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Dickinson-Iron District Health Department Offers
Tips to Get Kids to Eat Healthy

Kingsford and Iron River, Michigan, July 2014 - Having trouble feeding your children healthy foods? Listed below are some creative ways parents can get their kids to eat healthier.

Make it fun. "Sneak" healthy fruits and vegetables into foods your kids already eat. The real secret . . . let your kids in on it and that way they will view it as a game. One game is to put out a salad bar and tell your kids, “you call it, I toss it.” You can do this with a taco bar, a potato bar, you name it. The important thing is to include them in the decision making and not lie to them.

Play with color. Puree fruit and vegetables and use the mixes in certain recipes. For example, with the classic mac and cheese, add orange puree made from sweet potatoes and carrots. Kids love color; let kids decide on their own what color vegetables could go with which foods.

Create traditions. Figure out what meal is your child’s favorite and have a night each week dedicated to that dish. There’s a lot of unpredictability in life, especially for kids, but if they know they’re getting their favorite meal one day a week, it feels good.

Experiment. For example, who would have thought about putting in spinach, blueberries, oats, and wheat germ in a classic “brownie” recipe? With many recipes you can “sneak” in ingredients and both kids and adults will not notice the difference, and let the kids do the same. Provide guidelines for them, of course, but let them have fun.

Be a good role model. When parents eat healthy and demonstrate healthy behaviors, it is more likely that their kids will develop these same healthy behaviors as well!

Mix it up. Serve breakfast for dinner as a way to keep things exciting at the table and serve "ice cream for breakfast," which can be Greek yogurt and frozen fruit mixed together to make into a thick smoothie resembling soft-serve ice cream.

Plan ahead. Time is our worst enemy when it comes to healthy eating. Stock your pantry with healthy foods and snacks and make use of leftovers. "Cook once, eat twice.” Throw your leftovers from dinner in a Thermos and send it to school with your kids for lunch the next day.

Be patient. It’s impossible for anyone at any age to overhaul their lifestyle, but small changes can add up. Don’t force your kids to choke down vegetables. The most important thing is to have peace at the dinner table.

The Health Department has a Women, Infant and Children’s food program (WIC) for eligible participants. To learn more about this program, please call 779-7212 or 265-4173.

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