It’s never too early to eat a healthy diet that includes plenty of cancer-fighting plant foods like vegetables for lower cancer risk. In fact, research suggests that new foods are even better accepted at ages 2 to 4 than they are at ages 4 to 8.

Your first Healthy Kids Today – Prevent Cancer Tomorrow toolkit focuses on Powerful Plant Foods and how they protect us against cancer while making our meals delicious!

Which Foods Are Plant Foods?
Vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans, as well as nuts and seeds, are packed with powerful health protectors. How do these “superhero” foods protect us? The Super Crew calls the plant foods that contain phytochemicals “fight-o-chemicals” because they fight off disease.

• “Fight-o-chemicals” (Phytochemicals): Natural compounds in all plant foods give the plants – and the people who eat them – protection. These compounds give plants their colors.

For instance, beta-carotene makes carrots orange. Beta-carotene also protects our cells from damage that can lead to cancer.

Hundreds of different phytochemicals in plant foods work together against cancer developing when we absorb them from eating whole foods.
• **Fiber:** Eating plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans gives our bodies fiber, known to protect against colon cancer and help with weight control.

For example, fiber-rich whole grains are digested more slowly than refined foods made from white flour, keeping blood sugar levels normal to prevent diabetes. They also keep us satisfied to prevent weight gain that is linked to higher cancer risk.

• **Vitamins and Minerals:** Each plant food – whether an apple or a walnut – has a different set of vitamins and minerals. Many are essential for good health.

Examples of minerals include calcium from leafy green vegetables and potassium from bananas. Vitamin C from oranges and vitamin E from nuts are two essential vitamins.

• **Lower Calories:** Eating fruits and vegetables at every meal – at least 5 half-cup servings a day – is also filling in a low-fat, low-sugar way.

You get fewer calories bite-for-bite from plant foods than you get from sugary snacks, fatty burgers and fries. Those kinds of heavily processed foods cause obesity and set us up for serious diseases like diabetes and cancer.

---

**How to Get Your Children to Eat More Vegetables**

Here are seven ways you can teach kids to choose and enjoy more vegetables that protect against cancer:

1. **Set a good example.** When kids see you eat and enjoy vegetables, they are encouraged to eat them, too. Serve at least two different vegetables at each meal and show enjoyment when you eat them in front of your child. Smile and make a sound that shows you enjoy them. Offer small bites so they can taste the foods you are enjoying.

2. **Serve very small portions.** Cut familiar and new vegetables into small, bite-size pieces for kids. Big pieces can be too hard to eat and overwhelming. For toddlers, portions should be 1 tablespoon of each food served at a meal for each year of age. So 3-year-olds would start with three tablespoons of each food. If they eat it all, they can ask for more.

3. **Offer unfamiliar healthy foods 8 to 15 times.** Experts say it often takes this much repetition before children accept new foods, although adults often give up after a child rejects a food the first few times.

4. **Get your kids to help you prepare the food.** That can get them interested in eating what they made.

5. **Avoid scolding children if they don’t finish the food.** If they can’t finish their food, serve them less instead of forcing them to overeat. This will strengthen their ability to tell when they’ve had enough.

6. **Divide the decision making.** You decide where and when eating will occur and what foods are offered. Let the child decide which vegetable(s) to eat from a variety offered and how much to eat.

7. **Encourage kids to show what they know.** If kids are eating a variety of vegetables already, they might like to teach what they know to younger siblings.

“Check out this month’s activities: Kid Power Recipe for Bean and Veggie Enchiladas, SuperCrew® Colorful Food Tracker Activity and Lesson Plan.”

—Marcus

Visit www.superkidsnutrition.com for more fun activities with the Super Crew.