

## the colour benefits...

eating vegetables and good health go hand in hand

Study after study shows that people who eat vegetables have more protection against, and subsequently suffer less from, lifestyle diseases. Eating lots of vegetables is an insurance policy towards good health.

## colour can make it fun

Colourful vegetables contain many of the nutrients, minerals and phytochemicals (fight-o-chemicals) your body needs to maintain good health and energy. They also protect against some lifestyle diseases. Many of the phytochemicals and other compounds that make vegetables such healthy foods also give them their colour.

There are many different phytochemicals and compounds associated with the colour – so to ensure you get a wide range of them you need to try and eat vegetables from each of the colour groups every day.

**red**  
tomatoes, red peppers, etc

**orange/yellow**  
carrots, pumpkins, etc

**brown/white**  
cauliflower, potatoes, etc

**green**  
beans, broccoli, etc

**blue/purple**  
egg plant, beetroot, etc



## reality bites...

establishing any habit takes effort

A love of vegetables doesn't necessarily come easily and some children will be more receptive than others. Eating and enjoying vegetables needs to be part of your family lifestyle and as natural as cleaning your teeth or having a shower.

## a lot of rejections are common

Children are naturally drawn to familiar foods. Research shows that children may have to be exposed to a 'new' food or flavour seven to ten times before they think of it as 'familiar'. So you may have to offer new foods, or the same food cooked differently, lots of times before you get acceptance. The problem is that most of us give up after about the third or fourth rejection on the assumption they don't like it. So don't give up!

## eating vegetables needs to be 'normal'

Many parents expect children to dislike vegetables and reinforce that belief by some of their comments. Try not to call children 'good' or make a fuss because they eat their vegetables.

## 5+ A Day is for the whole family

Now is a good time to check the whole family eats 5+ A Day. If the rest of your household doesn't eat vegetables it is unlikely that your children will.



One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is a love of vegetables.

Once established, this love of vegetables will be with them for their lifetime.

Nutritionally, you are doing them a wonderful service and setting them on the path of a long, healthy and happy lifestyle.

further information and recipes at  
**vegetables.co.nz**

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## getting involved...

### lead by example

Attitudes to vegetables are caught rather than taught! Make sure your children see you eating and enjoying different vegetables.



### be positive about vegetables

Try to avoid comments such as "if you eat your vegetables, you can have some pudding." What you are actually saying is that vegetables are 'horrible' things that have to be eaten and, what's more, when they have there will be something nice as a reward for their endurance! Giving food as a reward can give the wrong message to your children. Better to reward with trips to the park, a story or something non-foody!

### involve the children

From time to time include your children in selecting vegetables, washing, peeling, chopping, slicing, cooking and serving. You may be amazed how much more cucumber your children will eat if they were the ones doing the slicing! Even growing some vegetables can make children more interested.

### get realistic with your expectations

There are so many different tastes and textures of vegetables; it is unrealistic to expect your children to like every type.

It is also unbelievable that a child doesn't like any!



### go with the flow

Some parents worry that their children aren't eating enough or any vegetables. To a large extent you have to just 'go with the flow' as long as vegetables continue to be present and regularly offered in your household

they will eventually come into favour. If children leave vegetables, don't make a big issue, but continue to offer next time. Have fun at mealtimes - happy relaxed children are more receptive to new foods.

### same food for all the family

Your ultimate aim is that the children eat the same food as the rest of the family. Even when you have made things that you suspect your children may not like, with flavours that are strong or spicy, still give them a little to expose them to new foods. Remember, to make a food familiar some children will need to try it seven to ten times before they will like it.

### make it easy on yourself

If you have the time, occasionally add special touches that children will love - a face on salad or their name written with sauce. But don't set yourself up that this is the norm.



## bright ideas with vegetables...

### keep things interesting

- Serve vegetables raw and/or cooked and present them in different ways or cut in new shapes.

- Offer a wide range and introduce new varieties - reintroduce ones which have previously been rejected, perhaps served in a different way.

- Children can be quirky - even the colour of the plate can be the difference between eating it or not.

### vary the times and places that you offer vegetables

For tv or after school snacks - add some carrot or celery to the plate that includes some of the more 'expected' foods.

On a picnic take a bag of carrots or pop a whole carrot in the lunchbox. Most children, and adults, confronted with a choice of a choc bar or a carrot are not going to choose the carrot.

Equally if the choice is not there, most children will happily eat the carrot. Use other raw vegetables as well.



### 5+ A Day is an easy model that children can relate to

For good health it is essential to eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables each day (or strive for five for under fives) and ideal if you can eat from each colour group. Specifically, the recommendations are three or

more servings of vegetables and two or more servings of fruits every day. A serving is about a handful and everyone uses their own hand so a child's serving is smaller than an adult's.



### start with a known favourite

- Potato wedges are an almost universal hit with children. Keep the potatoes as the hero and using the same cooking technique add kumara, parsnip, carrot or pumpkin wedges.

- With time you can become even more adventurous adding peppers, courgettes and egg plant to the mix. Start by adding small amounts. Chicken nuggets, fish fingers or sausages added to the roasting pan makes a quick complete meal.

- Mashed potato also rates really well with most children. Kumara, carrot, parsnip and pumpkin all mash brilliantly and give variety. Start by adding only one piece of the other vegetable to your potatoes. Once they have tasted and enjoyed the mash then you can increase the other vegetables. Eventually they will like not only mashed potato but other mashed vegetables as well.

- When you find a sauce that your children like, such as orange glazed pumpkin, use the same sauce over other similar vegetables.

- Sometimes it is the texture that children either like or dislike. A chunky soup may get the thumbs down, but blend it to a smoother consistency and you may get a totally different response. Once you have found a soup they like, change the ingredients bit by bit so you widen their taste experiences.

### take advantage of eating out

- Lots of children first try foods like fried rice or noodles, nachos, pizza, kumara wedges, coleslaws, salads or hamburgers when they are out. For some reason this can make the food 'special' but fortunately many of these dishes include quite a few vegetables. Repeat the experience at home, each time just varying slightly what you include.

- Tortillas and tacos are a fun way for children to eat vegetables - serve a selection of sliced cucumber or celery, grated carrots, tomato wedges, etc and let the children make their own.

- For lots of delicious and easy vegetable recipes and ideas visit [vegetables.co.nz](http://vegetables.co.nz)

### be subtle

- Add finely chopped or grated carrots, beans, mushrooms, onions, etc to curries, bolognaise, lasagna or nacho sauces - half the time children won't even know they are there.

further information and recipes at

**vegetables.co.nz**

