

Top 10 Tips to Get Your Kids to Eat Healthier

By Lisa A. Lundy, Author of *The Super Allergy Girl™ Allergy & Celiac Cookbook*
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As a mother of three young children, I understand and have compassion for the fact that most children just don't naturally love fruits and vegetables. In the last six years, we have made exceptional strides in having our children eat and to some degree even like more fruits and vegetables. According to food experts, you have to offer a child the same food at least 21 times before you can consider it rejected. Most parents stop offering a food after the second or third time it is rejected. I cannot emphasize this point strongly enough. It all starts with you the parent or the guardian. If you get committed that this will work, you will find a way to make it work. Here are the best recommendations for getting started on getting your kids to eat healthier foods.

1. Start By Talking

When I started this process over six years ago, I began by letting my children know that they would be required to eat more fruits and vegetables. I also informed them that it would be up to them to work with me to help me figure out ways to prepare the fruits and vegetable so they were appealing. It all started out with a frank heart-to-heart, and you should have seen their faces!! I recommend you begin with a no-kidding talk about your expectations.

2. Make Small Changes

Small changes add up a lot over time. This is not something that happens overnight. Take one recommendation from this tip sheet and implement it. Then, once you have some mastery and success in that one area, you can try a second tip. It will be as easy or as difficult as you decide it will be. I decided that it would be easy and that it would happen over time and that is exactly how it went for me.

3. Reduce Your Sugar Intake

Reducing your sugar and high fructose corn syrup consumption is a huge way to improve health. I had no idea how bad sugar was for you, medically speaking, until I started researching cancer in 2004. It was an eye opening experience and one that contributed to reducing our sugar. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know what has sugar in it. When we have cookies, cake or any other sweet treat these days it is really a treat because we are not eating sweets every single day!!

4. Eliminate Food Dyes, Additives and Preservatives

This is very important. Food additives, dyes and preservatives can have a serious and negative impact on human health, learning, behavior, emotions and cognitive processing. There is a short paper on my website on this significant subject, which you can download for free. I would also recommend you visit the Feingold® Association website at www.Feingold.org where you can review many studies on this same topic. The Feingold Association also has uploaded an excellent 2-part

video on this subject on www.YouTube.com which is exceptionally worthwhile. The more educated you become on this topic, the more invested you will be in making this change.

5. Get Your Child or Children Involved

Had I not gotten my children involved, I probably would have either failed or encountered a great deal of suffering on my part. Right away I got my children involved in:

- Selecting* fruits and vegetables from the grocery store
- Deciding *how* the new foods would be prepared
- Helping Prepare* the fruits and vegetables
- Using their imaginations in ways to showcase the foods

Take your children to the grocery store and have them help pick the fruits and vegetables. We recently did this when I decided that we need to expand the fruits that we had in our routine. The kids had a great time picking out mangos, papayas, kiwi and star fruit. Fruits that I was not exposed to as a child. It was a fun adventure because I set it up that way. “Won’t it be fun to explore what new fruits there are for us to try?” And the truth was – it WAS fun!

I would advise that you consider changing your language. Often I hear parents saying, “Will you eat broccoli tonight?” And the child often says no. What a difference to say “Your choice for vegetables is broccoli or green beans. Which are you choosing?” As parents we have to be the leaders and not have eating healthy be a luxury. We set the standards and it is our job to train our children, while they are in our care, what it takes to be healthy. A poor diet leads without question to poor health.

6. Use Dips and Dressings

To make fruits and vegetables more appealing in the beginning, you can use dips and dressings. Even if you are on a gluten-free, dairy-free, egg-free and tree nut and peanut-free diet as we are, you can purchase a “Ranch” dressing that is free of all allergens! Or you can make your own. In the beginning, my children would only eat beets with a mock ranch dip recipe that I made from scratch. Screwing up their faces as they ate the beets. What a joke. The beets with the dip were absolutely fabulous. Once I tried it, the ruse was over!! And my kids new it. Fast forward to today and my children eat their beets plain with a touch of salt like grown ups.

7. Use Smoothies

We were introduced to Green Smoothies by our friend, Christine Schaefer, who is a raw foods expert. Green smoothies are a great way to get greens and fruits into a delicious beverage that children will drink. O.K. you will probably have to put a lot of fruit into the smoothie, but if you are willing to experiment, green smoothies

have a lot of possibilities. I have included two recipes in this document to help you get started. In the beginning I do recommend you follow a recipe, because I did have at least two smoothies that were less than desirable in terms of taste.

The basic idea of a green smoothie is to blend water and dark leafy greens with fruit for a pleasant fruity taste in a beverage that is green in color. Naturally green in color I might add. You can also add vitamins and minerals and flax oil or any other supplement to this beverage. I would first recommend trying it and being patient. I'm not saying that kids will love this the first or second try. Not all adults will like green smoothies. Some of it is psychological – as in looking at a green drink. You can make the green smoothies more watery or thicker. You can make them sweeter by adding more fruit or tart. Have fun with this one.

8. Add Greens to Main Meals and Soups

We add greens to burgers, main meal stir fries and soups. When I say greens I mean dark leafy greens like spinach, kale, and swiss chard. Greens as a whole do not have a ton of flavor or taste unless you get the bitter or spicy ones, which we avoid. Add them to burgers, stir-frys and soups for a hint of color, and nutrition.

9. Buy More Organic or Grow Your Own

Buying or growing your own organic food will help your children be healthier since the organic foods are grown without pesticides, herbicides and fungicides. You can save money on organic foods by joining a CSA or Community Supported Agriculture farm in your area. You can find out more about CSA's and where they are in your area on-line. Some CSA's allow you to work on the farm in trade for food. There are ways to save money and afford organic foods if you are committed.

10. Set A Good Example

This may seem like the obvious, but it is worth saying. Children model themselves after our behavior more often than not whether we like it or not. What could you do to improve your diet? This will go a long way to helping your children embrace new foods and a healthier diet.

Recipes

Apple-Raspberry Smoothie

**Recipe from: The Super Allergy Girl™ Allergy & Celiac Cookbook – From A Mother Who Knows™ by Lisa A. Lundy, © 2007*

1 cup pure drinking water

2 apples, cored and sliced

½ cup raspberries, either fresh or frozen

3 fresh kale leaves

Mix the water, apples and raspberries in the blender and purée until smooth. Then add the kale leaves and blend until smooth and creamy. You may add more water if necessary. This makes 2 servings or a little more than 2 cups.

Banana-Blueberry Smoothie

*Recipe from: *The Super Allergy Girl™ Allergy & Celiac Cookbook – From A Mother Who Knows™* by Lisa A. Lundy, © 2007

2 bananas

½ cup blueberries (fresh or frozen)

⅓ cup pure drinking water

2 fresh kale leaves

Mix the bananas, water, and blueberries in a blender until creamy and smooth. Add the 2 fresh kale leaves and blend until the kale is puréed and smooth. Add more water if necessary. This makes 2 cups or 16 ounces.

Cauliflower and Greens Stir Fry

I made this with kale on a whim, trying to increase the number of greens and vegetables that my children would eat. Nothing could have surprised me more than when two of my three children cleaned their bowls and actually asked for seconds! This dish can easily be made as a vegetarian dish by omitting the bacon and using another acceptable oil in place of the bacon fat. You can also add additional vegetables for grown ups!

4 to 6 slices of bacon (free of nitrates, nitrites, and preservatives)

1 small onion, finely diced

½ head cauliflower or more

8 to 10 very large leaves fresh kale, spinach or greens of your choice

To taste: salt and pepper

½ cup water (omit if using frozen spinach or greens)

Prepare cauliflower and greens by washing. Chop or rip greens and cauliflower into very small pieces, removing any coarse or thick stems, and set aside. Fry the bacon in a large skillet. Remove the bacon when fully cooked and set aside. Keep most of the bacon fat in the skillet, only removing 1 or so tablespoons, if the bacon has rendered too much fat. Fry the onion and cauliflower in the bacon fat until soft. Add the small pieces of greens and sauté. Sauté the greens until they are wilted and very soft. Once the vegetables are done, crumble the cooked bacon over the vegetables and serve.

Non-Dairy Ranch Dressing

*Recipe from: *The Super Allergy Girl™ Allergy & Celiac Cookbook – From A Mother Who Knows™* by Lisa A. Lundy, © 2007

I invented this for salads so we could have a soy-free dressing that the kids would enjoy. The thickening agent in this dressing is xanthan gum. You will need a blender to make this recipe as it thickens with the whirling motion of the blender. Don't be alarmed if you mix it up and it seems too watery. You can add more xanthan gum, but I would not add more until you have blended it in the blender.

- ½ cup pure drinking water**
- ⅓ cup acceptable oil**
- ¼ cup milk substitute (see note)**
- 1 tablespoon sugar or other sweetener (see note)**
- 1 tablespoon brown rice syrup (see note)**
- 1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar**
- 1 teaspoon white or red wine vinegar**
- 1¼ teaspoon garlic powder**
- 1¼ teaspoon onion powder**
- ½ teaspoon Dijon mustard**
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice**
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes**
- Dash of ground black pepper**
- ¼ teaspoon xanthan gum, Blend and use ¼ teaspoon more, only if necessary to thicken**

Note: You can substitute other natural sweeteners, if needed, as long as you understand that they will alter the taste. Therefore, if you are using other sweeteners (like honey), you may need to adjust your spices. We used DariFree™ as our milk substitute which is already on the sweet side, so you may need to adjust your sweetener if you use another milk substitute.

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend for 1 to 2 minutes. Add more xanthan gum, only if necessary to thicken to your desired consistency. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator. Makes about 1 cup.

CHILI ON THE GO-GO

This is a FAST and EASY vegetarian chili recipe that could easily be converted to be a hearty meat chili by throwing in some ground meat, poultry or turkey. I have used canned beans here for speed, however if you have more time you can soak and cook dried beans. The great thing about this vegetarian chili is that you can use any vegetables that you like or that you have on hand. The beans are interchangeable for any beans that you have on hand also! You can eat this plain in a bowl, or over rice or your favorite gluten-free grain.

- 1 Tablespoon oil**
- 1 large onion, sliced**
- 1 red pepper, cut into bite-sized chunks**
- 4 medium carrots, peeled and sliced into bite-sized chunks**
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained**

1 15-ounce can pinto beans, rinsed and drained

1 15-ounce tomato sauce

1 15-ounce diced tomatoes

1/4 teaspoon dried basil

1 Tablespoon chili powder

Dash of cinnamon

2 teaspoons of sugar, stevia or other sweetener

Dash cayenne pepper

Salt to taste

Optional: Any other vegetables that you like or want to use up!

Saute the onion slices in the oil over medium high heat until soft and carmelized. Add the red peppers, carrots and any other vegetables you are using. Saute for 10 minutes over medium heat. Add the beans that have been rinsed well and drained, the tomato sauce and diced tomatoes and the spices. Cook over medium low heat for 20 minutes. This recipe as listed above will make 6-7 cups. We liked this so well that when I made it again tonight, I doubled the recipe! Enjoy and eat in good health!

**Recipes from: [The Super Allergy Girl™ Allergy & Celiac Cookbook](http://www.TheSuperAllergyCookbook.com) – From A Mother Who Knows™ by Lisa A. Lundy, © 2007, www.TheSuperAllergyCookbook.com Recipes may be shared or printed in the media or on website so long as the above credit is given.*