

Encourage your children to make healthy food choices

Let's face it... it can be a challenge trying to get children to eat healthy, especially when there are so many calorie-dense foods, filled with added fats and sugars tempting children's taste buds. These so-called "junk foods" compete for space in a healthy diet, but are hard to avoid when children see advertisements for them almost everywhere they go. Despite the tug-of-war battles, it's important that children are steered toward healthier food choices. Learning to enjoy nutritious foods when your young will promote healthier eating habits as adults.

**Fuel up and get
ready to learn!**

But what on Earth can you do to compete against super-charged, animated characters promoting these calorie-dense foods? For one, make healthy eating

convenient. Make those calorie-dense foods invisible. Don't leave the cookie jar on the counter or the chips easily within arms-reach. Instead, have a refreshing bowl of grapes on the table, keep lite yogurts and low-fat cheese at eye level in the refrigerator, and whole grain crackers where kids can easily spot them. Healthy food options become a snack of choice when they are easily accessible.

Another option for healthier eating involves using low-fat and low-calorie ingredients when cooking, but wait until after they have enjoyed a few bites before sharing your secret ingredients! Learning how to make kids favorite foods healthier teaches them that healthy can be, and is, tasty too.

Don't forget, children often make choices based on observation. If they see adults eating gobs of rich ice cream covered in thick chocolate syrup, chances are they will want the same treat. However, if they see you enjoying a colorful fruit salad, they will learn that snack time is more than crispy items from a bag. Being a role model is good for your health and theirs.

Finally, if your children have already fallen into the routine of eating less than healthy foods and snacks, introduce healthy options slowly. Children are less likely to fight back if their favorite goodies are gradually removed from their diet. Change takes time, so as they learn to accept new foods begin eliminating the unhealthy options.

Molding and changing children's behavior takes effort, but the reward of a healthy, energetic child makes all the work worth the battle. Consistent encouragement and patience will ultimately steer their palettes on the path to a healthier and brighter future.



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Roxanne Moore is a Registered Dietitian and past spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association (ADA). She completed her undergraduate work in Dietetics at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, and her Masters in Health Science and Business at Towson University in Towson, Maryland. Roxanne has over 15 years experience developing nutrition education programs and providing nutrition education for individuals, groups and the community-at-large. She is certified as a Child and Adolescent Obesity Counselor and a member of ADA Sports, Cardiovascular and Wellness Nutritionists dietetic practice group.

Sodexo is proud to partner with your school district to provide nutritious school meals for your children. Our unique approach provides students with a variety of healthy menu choices designed specifically to satisfy their taste preferences. To learn more, visit www.sodexousa.com or call 800-354-7000.

