



How to grow a future healthy eater

Healthful eating habits include eating fruits and vegetables every day. They help protect us from cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. How can we make eating fruits and vegetables a healthful eating habit for our families?

Your baby's first taste

The foods you choose guide your children's eating choices at every stage of life, and maybe even during pregnancy. Healthful eating habits can begin during pregnancy, when flavors from food you eat move into the fluid around your baby. Around the fourth month, your baby begins swallowing that fluid and tasting those flavors. Later on, babies seem to prefer flavors of foods their mothers ate during pregnancy. You can start healthful eating habits during pregnancy by eating all types of fruits and vegetables, such as carrots, broccoli, green beans, squash, apples, oranges, bananas, kiwis, and cantaloupes.

Food flavors in your breastmilk

Breastfeeding provides many benefits for mother and baby, including disease protection not found anywhere else. But did you know that flavors from the foods you eat pass into your breastmilk? This may help your baby better accept these foods later.

Watching what you eat

From 6 to 8 months of age, your baby watches what you eat and may start grabbing food from your plate.

It's important to show that you **like to eat** fruits and vegetables.

Most babies enjoy the taste of mild vegetables. Start offering cooked, mashed, or strained vegetables, fruits, and meats. Try a new food every five to seven days. Continue breastfeeding until your baby is one year old. If you don't breastfeed, be sure you offer formula with iron.

Between 8 and 10 months, give soft, bite-size pieces of meat, and more cooked, mashed fruits and vegetables. Around 10–12 months, most babies can chew pieces of soft, ripe fruits and soft, cooked vegetables cut into bite-size pieces. They will drink more from a cup, less from a bottle.

Most children form their tastes for foods by 2 years of age. The foods you offer, and the foods your child sees you eat will shape her food choices later. When she sees you eating fruits, vegetables, whole-grain cereals and breads, and other healthy foods, she'll be more likely to accept them, too.

Your child wants what you eat

Before birth, during infancy, through food jags, picky eating, growth spurts, and many different stages, you guide your child's eating habits and preferences. Start early — during pregnancy and breastfeeding — by eating vegetables, fruits, and other healthy foods daily. That way, when your child eats what you eat, you are growing a future healthy eater!



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

ProtectTexas™
Texas Department of Health

© 2004.
Texas Department of Health.
All rights reserved.