



12

WAYS TO GET KIDS TO EAT HEALTHY



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Knowing the best approach for your children can feel overwhelming. Below are some practical tips to help you get started.





1. Start Early

The easiest way to cultivate healthy eating habits in children is by introducing nutritious foods from the very start. When children are accustomed to wholesome options, they're less inclined to crave sugary snacks and processed foods.

Children who grow up on a diet heavy in bread, pasta, and other refined foods can take time and effort to break those habits. Conversely, when children, from the outset, are introduced to a diet low in carbs and high in healthy fats, it's a much easier process.

It's worth noting that taste buds adapt to the foods they're exposed to regularly. For instance, breastfed infants naturally gravitate towards fats, aligning with a ketogenic-like diet, as breast milk provides essential nutrients for their developing brains. By consistently offering nutritious choices, we can guide our children towards a preference for wholesome foods, setting them on a path to lifelong health.





2. What about sweets?

It's much easier to keep children on track rather than transitioning them from a processed diet to a healthy one.

What many parents don't realize is that overcoming the craving for sweets isn't all about mental strength. Cravings are strongly influenced by the bacteria in your gut, which release chemicals to make you eat the foods the bacteria need to thrive.

It's a chemical survival mechanism that you can only influence by changing the composition of your gut microbiome. That's one of the reasons why removing processed foods from your child's diet is difficult.

The good news is that it can be done, and you can change your children's microbiome over the course of a few weeks. Better yet, feed your children an appropriate diet from the beginning. This helps establish the right type of gut bacteria — the ones that crave high-quality sources of protein and fat.

3. Be a role model

Children often learn from what they see, not from what you tell them. So be a role model and don't tell your children to stop eating the very junk food that you continue eating.

In fact, you won't be successful in changing your kids' eating habits if you don't change yours first. So adopt a healthy lifestyle, and show them how it's done and how good it feels.

Only then will you truly understand the struggles, cravings, sugar withdrawal symptoms and social awkwardness that come with this transition.

I also encourage you to act as a team with your spouse or significant other, if you have one. If you're not on the same page about how to feed your kids, they'll get mixed signals and won't know what to believe.

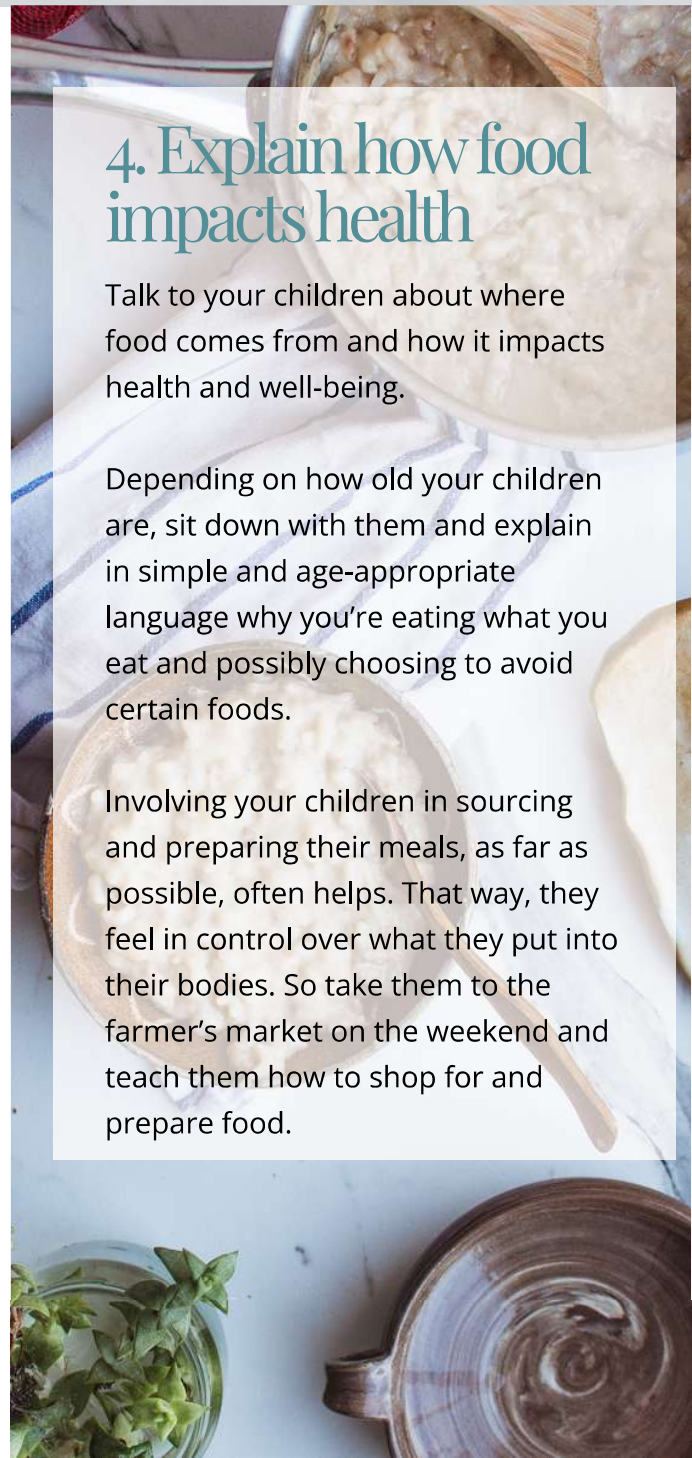
The same is true for grandparents and other caregivers. Help them understand how you do things and why. I know this can be a very touchy subject, but the bottom line is that you have to be firm.

4. Explain how food impacts health

Talk to your children about where food comes from and how it impacts health and well-being.

Depending on how old your children are, sit down with them and explain in simple and age-appropriate language why you're eating what you eat and possibly choosing to avoid certain foods.

Involving your children in sourcing and preparing their meals, as far as possible, often helps. That way, they feel in control over what they put into their bodies. So take them to the farmer's market on the weekend and teach them how to shop for and prepare food.



5. Only buy what you want them to eat

This might be the most powerful, logical piece of advice I can give you. If you don't want your children to eat sweets or certain snacks, then don't have them at home!



We have a rule in our house: whatever food you can find in the house can be eaten (with the exception of alcohol, coffee and similar items). The trick is that we don't have any food at home that we wouldn't want our children to eat.

By having put this framework in place, there is no opportunity to get into an argument over what food the children want. If it's there, anybody can eat it. If not, we don't bring it home.

6. Enjoy healthy fats

Human taste buds respond positively to sugar and fat. That's the reason why your favourite low-fat yogurt tastes so good; because it's loaded with sugar.

Despite what you've been told, saturated fats and cholesterol don't cause heart disease and they don't clog up your arteries. But guess what does? Sugar, processed carbs and vegetable oils (we'll talk about the latter in the next tip).

So start removing foods that are high in processed carbs from your childrens diets and start feeding them real food that's loaded with healthy fats such as grass-fed butter, coconut oil, avocado oil, olive oil.

Simple, delicious and healthy meals helped our childrens' metabolisms, eliminates cravings and the need for constant snacking while allowing them to sleep soundly and we know we are doing the best for their health.

7. Decrease snacks

The standard dietary advice is to eat three meals a day (breakfast, lunch and dinner) and to have some snacks in between to prevent your blood sugar from crashing. But we don't all need that and when our blood sugars are stable, we can reduce the amount of snacks we have!

It's essential to learn to listen to your body and eat when hungry, not just according to the clock or at a certain event or any of the other reasons we set up for ourselves.

If children are hungry between meals, remember to include protein with their snack in order to maintain stable blood sugars and keep it size-appropriate to carry them through so they are hungry for their next meal.

8 Leaving food is OK

It's vital to break free from the traditional notion that finishing everything on the plate is necessary. Instead, encourage listening to their bodies and respecting their internal cues for hunger and satiety. Teaching children that it's okay to leave food on their plate empowers them to develop a healthy relationship with food. One based on intuition rather than obligation.



However, it's equally important to instill the understanding that the next meal will be at the next scheduled time. This helps prevent the misconception that refusing food now will lead to alternative options a few minutes later. By striking this balance, we guide our children towards a mindful approach to eating, fostering a lifelong appreciation for nourishing their bodies in tune with their needs.



9. Prepare meals yourself

Children love to discover new foods.

Navigating the jungle of food labels is difficult. That's because brands try their best to make you believe that their food is good for you, even if it isn't. Plus, nutritional labels can be confusing, especially if you don't know what half of the ingredients mean or how healthy they are.

That's why I recommend staying away from packaged and processed foods as much as possible and, instead, cooking as many meals as you can from scratch using fresh ingredients.

I know that cooking every meal from scratch might be daunting. The good news is that cooking a natural diet is much simpler than you might think. Meat, veg and some grains don't need to be complicated and can be very tasty.

10. Exceptions are fine

Making healthy muffins / bites on occasion is absolutely fine.



Speaking of treats and exceptions: I think both are fine as long as they don't become the rule. For example, if you're having regular pizza every Friday, then that isn't an exception anymore.

The problem is that children can have a tough time differentiating between a one-time event and a routine.



11. Swap out their favourite foods

It's not difficult to make homemade versions of most foods, if you put in a little effort. Think ice lollies, pizzas, "fish fingers" or burgers!



12. Don't use unhealthy food as a reward

Many parents use unhealthy foods, as a reward for good behaviour.

This creates a positive association that's counter-productive and confusing for children. More importantly, it gives the message that unhealthy food (the reward) is better than healthy food.

However, if you want to reward good behaviour with food, use a food they usually don't get, or at least something that can be considered "healthy enough."

A special treat could be a banana or a homemade smoothie. However, be careful of using these as rewards for good behaviour.

Just allow yourselves (and your children) to have those treats from time to time, regardless.