

Giving Kids A Taste For Fruits And Vegetables

(NAPS)—Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows that most children should eat more fruits and vegetables, which contain essential nutrients that may help protect against chronic diseases. But how can parents, schools and other caregivers get kids to chow down?

Cut up fruit before serving it, suggests Mark Schuster, M.D., Ph.D., a researcher with the Prevention Research Centers (PRC) Program, a nationwide network of 37 academic research centers funded by the CDC to find ways to help people get and stay healthy.

Dr. Schuster, while leading the University of California at Los Angeles PRC, partnered with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in developing Students for Nutrition and Exercise (SNaX), a program in which middle school students promote healthy eating and physical activity among their peers. During testing of SNaX, Dr. Schuster (now at Harvard Medical School) and colleagues discovered that in general, kids don't like to bite into whole fruit. "But if you cut it up for them, even though it's the exact same fruit, instead of going in the trash can, it goes into their mouth," he says.

Dr. Schuster is now preparing SNaX for use throughout LAUSD and beyond. But LAUSD is already using some key features, including the cut fruit component.

Parents should model healthy eating habits, says Becky Mozaffarian, M.S., M.P.H., a researcher at the Harvard University PRC. Fruits and vegetables should always be readily available in the home. "Try keeping a supply of cut-up fruits and veggies in the refrigerator, at eye level, for snacking," she says.

Mozaffarian helped develop Food & Fun After School 2nd Edition, a curriculum that outside-of-school programs can use to promote



Experts say that one way to get kids to eat more fruit is to cut it up before serving.

physical activity and healthier food to children. The YMCA has committed to using Food & Fun nationwide as part of First Lady Michelle Obama's Partnership for a Healthier America initiative. The curriculum is available free at www.foodandfun.org.

"Serve a fruit or vegetable with every meal and snack," says Mozaffarian. "Even if children don't touch the fruit or vegetable at first, one day they just might try it. Don't give up."

For more information about the PRC Program, go to www.cdc.gov/prc.

More Tips

Parents and caregivers should:

- Introduce fruits and veggies early in life.
- Involve children in fruit and veggie purchases.
- Involve children in preparing fruit and veggie snacks.

Schools should:

- Offer salad bars.
- Involve students in taste tests.
- Pay attention to presentation. For example, a package with condensation on the plastic cover may look unappetizing.

See www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone for recommended daily amounts of fruits and vegetables, depending upon age, sex and physical activity level.

Did You Know?

For parents who want to help their children enjoy a healthier diet, CDC-funded researchers say one way to get kids to eat more fruit is to cut it up before serving. Another suggestion is to involve them in selecting and buying fruit. To learn more, visit www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone and www.cdc.gov/prc.

There's good news for parents who want to help their children enjoy a healthier diet. /// Giving Kids A Taste For Fruits And Vegetables