

GROWING GREAT TASTERS

It is important to encourage your child to try a wide variety of healthy foods, but sometimes this can be a struggle. Sometimes it can take up to 10 to 15 tries for a child to accept a new food. So keep offering foods, even if your child tried it and didn't like it the first few times.

Growing Great Tasters is about gardening, learning where foods come from, and trying new foods. Children are more willing to try foods they have grown. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) states that "by learning about new food, children increase their knowledge of the world around them, and the likelihood that they will choose a more varied, better balanced diet later in life." Activities focused around gardening engage children through all of their five senses, sight, touch, sound, smell, and taste.¹⁰

Encourage children to try just one bite of a new food or foods they think they do not like. The chance to taste a food many times helps young children to grow into adventurous eaters. Discuss children's preferences and the characteristics of a variety of foods such as color, shape, texture, taste, etc. Avoid forcing children to eat an entire serving or clean their plate because this makes meal time a struggle, and may result in even more resistance to new foods. After they try one bite, let them decide how much more of it they want to eat.

Some great ways to help your child learn about new foods are:

- Take a trip to a farmer's market or community garden, and talk to farmers about where and how food grows.
- Start a garden and let kids pick the seeds or seedlings out. Remember gardening does not have to be a full-scale production. Start with a couple of pots on the windowsill.
- Take your child to the produce department or a farmer's market, and let him/her choose a new fruit or vegetable to try. Involve the child in cleaning and preparing the food to eat.
- Let your kids cook. Even young children can help measure, mix, and pour. This can also be a good time to talk about new foods.
- Eat new foods with your child and talk about how it tastes so they can see you trying new things too. Choose a variety of favorite foods and new foods.
- Be sure to only serve your child one new food at a time so they are not overwhelmed. Try offering one new food on a plate with other foods they already like.
- Be a healthy role model – parents eating similar foods has been shown to increase the eating of and liking of vegetables by preschool age children.²⁴

(Discuss family activity on handout. Explain how it works and show to parents.)

Discussion:

1) *How do you get your child to try new foods?*

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES – GROWING GREAT TASTERS

(Encourage parents to participate so that they can model the activity for their child.)

Fruit and Veggie Tasting

Directions:

- Rinse and cut a variety of fruit and/or vegetables into small pieces and place on table.
- Provide children a plate a allow them to take some of each food
- Encourage them to explore the foods by asking them:
 - What color is the food?
 - What does it look like?
 - What does it remind them of?
- Encourage children to try “one bite” of each food.
 - Discuss what the foods taste like: sweet, tart or bitter.
 - Ask if they liked it or not.

Edible Faces

Materials:

- Plates
- Cheese cubes
- Low-fat dip or yogurt
- Diced fruit and vegetables

Directions:

1. Rinse and cut fruits and vegetables into small pieces.
2. Provide children with bowls of small foods (diced fruits, vegetables, cheese) and a plate.
3. Encourage children to play with food to make “food faces” on their plate.
4. After making a “food face”, encourage children to taste the foods on their plate.