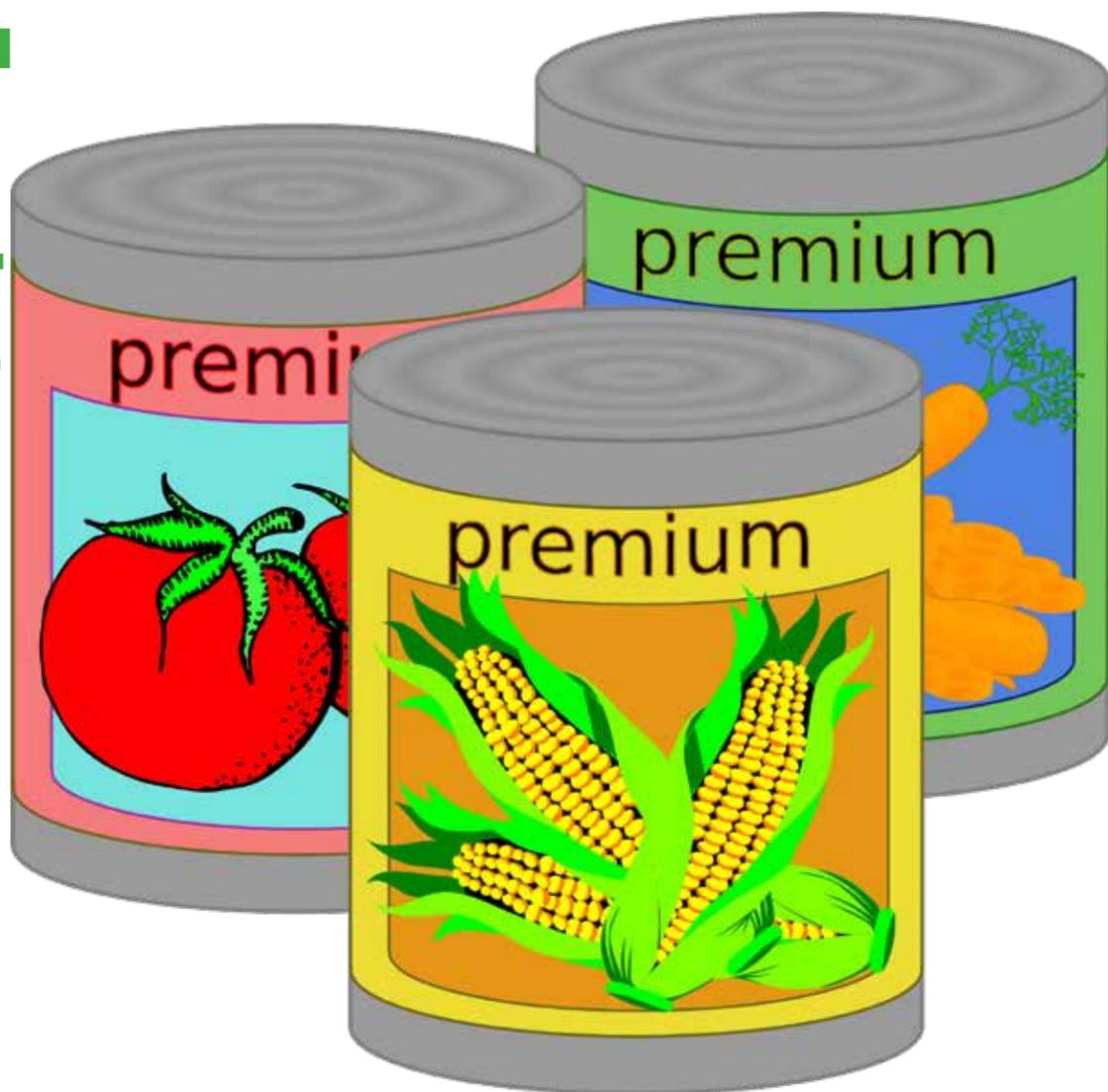
Half your Plate!

How many vegetables and fruits should you be eating each day? What is a serving size? There is a lot to know about healthy eating. Simply, if you fill half your plate with vegetables and fruits at each meal and snack, you will be getting about the right amount of vegetables and fruits.



1. Include vegetables at every meal and snack, even breakfast!
2. Try this activity with your children – use a marker to separate a paper plate into quarters. Use grocery store flyers and cut out pictures of foods to fill their plate. Half the plate should be vegetables and fruits, a quarter grains and a quarter meat and alternatives.

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Fresh, frozen, canned or dried?

Frozen and canned vegetables and fruit generally have the same nutritional value as fresh. They can be an affordable way to get the recommended daily servings. Dried fruit is a nutritious choice. Look for varieties with no added sugar or salt when buying frozen, canned or dried.

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1. Try adding dried or frozen blueberries to oatmeal for breakfast or canned vegetables into baking such as pumpkin muffins. Frozen vegetables like peas or spinach work well in soups.
2. Save money and retain nutrients by preserving in-season vegetables through freezing. Many vegetables and fruits freeze well to use at a later time in recipes.

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THE NUMBERS YOU NEED TO KNOW



Countdown to a healthy lifestyle

These are the numbers to think about to keep healthy! Changing behaviours takes time. As a family use these numbers to set reasonable goals. Post those goals on your fridge and work together to follow through. Parents should lead by example!

Ages 2-4

- 10 or more hours of sleep
- 4 or more vegetables and fruits
- 3 or more hours of physical activity throughout the day
- 1 hour or less a day watching screens or being inactive
- 0 sugar-sweetened beverages

Ages 5-17

- 10 or more hours of sleep
- 5 or more vegetables and fruits
- 2 hours or less of screen time
- 1 hour or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity
- 0 sugar-sweetened beverages