

Winning the veggie wars with kids

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(HealthDay)—For every parent who's ever pleaded with their young child to eat "just one more bite," a nutrition expert says there are ways to get kids to eat and even enjoy vegetables.

Youngsters' tastes start being influenced while they're still in the womb, according to Richard Rosenkranz. He's an associate professor of food, nutrition, dietetics and health at Kansas State University.

"During pregnancy, an embryo and then a fetus is obtaining information about the outside world. So, moms can set the stage for what their kids will want to eat before they're even born," he said in a university news release.

Parents should eat the same [vegetables](#) they serve their babies and toddlers because little ones take cues from their parents.

"Babies start to think, 'Why does he keep putting this stuff in front of me, but he never eats it?' We're being watched by our kids from very young ages," Rosenkranz said.

Start with sweeter vegetables like corn and carrots, he suggested.

One way to encourage young school-aged children to eat vegetables is to cut and arrange them into smiley faces or animals.

"If you cut [fresh vegetables](#) into fun shapes or use grape tomatoes for eyes, suddenly the kids are taking something healthy they never would have eaten and actually enjoying it," Rosenkranz said.

Get children involved in food preparation and cooking as early as kindergarten and increase their kitchen responsibilities as they grow. If children grow vegetables, select them in the store, or prepare them in the kitchen, [kids](#) are more likely to eat more veggies, he said.

To boost teens' vegetable consumption, provide fully prepared vegetables in easy-to-access places. For example, set out a vegetable tray with dip for teens when they come home from school or have grab-and-

go vegetables in the fridge.

And, again, modeling good behavior by eating vegetables yourself is likely more effective than just telling your teen to eat vegetables, Rosenkranz said.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more on getting children to eat [vegetables and fruits](#).

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