

8. *If at first you don't succeed*

DO you find yourself saying: "I've tried, but my kids just don't like fruit and veg"? Maybe you've not given them the chance. Often it takes more than one introduction to a food before they acquire a taste for it.

Kids have an inbuilt preference for sweet flavours, which is why they prefer juice to water and puddings to vegetables. They will eventually accept savoury flavours if you keep trying them, but this can take up to 10 attempts - so persevere.

9. *Don't use the 'D' word*

TELLING your child you're putting them on a diet and getting them thinking about calories and fat can be the start of an lifelong, unhealthy obsession with food. It can make them feel deprived and think they're being singled out as having a weight problem.

As for health, a restrictive eating plan can mean your kids don't get all the nutrients a growing body needs. Instead, try cutting out 100 to 200 calories a day - that's just one chocolate bar or soft drink. The bottom line is not to restrict them, but to encourage them to eat healthier foods.

10. *Be more active as a family*

MAKE exercise a family activity. For example, every night after dinner in the summer, go for a half-hour walk. Make it something fun that kids look forward to.

Walk your kids to school rather than driving them if possible. If you're really busy, try alternating between walk and drive days. If it's not practical to go with them, talk to their school about the possibility of setting up a "walking bus" scheme.

A walking bus is led by volunteer adults and operates along a selected route picking up child "passengers" at designated points and delivering them safely to school. Visit www.walktoschool.org.uk for more details.



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Here are
10 ways
YOU

can help to
make sure
your child
eats more
healthily



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1. *Don't make them clear their plate*

WE all remember being told as children: "You're not getting down from the table until you've finished everything on your plate." But that's one of the worst things you can do.

Dr Gillian Harris, consultant psychologist says: "Children quickly get tired of the same taste, which is why they often only eat half of their main course but still want a pudding. So forcing them to finish their main course first won't help."

Pennsylvania State University found that fussy eaters tend to have mums who nag them to eat. A "softly, softly" approach works better.

2. *Be a good role model*

KIDS with obese parents are 80 per cent more likely to become overweight themselves.

"Children don't develop bad eating habits on their own," explains nutritionist Angela Dowden. "If a child is gaining too much weight, the rest of the family probably has an unhealthy diet too."

If there are only crisps, chocolate and sweets when your kids look for snacks, that's what they'll eat. Instead, fill your fridge and cupboards with fresh fruit, juices, wholemeal bread and other healthy treats. By the same token, if your kids see you bingeing on pizza and takeaways night after night they're likely to follow suit. You need to give the whole family's diet a makeover.



small change, **big difference**

3. *Exercise portion control*

DIETITIANS say the trend for "supersizing" has played a big role in the current obesity crisis. Over the past few decades, chocolate bars, crisps and fast foods have been morphing into something much bigger and the average burger has doubled in size since 1982.

The trouble is, if kids like what they're eating, they tend to clean their plates. Numerous studies show that however big the portion in front of them, rather than stopping when full they'll guzzle it all down.

So while McDonald's and Kraft are working to cut portion sizes, you need to keep portions in check at home. Serve meals on a plate rather than buffet-style. Servings of pasta/rice/mash should fit in your kid's palm, a portion of meat/fish/poultry should be the size and thickness of their palm and veggies should make up a good third of the plate.

4. *Give them a healthy breakfast*

BY far the healthiest breakfast is a bowl of low-sugar cereal with milk. It's packed with fibre, calcium and other vital nutrients.

Dr Sarah Schenker of the British Nutrition Foundation says: "Studies show that kids who eat cereals have better performance during the morning and a more balanced diet overall."

But beware: *Which?* magazine has found that 80 per cent of breakfast cereals exceeded official health guidelines on salt or sugar levels. Those specifically aimed at children are usually the worst offenders. Good choices are Ready Brek, Shreddies and Weetabix - throw in some chopped banana for sweetness.

5. *Don't use food as a reward*

AS soon as a food becomes a reward it becomes more desirable - but that's not all. Other foods become less desirable.

In other words, telling children they can have a packet of sweets if they eat all their veg simply makes the sweets even more alluring and the veg less appealing.

6. *Pack a nutritious lunchbox*

A RECENT study found that 9 out of 10 packed lunches are too high in sugar, salt and fat and fewer than half contain fruit. Here's how to make them healthier...

- *Swap fizzy drinks for chocolate or strawberry milk shakes - they will boost calcium intake to build stronger bones and teeth.*
- *Cut fat by using less butter, spread or mayonnaise in sandwiches and choose low-fat fillings such as lean ham, turkey, chicken, tuna in water, cottage cheese or banana.*
- *Add two portions of fruit but don't stick to apples and pears - try easier-to-eat grapes, strawberries and raisins. Include cherry tomatoes, carrot and pepper sticks to nibble on and add salad to sarnies.*
- *Use wholemeal bread, rolls and pitta instead of white.*

7. *Make eating a family affair*

"GET the whole family eating the same healthy food so you don't single out an overweight child as having a 'special' meal," says obesity expert Denise Bruner.

If your kids are old enough, let them help you prepare the meal so they learn early on not to rely on ready meals and fast food. Make cooking fun, not a chore.

And eat together. A family that eats together, eats better, according to a recent study. Children who reported having frequent family dinners were found to consume 41 per cent less fat and 57 per cent more fruit and veg overall than their peers who didn't.



Just Eat More
(fruit & veg)