



## DIETETICS

## Increase Vegetable intake for children

By OSCAR Care Group Lead Dietitian, Ella Monaghan

Did you know that **only 20%** of children aged between 2-3 years old are eating the **recommended serves of vegetables** per day?

During National Nutrition Week (13 – 19 October) the aim of the '**Try For 5**' campaign aims to encourage all Australians to meet the recommended intake of vegetables.

For children aged 1-2 years of age it is recommended that they eat 2-3 serves of vegetables per day. Older children between the ages of 2-3 years require to 2 ½ serves of vegetables per day.

It is very important that children are consuming all 5 food groups as their bodies are in a peak period of growth and require good nutrition to ensure that they are reaching their nutritional requirements and building a solid foundation of healthy habits for the future.



**One serve is the equivalent of:**

- ½ cup cooked green or orange vegetables such as pumpkin or spinach
- ½ cup cooked dried or canned beans, lentils or peas
- 1 cup of raw salad vegetables or green leafy vegetables such as lettuce
- ½ cup sweet corn
- ½ medium potato or sweet potato
- 1 medium tomato

### SERVE SIZES



**Vegetables and legumes/beans**



### Why are vegetables important?

Vegetables contain a range of **nutrients** called phytochemicals which play important roles in the body.

We recommend that adults and children 'eat the rainbow' meaning to fill the plate with **lots of coloured vegetables** as the different colours provide the body with different nutrients.

You may like to create a **vegetable rainbow chart** at home to encourage children to eat and try different vegetables. Each time the child eats a colourful vegetable, get them to colour in the corresponding colour on the rainbow!

Vegetables contain **dietary fibre** which is beneficial for regular bowel habits and reduces the risk of bowel cancer and high cholesterol, plus fibre helps to keep you fuller for longer as it takes longer for the body to break it down.

### 5 ways to increase vegetable intake for children

1. **Involve:** Children are more likely to eat vegetables if they are involved in the preparation phase – try asking children to select a vegetable to include in the evening meal when shopping or asking them to stir in the vegetables in a pan.
2. **Role Model:** Children learn their eating habits from watching those around them. Making sure children can see you add a variety of vegetables to your plate and talk positively about vegetables will help to build a positive relationship about vegetables.
3. **Persistence:** It can be disheartening to make a meal then only for your child to refuse to eat it. Remember that it can take up to 10 times for a child to accept a new food, so it is important to continue to persevere with offering your child vegetables even if they may refuse to eat it a few times.
4. **Avoid alternatives:** If a child refuses to eat their vegetables it is important to avoid 'bribing' them to eat it for example; "if you eat your carrots, you can have an ice cream afterwards" as your child will associate vegetables as negative and desserts as the preferred food. If after 20 minutes, the child continues to refuse their vegetables it is recommended to remove the plate and try again another time.
5. **Incorporate:** Try to incorporate vegetables into snacks such as pumpkin scones, savoury muffins, vegetable sticks with dip or natural yoghurt or zucchini slice cut into small easy to eat squares. Finely chopping or grating vegetables into dishes such as pasta sauce is also an option to add extra vegetables into the meal, which is beneficial for the whole family!

### Recipe Idea:

Another fun way to incorporate vegetables into the evening meal is to make your own oven baked chips!

Select a variety of vegetables such as potato, sweet potato, carrot and capsicum and chop into 'chip' size. Place the vegetables on a baking tray (with baking paper) and cover with olive oil, garlic, onion and season. Place in the oven for approx. 40 minutes on 200 degrees (fan force) for perfect homemade 'chips' which are perfect for little fingers!



### References

1. Australian Institute of Health. Australia's Health 2018. Available from; <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/australias-health-2018/contents/indicators-of-australias-health/fruit-and-vegetable-intake>
2. Try For 5. Available from; <http://www.tryfor5.org.au/about>
3. Eat For Health. Recommended Number of Serves for children, adolescents and toddlers. Available from; <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/food-essentials/how-much-do-we-need-each-day/recommended-number-serves-children-adolescents-and>



Need help encouraging a child in your care to increase their vegetable intake?  
For further information, contact **OSCAR Care Group** Dietitian Ella Monaghan.

