

Getting kids in the habit of healthy eating

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(HealthDay)—Want to help your kids make healthy food choices when you're not with them? Make every meal at home a lesson in good nutrition.

Start by showing them what goes into a [healthy meal](#), ChooseMyPlate.gov from the U.S. Department of Agriculture suggests. Fill half their plate with fruits and veggies, one quarter with grains—preferably whole grains—and a quarter with protein, like lean meat, seafood, beans or tofu. Then let them practice making [smart choices](#) by serving themselves.

Keep portions small. A spoonful of fruits and veggies, a few bites of meat, and a quarter of a slice of bread is enough for [young children](#). Don't force them to clear their plate, but if they do, let them ask for seconds. Resist offering more on your own. Teach kids to eat slowly and with focus—not in front of the TV. They'll eat the right amount for their body and reduce their risk of obesity, a serious health threat.

Introduce new foods more than once, preparing them differently each time. You might first serve broccoli, for instance, as a baked potato topping. On another day, offer it raw or lightly steamed with a healthy dip. Sometimes kids need to see a new food a few times, often next to a familiar one, before deciding that they like it.

Have your kids help you in the kitchen with age-appropriate tasks. Even if they create a bit of a mess, they'll learn healthy cooking skills and be excited to eat what they made.

More information: The USDA Food and Nutrition Service has a [step-by-step guide](#) for teaching kids to make healthy food choices from an early age.

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