

5 Steps for Teaching Young Children to Love Food and Nutrition

Focus on experiential learning

Young children are learning every moment. They are observing the world around them, asking questions, exploring and discovering. Make everyday experiences with food and nutrition into learning opportunities. Explore how food comes to us, how it becomes delicious meals, and how it nourishes us and helps us grow.

Keep it simple

Children can learn a lot about food, nutrition, and health if we keep it simple and focus on just one key message at a time. Begin with what they know and build on it piece by piece with increasing detail and complexity. Allow their questions to lead you in how deep to go. Ask them questions to check for understanding. Keep it accurate, but keep it simple.

Keep it positive

Food and nutrition guidance can easily become negative: “avoid this, eat less of that.” Children pick up on adult fears related to food, fat, and fatality. If we want children to have a positive relationship with food and their bodies, we need to keep our messages positive. Encourage body love and respect. Banish fears of food.

Build healthy habits

Food habits are formed beginning at birth. We can help young children build healthy habits through positive experiences with food and through nutrition education. Encourage food exploration and a desire for eating a variety of foods. Mindful eating and enjoyable movement are the cornerstones of healthy habits.

Make it fun!

Children enjoy learning, especially in a fun and supportive environment. Children learn through play, so make play the way to learn. Games, stories, dramatic play, puppet shows, songs, cooking, and crafts are just a few of the fun ways to learn about food and nutrition. No boring lectures – make it fun!