

Creative ways to get children to eat vegetables

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Dr. Laura Bloom

(Medical Xpress)—Can you imagine a young child eating spinach, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts or even asparagus? Yes, it

can happen. "But how?" you ask.

Experts across both nutrition and child development fields offer multiple tips on ensuring good nutrition for [young children](#) through a variety of foods. More often than not, [vegetables](#) present the biggest challenge.

To make this process more successful, The University of Alabama's Dr. Laura Bloom offers a few tips on how parents can get the nutrition in their child and not in the doggie bowl.

- Set a good example. The best predictor of a child's eating is the pattern of their family and primary caregivers. Expose them to different vegetables at your own kitchen table – the earlier, the better.
- Talk to your [children](#) about the importance of [good nutrition](#) and the value of eating a variety of vegetables. Vegetables contain vitamins and minerals that are critical to their growth, and children are curious as to how their body works and what food does for them.
- Introduce sweeter vegetables like red peppers, carrots or corn first. Save the plain or bitter vegetables for later.
- Be creative. Try different vegetables and cook them in different ways. Be careful to not bribe children with fat-laden dips and sauces. Also, arrange their plates in creative shapes or even a smiley face.
- Involve your children in the preparation of the vegetables. Take them to the grocery store, talk about the variety of vegetables, and even have them help wash and prepare the vegetables once you get home. Older children can help peel and even stir them as you are cooking.
- Be persistent. Developing good habits take time. Introduce a new vegetable and encourage them to take at least one bite. It may take several times for a child to actually acquire the taste for a

new vegetable. Once they are accustomed to that vegetable, introduce another. Before you know it, the battle of the vegetables will become a win-win situation for you and your child!

Bloom is an assistant professor in UA's College of Human Environmental Sciences' department of human development and family studies.

Provided by University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa

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