

Fruit & Vegetables

Vegetables are the food group most commonly refused by young children. However, with such a huge range of vegetables to choose from, it is likely children will identify some vegetables as favourites.



Fruit and vegetables are an important part of meals. The different textures, flavours and colours of fruits and vegetables add variety and interest to what we eat as well as provide us with nutrients such as vitamins, minerals and fibre.

How much should children be eating?



Fruit and vegetables should be introduced into the diet at around six months of age. By the time they are toddlers they should be eating widely from the fruit and vegetable food group. By the time a child is two years old he or she should be eating at least 4 servings of fruit and vegetables each day.

Fruits and vegetables are placed together in the same food group because they have a lot of similar characteristics. They are usually low in fat (with the exception of avocados), have a high water content and have significant amounts of carbohydrate and fibre. All fruit and vegetables have some vitamin A and some vitamin C. Some fruit and vegetables also have B vitamins and minerals such as potassium, calcium and iron.

The nutrient content of fruit and vegetables depends largely on the way they are prepared and/or cooked. To preserve the nutrient content, try to prepare and cook fruit and vegetables just before serving.

Frozen and canned fruit and vegetables still contain valuable nutrients. Fruit or vegetables that are freshly processed are probably richer in vitamins and minerals than fruit or vegetables that have



been sitting in the bottom of the fridge for a week! If using canned fruit or vegetables, choose varieties that have little or no added salt (sodium) or sugar.

Researchers tell us that children will commonly refuse new food the first time it is offered. The trick is to offer the food repeatedly to increase the chance of it being accepted by the child. The food may need to be tried up to ten times before it is accepted. Always encourage children to taste new fruit or vegetables, and try new ways of serving familiar fruits and vegetables. Perseverance will pay off in the end.



Explore different fruit and vegetables with your children and different ways of preparing familiar fruit and vegetables. Involving your children in food preparation is a good way to entice reluctant eaters to try new foods. In addition, children who help grow their own fruit and vegetables are more likely to try their produce.