

New free resources launched to help children eat more vegetables

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Credit: University of Reading

Parents and carers will benefit from new free resources to help them encourage their young children to eat a greater variety of vegetables.

The See & Eat project, funded by European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Food, has launched a [new website](#), featuring a range of evidence-based activities and 24 eBooks in multiple languages for [parents](#) across Europe.

The See & Eat project is being led by Professor Carmel Houston-Price at the University of Reading and supported by partners including the British Nutrition Foundation (BNF). Following a successful initial launch late in 2019, the new See & Eat website will enable more families

across Europe to access the eBooks, which are now available in English, Italian, Finnish, Polish, Dutch and French, as well as a range of new evidence-based activities to help [children](#) try new vegetables.

The resources have been developed based on research showing that visual familiarity in the form of picture books is an effective way to increase a child's willingness to try and liking of vegetables. The project aims to deliver these familiarization-based resources in a way that is both effective and easily accessible to families.

Dr Natalie Masento, a collaborator on the project at the University of Reading said:

"Vegetables can be particularly difficult to introduce into young children's diets as they're less sweet than fruit and can often be rejected when they're first offered. It has been shown, however, that children's acceptance of vegetables can be boosted purely through increasing visual familiarity, and therefore our project's aim is to build on this research, while developing a series of accessible resources to help parents introduce more vegetables to their children. With the launch of the new website, we hope more parents from across Europe will find the eBooks easier to access, and will enjoy the new evidence-based activities we have developed."

New games and activities

New free activities which parents can access on the website include: a flash card game where children are asked to match pictures to the names of vegetables; VeggieSense, a guess-the-vegetable activity where parents encourage their children to explore vegetables through their sense of sight, touch and smell; instructions on how to grow your own cress; and shopping lists to involve children when choosing vegetables during the weekly shop.

Each profiling a different [vegetable](#), the 24 See & Eat eBooks are all interactive and can be viewed and personalized, using audio, video and pictures, through the Our Story 2 app. The app is free to download and available for both tablets and smartphones via the Apple and Android app stores.

Helena Gibson-Moore, Nutrition Scientist, BNF, explains the importance of including a variety of vegetables in a child's diet. Helena said:

"Encouraging healthy eating habits from a young age will help your child make healthier choices as they get older, therefore it's key to introduce lots of vegetables early on. Eating a variety of vegetables is important as different types and colors contain varying combinations of essential nutrients, like vitamins and minerals, as well as dietary fiber, which our bodies need to stay healthy. Trying a wide range of different vegetables introduces children to an array of various tastes and textures and can be an opportunity to include vegetables as snacks and in different dishes from salads and soups to curries and pasta bakes."

Further study

Alongside the launch of the new website, the See & Eat project team is currently conducting a study to understand whether extra interactivity and personalisation through eBooks, such as adding photos or videos of shopping for, preparing or eating vegetables, can support children to become even more receptive to new vegetables. The study covers a range of nationalities and languages, with results due to be launched in 2021.

University of Reading is also hosting a series of workshops for parents and professions to discuss and demonstrate practical resources to encourage healthy eating. Week of 16th November. More details will be in the webinar but also on the Kids choice website:

<https://research.reading.ac.uk/kids-food-choices/workshop-week-2020/>

More information: Laura H. Owen et al. Peas, please! Food familiarization through picture books helps parents introduce vegetables into preschoolers' diets, *Appetite* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.appet.2018.05.140](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2018.05.140)

The eBooks and resources can be accessed for free here:
www.seeandeat.org

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