

# Cook Healthy

## Food and Nutrition Tips from Kids Eat Right

# Get the Kids Involved!

Want your kids to eat healthier? Make it easier (and more fun!) to prepare fresh meals at home and eat fast food less often by involving your kids in the kitchen. Although popping a meal in the microwave might seem like the easiest option, it is not always the best one. Pre-prepared, microwaveable, or heat and serve entrees are often higher in sodium, fat and calories than freshly prepared meals. These tips will make you and your kids kitchen pros.



### **Allow your children to pick a recipe**

Make a list of the ingredients, and check off the ones you already have. Shop together for the rest.

### **Make the rules clear**

If you do not want your kids to touch the stove or knives, tell them so. When they are old enough, allow them to use the stove and sharp objects with your close supervision.

### **Expect mistakes**

The experience of cooking together is more important than the finished recipe. Just ignore little spills or the pepper that misses the bowl.

### **Give your kids appropriate tasks for their age and level of development**

The following may be appropriate for the youngest children:

- Tear lettuce
- Rinse fruits, vegetables and canned beans that have been placed in a colander
- Add ingredients to a bowl
- Stir ingredients
- Beat eggs

### **Kids have short attention spans**

Keep them busy with vegetables to wash or pots to stir. Even setting the table and putting things in the trash count.

## Cooking for Picky Eaters

If your kids are picky when it comes to eating fruits and vegetables, try these tips:

- Involve your kids in selecting and preparing fruits and vegetables.
- Serve the fruits and vegetables you know your kids like at meals and snacks.
- Keep offering your kids fruits and vegetables they don't like. It often takes kids several exposures to a new food before they will accept it.
- If your kids like fresh broccoli but not steamed broccoli, it's okay!

## Easier-than-Ever Entrees

Next time you think grabbing a frozen dinner or other prepared entrée would be easier than making dinner yourself, think again. Try these super-easy entrees that will cost you less time, calories and fat, and money!

- Black bean tacos (black beans, tortillas, salsa)
- Chicken salad (roisserie chicken, shredded, over romaine lettuce)
- Veggie stir fry (frozen veggie mix and a touch of low-sodium soy sauce)
- Pork tenderloin (throw in the crockpot and let it cook on low all day)
- Cheesy quesadillas (whole wheat tortilla with reduced -fat cheese and salsa)

## Limit Soft Drinks

There are many ways to kick the soft drink habit.

- Be a good example and drink fewer soft drinks or sugary drinks and your kids will follow.
- Drink more water.
- For a sweet treat that still offers a great dose of nutrition, offer your kids low-fat chocolate milk, fruit smoothies (made with low-fat milk or yogurt) or 100% fruit juice.

### Peanut Butter Wrap

Place a tortilla or a whole-wheat wrap on a plate. Spread with peanut butter. Sprinkle with shredded carrots or a favorite fruit such as raisins, sliced bananas or strawberries. Tightly roll the tortilla or wrap and cut into bite-sized pieces.

*Authored by Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics staff registered dietitians.*

For more articles, tips, recipes and videos to help your kids eat healthy, visit [www.kidseatright.org](http://www.kidseatright.org).

To find a registered dietitian in your area, visit [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).



Kids Eat Right is a joint effort of the **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics** and the **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation** to end childhood obesity and provide the resources to help families, communities, and policy makers ensure quality nutrition for children.