



# PREMIER MEDICAL ASSOCIATES

## Health & Safety Corner Those Dreaded Fruits and Vegetables!

**When I speak to parents about improving nutrition in their children, overwhelmingly, their biggest frustration is getting them to eat more fruits and vegetables. When I ask the children how many servings they get each day, most reply that they eat them 1 to 2 times a day. I usually receive a look of total shock (or disgust) when I tell them they should be eating 5 servings a day (the latest guidelines recommend 2 ½ cups of vegetables and 1 ½ cups of fruit). The sad truth is that most of us, adults included, get nowhere near the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables. This robs us of the benefits of these foods-- they are a rich source of vitamins and minerals, and have antioxidants which may defend against cancer, affect the immune system and decrease cholesterol and blood pressure. Being a low calorie, high fiber food, they are a critical part of a healthy diet and aid in maintaining a healthy weight. So what can we do to turn it all around?**

### **Make small goals and don't give up:**

- First of all, start slowly. Make a goal of adding one extra serving a day--or if your child is one of those who eats fruits and veggies once or twice a week, make the goal one serving per day. Once that goal is achieved, add one more!
- Realize that children may need 10 to 15 tries of a new food before they're willing to accept it. Encourage the "one bite" rule
- Avoid mealtime battles--a comfortable meal environment will encourage your child to be more adventurous with new foods
- Be a positive role model--kids won't eat it if you turn your nose up to it--if they know that the whole family is involved, then they will more likely

accept changes

**Make it easily accessible (availability is key!):**

- Keep a bowl of cleaned fruit on the table for a quick easy snack
- Have freshly cut raw veggies and dips in the refrigerator
- Have frozen fruits on hand to add to yogurt or make smoothies
- Freeze bananas or grapes for a quick grab-and-go frozen treat

**Empower your Child:**

- Let your child choose fruits or vegetables to try at the grocery store.
- Involve your child in preparing menus and foods--finding a children's cookbook sometimes motivates them to try new things
- In the summer, if time and space allows, grow your own veggies. Children are more apt to eat what they reap!
- Make a project out of it--for younger children, they can work on eating a rainbow of fruits and veggies--they can make a poster and color in that part of the rainbow when they attain that goal. Older children can go online and check out games, and worksheets on MyPyramid.gov

**Sneak it in:**

- Add broccoli florets or julienne carrots to pasta or potato salad
- Add spinach, mushrooms or zucchini to spaghetti sauce
- Mash beans and add corn and carrots to chili
- Shred or finely mince zucchini or carrots into meatloaf or hamburgers

**Making these sort of changes does take some time and planning, but remember what a great gift good health is to your family. We want to protect our children-- protect them from the consequences of obesity. The time and effort will really pay off in the end!**

**Some helpful websites, many of which provide recipes:**

[www.Family.com](http://www.Family.com)

[www.busycooks.about.com/od/healthyrecipes/a/kidsnutrition.htm](http://www.busycooks.about.com/od/healthyrecipes/a/kidsnutrition.htm)

[www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov)

[www.eatjustonemore.com](http://www.eatjustonemore.com)

**This site sponsored by Del Monte foods allows you to make the pledge to eat one more serving of fruits & veggies, and other healthy lifestyle changes. You can get a starter kit for \$2.50 s&h that includes coupons, recipes, tips, advice and a pedometer**

## **Patient Information**

### **Medical Disclaimer**

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