

Plant Foods and Preschoolers

How many times have you heard the saying, “eat all of your vegetables”? Most parents know that their children should eat plenty of fruits and vegetables in addition to other plant foods such as whole grains and legumes. Research has shown that plant foods are associated with a lower risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, heart disease, and cancer.



Parents of children who like to eat a variety of plant foods usually don't worry about whether their children are getting the daily recommended servings. Parents who do not model good eating habits and don't eat vegetables and other plants based foods themselves, often have

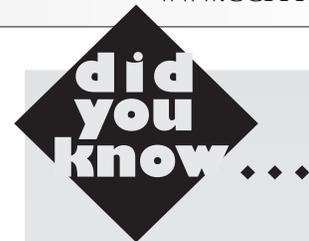


children who also don't eat vegetables, resulting in daily struggles at mealtimes. The benefits of eating more plant foods beginning in early childhood are numerous. Children develop a taste for what is offered to them and will carry this healthy eating habit throughout their life. In addition, plant based foods contain fewer calories than many processed foods and are good sources of phytochemicals, fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Replacing the high calorie processed foods with healthy plant foods will help children maintain a healthy weight and the energy to get plenty of physical activity.

Rich in Phytochemicals

All plant foods contain phytochemicals, which are natural compounds believed to provide protection from many chronic diseases, such as mouth, larynx, prostate, esophagus,

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- ▶ The average person in the US eats 4½ pounds of broccoli each year which is 900% more broccoli than Americans ate 20 years ago.
- ▶ The average child will eat 1500 peanut butter sandwiches by their high school graduation.
- ▶ Potassium citrate in fruits and vegetables appears to boost bone density by neutralizing excess acid in the body.
- ▶ California is the number one food producer in the US.
- ▶ There are 89,000 farms in California.

Sources: *Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism*, *President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition*, *CATCH*

Quotable Quotes

“A recipe is not meant to be followed exactly—it is a canvas on which you can embroider.”

– Roger Verge

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Plant Foods and Preschoolers

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and colorectal cancers and cardiovascular disease. These compounds also give plants their deep rich colors. The health benefits of consuming a variety of phytochemicals is believed to come from eating whole foods rather than taking supplements, as the phytochemicals may work together with other nutrients to combat disease in ways that aren't yet fully understood.

In addition, foods containing phytochemicals have antioxidant properties, which can protect cells from damage that may lead to chronic age-related diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular disease.

Brimming With Fiber

Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans and legumes contain large amounts of fiber, and therefore can produce healthful gut bacteria and protect against colon cancer. Fiber plus adequate hydration also helps prevent constipation, which can contribute to gastrointestinal distress.

Fiber-rich whole grains such as oats, brown rice, millet and quinoa are digested more slowly than refined grains, so eating them decreases the risk of overeating and boosts satiety. In contrast, processed foods made of refined grains lack fiber, are quickly digested and leave children feeling hungry again soon.

In addition, fiber-rich whole grains, such as oatmeal, keep blood sugar levels more stable and provide a consistent fuel source for the brain, helping children to focus better in school and improve their performance. Whole grains also provide vitamins and minerals that are lost in the refining process.

Vitamins and Minerals

All plant foods contain different types of vitamins and minerals that are essential to good health. The following examples show some of the important vitamins and minerals found in plant foods along with some of their plant sources:

- **Vitamin C:** maintains collagen for proper growth of blood vessels and bone and is an important antioxidant that helps prevent cancer; found in oranges, strawberries, tomatoes and bell peppers.



- **Vitamin E:** protects against cardiovascular disease and cancer; found in almonds, hazelnuts, peanuts, and avocados.
- **Calcium:** builds strong bones and teeth; found in bok choy, kale and broccoli.
- **Potassium:** helps maintain sodium-potassium balance; found in bananas, potatoes with skin, oranges and tomatoes.

Strategies for Parents

The following strategies can make it easier for parents and fun for kids to incorporate more plant foods into their diets:

Include the Children

- **Shop with the kids.**

Let children choose a few fruits and vegetables they'd like to try. When they select the foods themselves, they're more likely to eat them.

- **Visit a local farmers' market.**

Introduce children to the farmers and let them choose which produce they want to take home. Ask the farmers if you can visit the farm to see where and how the foods are grown to increase children's appreciation for fruits and vegetables.

- **Involve the kids in food preparation.**

Children are more excited to eat a food if they helped prepare it. Let children make their own pizzas with whole wheat crust and healthy toppings, such as mushrooms, peppers, zucchini and spinach. They are likely to eat and enjoy their own creation.

- **Share in the decision making.**

Parents should decide where and when the family will eat and what foods to offer. Allow children to decide which foods to eat from the variety offered and how much to eat. When children feel they have some control, they're more likely to eat the vegetables they choose, thereby increasing their consumption of plant foods.

— Adapted from: Melissa Halas-Liang, MA, RDN, CDE,
Today's Dietitian

KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

Norovirus Fact Sheet

NOROVIRUS IS A VIRUS that causes illness sometimes referred to as the “stomach flu,” although it is not related to the flu (or influenza). Infection with norovirus affects the stomach and intestines, causing an illness called gastroenteritis. Norovirus was named for Norwalk, Ohio in 1968 after an outbreak in a school. More than half of all foodborne illness outbreaks are caused by norovirus.

What are the symptoms of norovirus?

Norovirus symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramps. Some people also complain of headache, fever or chills and muscle aches. Symptoms usually begin 1–2 days after contact with the virus and usually last for 1–3 days. During that time, people can feel very ill and often vomit violently or have explosive diarrhea many times a day.

How is norovirus spread?

Norovirus is found in the stool or vomit of infected people. Ill people are contagious even after their symptoms have disappeared. The virus is very contagious and easily spread by:

- Eating food or drinking liquids contaminated with norovirus.
- Touching surfaces or objects contaminated with norovirus, and then placing a hand to the mouth. For example, a child picks up a toy contaminated with norovirus, and then eats lunch without washing their hands. In another example, a day care provider handles a door knob infected with norovirus and then serves food.
- Having direct contact with stool or vomit from a person who is infected.
- Having contact with tiny droplets of vomit that have become airborne during a vomiting incident. Droplets can travel through the air up to 25 feet to land on food and food preparation surfaces.



Why is safe food handling important?

Norovirus can easily make others ill by contaminating through unsafe food handling. Many of those eating the contaminated food may become ill, resulting in an outbreak. People infected with norovirus are contagious from the moment they begin feeling ill to at least 3 days after symptoms are gone. Some people may be contagious for as long as 2 weeks after recovery. It is important for people to use good hand washing and other hygienic practices, especially after they have recently recovered from norovirus illness.

How can norovirus be prevented?

Everyone plays a part in the prevention of norovirus by practicing good personal hygiene, which includes:

- Frequent hand washing with soap and water, especially after each toilet visit, before eating or preparing food, before putting on clean gloves and after changing diapers in child care settings.
- Preventing bare hand contact with all ready-to-eat and ready-to-serve foods.
- Do not care for children when you have symptoms such as:
Vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice or yellowing of the skin or eyes, a sore throat with fever, and infected cuts on hands, wrists, or exposed arms.
- Excluding children from care when they are ill. For illnesses like norovirus, stay home until symptoms have been resolved for two days.

Norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne disease in the United States and has been the primary source of outbreaks in schools. Follow prevention steps to reduce the likelihood of an outbreak in your child care home or center.

— *Adapted from National Food Service Management Institute, The University of Mississippi*

Cheesy Bean and Rice Bake

Brown rice, cooked	4 cups
Milk	¼ cup
Cottage cheese	2 cups
Onion, diced	¼ cup
Kidney beans, rinsed and drained	1 (15 ounce) can
Mozzarella cheese, shredded	2 cups

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray a 2-quart baking dish with non stick spray.
2. In a small bowl, mix the milk with the cottage cheese. In another bowl combine rice, onions and beans.
3. Cover the bottom of the baking dish with ⅓ of rice. Layer with ½ cup mozzarella cheese and ⅓ of the cottage cheese mixture. Repeat the layers.
4. Bake for 30 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining ½ cup cheese during the last 5 minutes of baking.

Yield: 8 servings

Meets requirement for grains/breads and protein/meat alternate

Salmon and Asparagus Frittata

Red potatoes, cut into ½ inch cubes	12 oz	Red bell pepper, chopped	½ cup
Eggs, lightly beaten	8	Oregano, dried	1 tsp
Salt	½ tsp	Asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1 inch pieces	8 oz
Black pepper	⅛ tsp	Salmon, poached or canned cut into bite-size pieces	12 oz
Olive oil	2 tsp		
Onion, chopped	1		

1. Boil potatoes until just tender, about 7 minutes, drain. Heat broiler to low. Combine eggs, salt and pepper in a bowl.
2. Heat oil in a 12 inch, ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Cook onion, bell pepper and oregano until soft. Add asparagus and potatoes, cook 3 minutes. Add salmon, cook 3 minutes.
3. Pour egg mixture into skillet. Reduce heat to low. Cook; stirring gently until eggs begin to set, about 5 minutes. Cook without stirring 5 minutes. Place skillet under broiler for 2–3 minutes or until golden.

Yield: 12 servings

Meets requirement for protein/meat alternate and fruit/vegetable

— *Epicurious.com*

Activity Corner

ALPHABET EXERCISES

For this activity, you can write the ABC's on pieces of paper and scatter them all over the floor. Have the children walk from letter to letter in order and perform each movement when they get there. You can do any movement you like, but here is a list of sample actions. Try making up new actions to keep it new for the next time.



- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| A - Act like a cat | P - Pop up |
| B - Bend knees | Q - Quiet hops |
| C - Chair pose | R - Run |
| D - Dance | S - Side steps |
| E - Elephant steps | T - Turns |
| F - Fly like a bird | U - Under the table |
| G - Gallop | V - Vacuum |
| H - Hugs | W - Wiggles |
| I - Itsy bitsy steps | X - X-jumping jacks |
| J - Jump | Y - Yoga pose |
| K - Kick | Z - Zig zag steps |
| L - Leg lifts | |
| M - March | |
| N - Noisy steps | |
| O - Open arms | |

— *Kidsactivityblog.com*

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Food Funny Q: What starts with a 't', ends with a 't' and is full of 't'?
A: A teapot!