

4c

Food Program

Healthy Habits: Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Increased servings of
fresh fruits vegetables
will have many benefits



Child care providers have a unique opportunity to shape young children's healthy development,

through promoting physical activity, screen time limitations, good nutrition, and healthy sleep practices.¹ The 4-C Food Program Tots at the Table initiative, funded by the ConAgra Foods Foundation, is designed to encourage child care providers to focus on promoting child wellness through setting personal goals related to child nutrition and physical activity.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General's Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, January 2010.

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**ConAgra
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Studies have shown that children who participate in the CACFP consume more fruits and vegetables than children who do not participate in the CACFP. Good job to all of you who serve fresh fruits and vegetable at meals AND snacks. But it has also been shown that children still do not get enough vegetables while in care and the most commonly served vegetables are potatoes.²

Studies have shown that 71% of children age 4 through 8 eat fewer than the 5 servings of vegetables and fruit per day.

This packet includes information on the benefits of fresh fruits and veggies for children, ways to incorporate fresh fruits and veggies into meals and snacks and play time, and information for families.

Why Fresh Fruits and Veggies?

Establishing Habits: Children often need many experiences with a new food before they are willing to try it. If you continue to offer broccoli or red peppers at snacks, eventually, they will be more likely to have a bite.

Convenience: Fresh grapes, carrots, or apples are ready to eat raw. And it is easy to add frozen vegetables to any meal or snack.

Low in Calories but High in Vitamins and Minerals:³ Fruits and veggies are naturally low in calories but rich in vitamins and minerals that help keep children healthy and energized.

Reduced Risk of Disease: Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables may help reduce the risk of many diseases, including heart disease, high blood pressure, and some cancers.

Best Practices:

- Incorporating fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables at every meal and snack is a great way to increase consumption.
- For maximum health benefits, serve dark green, orange, and deep yellow vegetables.
- Serve a variety of fresh, seasonal fruits.

² Story, M., Kaphingst, K., & French, S. (2006). The role of child care settings in obesity prevention. The future of children (pp. 143-167). Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and the Brookings Institution.

³ www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org

Children age 4 through 8 eat fewer than the 5 servings of vegetables and fruit per day

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Activities

Getting Comfortable with Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Here are some activity ideas to get kids more comfortable with fresh fruits and veggies.

Grow a Garden

It is a great way for children to be active and participate in growing their own food. Children can help plant, water, weed, harvest, and prepare meals. For young children, find space in your garden (or pots) for them to plant, dig, or water with child-safe tools. They may get muddy, wet, or tired, and they may even make a mess but it's all part of the learning process!

Read a Book

Reading a book about new fruits or vegetables is a great way to help kids accept and like fruits and vegetables. Some examples are *Blueberries for Sal* or *More Peas Please*.

Sing a Song

For younger children, singing a tune to the tune of the Muffin Man while introducing a new vegetable.

Do you know the orange carrot, the orange carrot, the orange carrot? Do you know the orange carrot that lived on Drury Lane?

Do an Activity

Once a week have a fruit or vegetable activity where children can make their own salad with at least 3 veggies, 3 fruits for smoothies, or fruit kabobs (using cookie cutters).

Take a Trip

Take a trip to a local farm. This is a great outing for kids and a fun way for them to see how their food grows. Take a trip to a picking farm where children can pick fruits or veggies during harvest time.

Cut Out Shapes

Try cutting fruits and vegetables into different shapes and let children make a picture before eating them. By using all of their senses, children will become more comfortable with new foods. For example, use cherry tomatoes with a little bit of sour cream and a black olive for eyes, carrot strips for whiskers, parsley for eyebrows, and a red pepper slice for a mouth.

Use the Alphabet

Focus on a different letter every week in which a different fruit or vegetable is the theme of the week. For example, using "A" as the letter of the week, talk about Apples, Asparagus, Artichokes, and Avocados.

Have a Taste-Test

Have the children try several different varieties of fruits or vegetables

For examples:

- Different apples such as MacIntosh, Gala, and Golden Delicious.
- Different berries such as blueberries, strawberries, and blackberries.

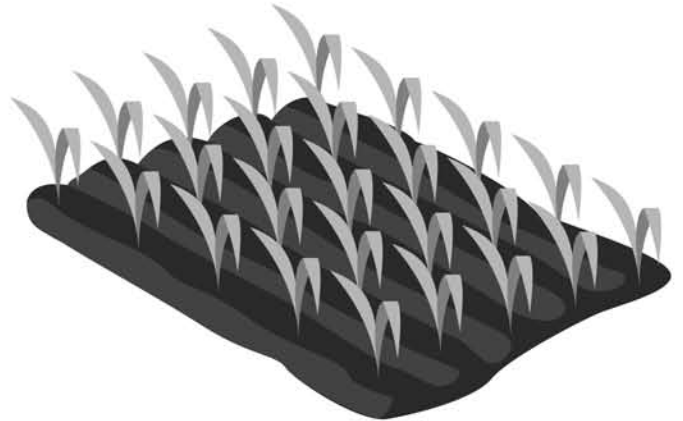
Resources:

Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture • <http://www.macsac.org/>

Pick Your Own Produce in Wisconsin (Listed by county) • <http://www.pickyourown.org/WI.htm>

Buying Directly from Farmers • <http://www.wisconsinfreshproduce.org/southwest.htm>

Southern Wisconsin Farmers Markets • http://www.reapfoodgroup.org/atlas/farmers_markets.htm



Check out www.4-C.org and go to the Food Program Articles section for more information about gardening with children.

Bring Fruits and Veggies to Every Meal

Try these ideas for adding more fruits and veggies into your meals and snacks. Just don't forget to include all required CACFP meal pattern components at these meals!

Remember to serve a rainbow of foods! Each color group of vegetables has its own health benefits. And a more colorful meal is more eye-catching and looks tastier!

Don't worry about fruits or veggies spoiling - use them before they get there! Make salsas, freeze veggies, or mash fruit for yogurt toppings. That way you can get the most out of your grocery dollar.

BREAKFAST	LUNCH or DINNER	SNACK
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a sliced banana on cold cereal • Dice an apple into oatmeal with cinnamon • Top pancakes or waffles with frozen (thawed) fruit • Add frozen (thawed) fruit to plain yogurt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top a sandwich with fresh spinach, tomato, or sprouts • Serve a side of canned peaches or peas with a sandwich • Try a veggie soup • Eat an apple, pear, or grapes for dessert • Top a homemade pizza with peppers, pineapple, or broccoli (make sure to cut pieces small enough to avoid a choking hazard) • Add veggies into a stir fry of chicken breast and brown rice • Add frozen broccoli or peas to a baked casserole • Make bean burritos with tomato salsa, frozen corn, and spinach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top a sandwich with fresh spinach, tomato, or sprouts • Serve a side of canned peaches or peas with a sandwich • Try a veggie soup • Eat an apple, pear, or grapes for dessert • Top a homemade pizza with peppers, pineapple, or broccoli (make sure to cut pieces small enough to avoid a choking hazard) • Add veggies into a stir fry of chicken breast and brown rice • Add frozen broccoli or peas to a baked casserole • Make bean burritos with tomato salsa, frozen corn, and spinach

In Season Produce

Use this Chart for Produce By the Season. Although not all is grown locally, this is a good tool to use while grocery shopping. For seasonal, local foods, check out the resources on the Activities page.

February	oranges, tangelos, grapefruit, lemons, papayas, broccoli, cauliflower
March	pineapples, mangoes, broccoli, lettuce
April	pineapples, mangoes, zucchini, rhubarb, artichokes, asparagus, spring peas, broccoli, lettuce
May	cherries, pineapples, apricots, okra, zucchini, rhubarb, artichokes, asparagus, spring peas, broccoli, lettuce
June	watermelon, strawberries, cantaloupe, cherries, blueberries, peaches, apricots, corn, lettuce
July	watermelon, strawberries, cantaloupe, blueberries, peaches, apricots, kiwi, raspberries, plums, cucumbers, tomatoes, summer squash, corn, green beans, lettuce
August	watermelon, strawberries, cantaloupe, blueberries, peaches, apricots, kiwi, raspberries, plums, cucumbers, corn, eggplant, tomatoes, summer squash, green beans, lettuce
September	grapes, pomegranates, persimmons, eggplants, pumpkins, tomatoes, spinach, lettuce
October	cranberries, apples, pomegranates, grapes, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, winter squash, broccoli, spinach, lettuce
November	cranberries, oranges, tangerines, pears, pomegranates, persimmons, pumpkins, winter squash, sweet potatoes, broccoli, mushrooms, spinach
December	pears, oranges, tangelos, grape fruit, tangerines, papayas, pomegranates, sweet potatoes, mushrooms, broccoli, cauliflower
Always A Good Deal	bananas, potatoes, celery

Family Information

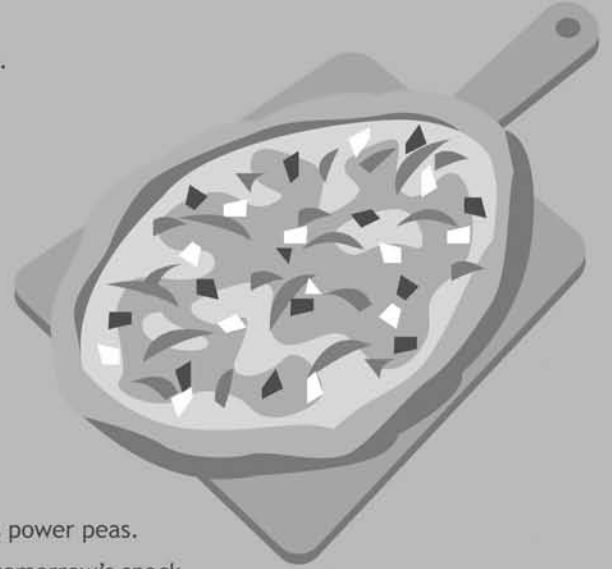
Share with Families

Remember to share information about fresh fruits and veggies with the families in your care. These tips, along with the fun activities the children will be excited to share with mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, or siblings, are great to send home in a child care newsletter.

Incorporation of Fruits and Veggies

Ways to Incorporate More Fruits and Veggies Into Meals:

- Puree vegetables into pasta sauces (carrots and peppers are great for this).
- Add veggies to ground meats, casseroles, soups, stews, eggs, etc.
- Experiment with shakes or smoothies.
- Try adding shredded veggies (zucchini or carrots) to breads and muffins.
- Dice veggies and add to pizza.
- Serve veggies au gratin (adding melted cheese).
- Make fruit juice ice pops with 100% fruit juices.
- Make mashed “potatoes” with cauliflower instead of spuds.
- Wrap up chopped veggies in tortillas.
- Add sliced cucumbers or carrots to sandwiches.
- Offer fruits and vegetables at snack daily. Make it a habit.
- Create a positive association with veggies by using creative names, such as power peas.
- Add variety. If your child doesn't like today's veggie, maybe they will try tomorrow's snack.
- Be a good role model. If children see you and your family enjoying fresh fruits and vegetables, they will be more likely to try them.



Encouraging Kids to Try

Try these tips to help encourage children to try fruits and veggies

- Share some fun food facts with your children. The more they learn about fruits and vegetables, the more interested they become in them.
- Plant some fruits and vegetables at home. You can easily plant blueberries, tomatoes, greens, or even carrots in pots for the deck or porch. And a window herb garden will add color even in the dead of winter.
- Have the kids find or create recipes with their favorite fruits and vegetables.
- Talk to your kids about fruits and vegetables. Ask them what they like or don't like about textures, flavors, temperatures, or appearances of fruits and vegetables. It is ok for them to have preferences, and remember that those preferences are subject to change!