



By Regina Crone, PhD., BCBA-D, Founder of Camden Hill Montessori

The word, “Yuck” from a preschooler along with a scrunched up little nose is a familiar reaction many parents witness when their child encounters something green. It is interesting that this veggie battle has stood the test of time across generations. So, why do our kids find vegetables so appalling? Well, Mom and Dad, don’t take it personally because the veggies themselves might actually be to blame. The calcium content in most vegetables produces a naturally bitter taste. Children have a more immature palette than adults, which can be more sensitive to this bitterness. So how do you begin to prepare for this uphill battle? The good news is this doesn’t have to begin and end with a battle of the wills, and there are a few easy tips you can do at home to help your little ones crave more veggies.

V is for Vegetables: Get Your Preschooler to Crave Veggies!

TIP #1: SERVE VEGGIES FIRST

Use your child’s hunger. By no means does this mean starve your child until they are ready to devour veggies, but serving vegetables first and when your kids are the hungriest is a great start to getting them interested. Also, don’t feel guilty

about adding dip, hummus or even butter to make the vegetables more enticing. These added flavors can cover up some of the bitter taste. Great times for serving veggies are first thing when they get home from school or right before dinner.

TIP #2: INCLUDE YOUR KIDS

Every day we see a little of ourselves in our kids and we know preschoolers love to copy you. This provides a great opportunity to teach your kids about healthy meal preparation and the importance of eating vegetables. Seize the moment and make veggie dishes with your little one throughout the week. For example, salads are a great and easy way to include your kids. If you have the time, you can incorporate washing, cutting, and measuring the ingredients; keep in mind that including your kids in the process can be meaningful without all these steps. Consider buying a pre-bagged salad and having your kids help you mix it all together in the bowl. You may be surprised how excited they get to eat the salad if they helped assemble it.

TIP #3: MONKEY SEE - MONKEY DO

Remember that preschoolers love to mirror adults because that is how they learn. Consider playing “Monkey See-Monkey Do.” Basically, your child selects and takes a bite of a vegetable in a silly way and you must copy him or her. Then switch roles. Before you know it, all the veggies are gone. This method is also a great way to get them to try new things.

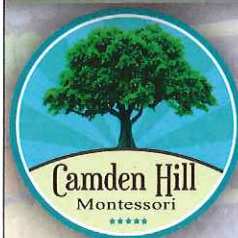
At Camden Hill Montessori in Carrollton, we look at health intentionally and introduce core concepts, such as eating your veggies, at an early age. We have partnered with the community to plant a school garden, where we can prep, serve and eat from what the kids grow in order to celebrate healthy choices. Remember, it is never too early to learn about eating and build healthy habits for life. Happy veggie eating!!

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