

Core Nutrition Messages



Fruits and Vegetables

Tips, Advice, and Guidance for Moms

HELPING MOMS AND KIDS MAKE HEALTHIER FOOD CHOICES

Use the following tips, advice and guidance with the messages to provide mothers with actionable tips and realistic advice. You can present this information in a variety of formats, such as posters, handouts, in counseling or digital presentations (see communication tools for ideas). The formative research indicated that moms are motivated by information that is new or unique to them and that they found the tips and advice below both relevant and realistic.

The tips, advice, and guidance are shown along with suggested messages; however, most of these materials can complement many of the other messages as well. Create the combinations that will be most effective for your audience.

Suggestion

Present this information in small, incremental steps rather than all at one time or in a single document. Choose message and tips based on your audience's needs and interests. For example:

Send a copy of *Healthy Snacks for Hungry Kids* (page 5) home to parents. Include the recipes of dips (page 6) on the back of the page.

1. Follow-up by asking kids or parents whether they have fruits/veggies and dips available for a quick afterschool snack.
2. If no, encourage kids to ask parents to keep these foods on hand, so they have healthy and tasty afterschool snacks easily available.
3. Provide parents with tips for getting kids involved in selecting what fruits and veggies to offer for snacks and meals.

For more ideas on how to use the messages and supporting guidance, download the free implementation guide, [Maximizing the Messages](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/corenutritionmessages/Maximizing.htm) (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/corenutritionmessages/Maximizing.htm>).

Messages for Mothers of Preschoolers

1. They learn from watching you. Eat fruits and veggies and your kids will too.
2. They take their lead from you. Eat fruits and veggies and your kids will too.



They learn from watching you. Eat fruits and veggies and your kids will too.

“My 3-year-old picks up on so much. She loves to copy what I do. Sometimes she will ask for a food she saw me eat. And I didn’t even know she was watching me! So, I try to eat fruits and vegetables. That way she’ll want them too. My doctor told me that kids learn eating habits when they are young. I want my child to learn to eat fruits and vegetables so she’ll be healthy. It makes me feel good that I’m teaching her something she’ll use for life.”

How can I help my child eat more fruits and vegetables?

- **Eat together.** Let your child see you enjoying fruits and vegetables at meals and snacks.
- **Take it with you.** Show your child how whole fruit is a great snack to eat at the park or in the shopping mall. Put apples, oranges, or bananas in your bag for quick snacks.
- **Share the adventure.** Try new fruits and vegetables together.
- **Fix them together.** Teach your child to tear lettuce or add veggie toppings to pizza.



Why does it matter what I do?

- **They learn by watching you.** Kids get curious when they see you eating fruits or vegetables. Before you know it, they’ll want to taste what you are having.
- **You teach them lessons they’ll use for life.** It’s normal for 2- to 5-year-olds to be “picky” eaters. Help them increase the types of fruits and vegetables they like by setting a good example.

What kinds should we eat?

- Fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables are all smart choices. Buy some of each to last until your next shopping trip.
- Frozen vegetables have as many vitamins and minerals as fresh. Choose packages that contain vegetables --and nothing else--no added fat, salt, or sugars.
- Buy canned fruits that are packed in “100% juice” or water.--
- Rinse canned beans and vegetables with cold water to make them lower in salt.--
- Look for canned vegetables that say “No added salt” on the front of the can. Buy them when they go on sale.
- Cooked vegetables or ripe fruits that are cut into small pieces are easy for your child to eat.



Messages for Mothers of Elementary School Kids

MESSAGE:

Let your kids be produce pickers. Help them pick fruits and veggies at the store.

New Helpful Tips

Q. How can I get my child to help with choosing fruits and vegetables?



A. Try some of these ideas:

- Before going to the market, look over the store flyer together. Ask them to pick out which fruits and vegetables to buy.
- Use games about fruits and vegetables to get kids excited about selecting them at the store.

For example: Challenge your child to see how many colors he or she can include in fruit and vegetable choices. Different colors contain different nutrients. A mix of colors gives them the different vitamins and minerals they need to stay healthy.



- Encourage your child to choose from various forms of fruits and vegetables – canned, frozen, and fresh. They all contain important vitamins and minerals. Plus, canned and frozen forms last longer. Buy canned veggies without added salt and canned fruits without added sugar or packed in 100% fruit juice.
- Ask your kids to pick a fruit or vegetable for a snack or dessert.

New

One Mom's Story:

Eating a Rainbow



I know kids need a variety of foods to stay healthy and I recently learned that eating different colored fruits and vegetables

provides a wider variety of the nutrients we need. So, as a fun activity, when I take my kids to the farmers' market or grocery store, I ask each of them to pick out a different colored fruit or vegetable. They're more likely to try something new when they choose it themselves. And the more colors they try, the more nutrients they'll likely to get. That's the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow!

Message:

When they come home hungry, have fruits and veggies ready to eat.

Moms Story: Healthy Snacks for Hungry Kids:



“I’m hungry.” That’s the first thing my kids say when they come through the door. I need something to feed them—fast. Sometimes they go to the kitchen and get their own snacks. I found that when I put fruits and vegetables in a place where my kids can see them--they eat them. Now I keep cut-up veggies on a low shelf in the fridge and a bowl of fresh fruit on the counter. When I don’t have fresh fruits and veggies, I use canned or frozen. It takes a little planning, but it’s worth it. I know fruits and vegetables help them stay healthy.

Keep Fruits and Veggies Where They’re Easy To See

- Keep a bowl of washed fresh fruits on the kitchen table.
- Put washed and cut fruits and vegetables on a shelf in your refrigerator where your child can see them.
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Make-Ahead Fruit and Veggie Snacks from the Fridge

- Toss veggies with cooked pasta and fat-free Italian dressing.
- Slice apples. Dip them in pineapple or orange juice to keep them from turning brown. Store apples in plastic snack bags or covered bowls in the fridge.
- Kids love to dip fresh veggies in low-fat ranch dressing. Cut up veggies. Store them near the dip on a low shelf in the fridge.

Message: Want your kids to reach for a healthy snack? Make sure fruits and veggies are in reach.

Easy Recipes Moms and Kids Love!

Dip-a-licious!

Fruit Wands with Pink Princess Dip or “Swamp Slime”

Put pieces of fruit on a toothpick, skewer, or straw.

Cover with plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator until snack time.

Serve with low-fat strawberry (Princess Dip) or lime yogurt (Swamp Slime) for dipping.



Happy Snack Packs

Fill small containers or snack bags with cut-up veggies.

Add a small container of fat-free ranch dressing for dipping.

Decorate the outside of the bags with stickers.

Store in the refrigerator on a shelf where they are easy for your child to see.

Dip Your Favorite Veggies in These Tasty Dips

(1 serving is 2 tablespoons of dip)

Honey-Mustard Dipping Sauce

1/4 cup fat-free plain yogurt

1/4 cup low-fat sour cream

2 teaspoons honey

2 teaspoons spicy brown mustard

Mix all ingredients together. Store in a covered container in the refrigerator.

Makes 4 servings.



Curry Dip

1 cup fat-free sour cream

1 cup fat-free plain yogurt

1 tablespoon curry powder

Mix all ingredients together. Store in a covered container in the refrigerator. Makes 16 servings.



Avocado Dip

2 medium ripe avocados

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1/4 cup salsa

1/8 teaspoon salt

Peel and chop avocados. Toss avocado with lemon juice in small bowl. Add salsa and salt. Mash with a fork.

Cover and store in the refrigerator. Makes 12 servings

