



Kids Say Yes to Fruits and Veggies: Tips for More Fun and Fewer Fights *60-minute lesson*

GOAL

Encourage caregivers to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into family meals and snacks.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Prepare meals that help kids eat more fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ Discuss pros and cons of using different forms of fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ Share ideas for helping kids enjoy more fruits and vegetables.

KEY MESSAGES

- ✓ Buying fruits and veggies in all their forms (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) can help save you money and time. There is no “best” form of fruits and vegetables – they all count!
- ✓ Kids learn by watching you! Be a role model by eating fruits and vegetables yourself.
- ✓ Patience works better than pressure. You decide what foods to serve – then let kids choose whether and how much to eat.
- ✓ Kids may need to see a new food on the table many times before they will try it or like it.

MATERIALS

Flip chart or white board • Markers/pens • Name tags • Ingredients and equipment for your chosen recipes • Samples of different types (fresh, canned, frozen, dried) of fruit and vegetables (in addition to those you prepare together in class – optional) • Materials for kids' activity (if using - optional)

KIDS' ACTIVITY OPTIONS

We have provided a booklet of activities that can be used with kids. The following are suggestions for specific activities that may be complementary to what caregivers are learning in this lesson. **You are not limited to this list** – feel free to use whatever activities are most appropriate for your situation.

Note that some activities are written for the whole family, but can be easily modified for an activity with only kids.

- For younger kids:
 - We Eat Tops and Bottoms, page 18
 - Fruit and Vegetable Mystery Bag, page 10
 - Make a Fruit Clown Face, page 42
 - Any of the coloring sheets on pages 21-32
- For older kids:
 - Fruit Partner Games, page 57
 - Food Group Relay Race, page 54

CAREGIVER HANDOUTS

We have provided a comprehensive set of handouts for each lesson that can be 1) used as references for the instructor to prepare for class 2) referenced verbally and/or visually during class to guide discussion 3) provided as take-homes for caregivers to reinforce what they learned in class and encourage further learning. **You are NOT required to provide all of these handouts as take-homes** (though you may if you wish). Feel free to pick and choose which you feel are most helpful and appropriate. However, we ask that **at a minimum you provide a printed copy of the recipe(s) you prepared in class, as well as the Making It Work at Home handout.**

Check off the handouts you plan to reference during class

- Fresh, Frozen, and Canned
- Seasonal Fruits and Vegetables
- MyPlate
- Raising a Healthy Eater
- Set a Healthy Example
- Storing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables
- Freezing Fruits and Veggies
- Fun with Fruits and Veggies
- Delicious Dips and Spreads
- Veggies Three Ways
- Snack Smart
- Step-by-Step Pasta Dinner
- Step-by-Step Stir-Fries
- Make Your Own Trail Mix
- Make Your Own Baby Food
- Making It Work at Home**

RECIPE OPTIONS

Choose **at least 1 snack to prepare in advance and share during discussion and at least 1 meal or side dish** (or as many as time allows) **for the hands-on cooking.** The following chart provides some ideas. You may use other recipes if you wish – see CookingMatters.org/recipes for more ideas. If you are not using a Cooking Matters recipe, please be sure it contains only ingredients that are affordable and accessible for low-income caregivers, does not require fancy cooking tools, and follows healthy eating guidelines. If of interest and appropriate for your group, make your own homemade baby food in place of the snack.

Snacks			
Recipe Ideas	Prep and Cook Time	Time Saving Tips	Talking Points
Raw fruits or veggies paired with any dip from the Delicious Dips and Spreads handout	Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 0 minutes	Prepare in advance for tasting.	“Kids love to dip their foods. Particularly with picky kids, dips are a great way to add new flavors that will encourage kids to eat their fruits and vegetables.” “Dips can be made on the weekends, or when you have a little extra time, and used throughout the week. Get kids involved in the mixing and mashing!”
Fruit Tarts	Prep Time: 30 minutes Cook Time: 10 minutes	Prepare in advance for tasting.	“Works as a snack or healthier dessert.”

Recipe Ideas	Prep and Cook Time	Time Saving Tips	Talking Points
Make Your Own Trail Mix	Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 0 minutes	Prepare in advance for tasting.	“Trail mix can satisfy those cravings for savory crunchy foods but with a serving of dried fruit thrown in.” “This one is perfect for beginning to get younger kids familiar with food prep. They can help measure and mix. They can also help divide and bag into servings for use throughout the week.”
Yogurt Parfait	Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 0 minutes	Prepare in advance for tasting.	“Yogurt parfaits you buy pre-made often have lots of added sugar and cost as much as a whole tub of yogurt. Or, compare them to single- serving fruit-flavored yogurt cups or “smoothies” – which typically have little or no actual fruit! Make your own for a healthier, lower-cost treat.”
Snack Smart handout	Prep Time: 10 - 60 minutes depending on recipe chosen Cook Time: 0 minutes	Prepare in advance for tasting.	“Planning is key – think about when you’ll have some extra time to assemble the snacks and store for easy grabbing throughout the week.” “For older kids who can help themselves, make sure healthy snacks are easier to access than less healthy foods. Keep them pre-assembled and in plain sight.”
Make Your Own Baby Food (see handout)	Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 10 minutes	Prepare in advance for tasting.	“Fruits and vegetables are a great first food for baby. Start with mild- tasting fruits and vegetables, such as bananas, avocados, sweet and white potatoes, peas, and winter squash.”

Meal or Side Dishes

Recipe Ideas	Prep and	Time Saving Tips	Talking Points
Black Bean and Vegetable Quesadillas	Prep Time: 25 minutes Cook Time: 20 minutes	Drain and rinse beans in advance. Wash and prepare vegetables. Prepare recipe in advance for tasting.	“Substitute frozen spinach for fresh to save money, or if you won’t use up the fresh spinach in other ways.” “Use any veggies you like. Quesadillas are great for throwing in leftover veggies too!”
Turkey Chili with Vegetables	Prep Time: 20 minutes Cook Time: 20-25 minutes	Drain and rinse beans in advance.	“Save time by cooking once and eating twice. Make in a big batch and freeze half to eat later.”

Recipe Ideas	Prep and	Time Saving Tips	Talking Points
Veggies Three Ways handout	Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 2-35 minutes depending on cooking method and vegetable type	Choose a cooking method and vegetable type that can be prepared during lesson. Prepare longer cooking vegetables in advance and focus lesson on tasting.	<p>“Let your kids taste veggies in different ways until you find a style they like best.”</p> <p>“Once you have some great go-to veggie options, you can put them on the side of very simple meals (grilled cheese, ham sandwich) and always feel good knowing they're getting their veggies.”</p>
Step-by-Step Pasta Dinner	Prep Time: 15 minutes Cook Time: 15 - 20 minutes	Cook pasta in advance. Prepare vegetables in advance. Prepare sauce in advance. Focus lesson on assembling and using framework.	<p>“Pasta dishes are great for throwing in leftover veggies, thawed frozen veggies, canned veggies – whatever you've got.”</p> <p>“These are great recipes to double and serve leftovers for lunch or dinner later in the week.”</p>
Step-by-Step Stir-Fries	Prep Time: 15 minutes Cook Time: 15 - 20 minutes	Cook grain in advance. Prepare vegetables in advance. Prepare sauce in advance. Focus lesson on assembling and tasking using framework.	<p>“Stir-fries are a great way to get a colorful variety of vegetables into a single meal. Perfect for throwing in small amounts of leftovers or using up veggies that may soon go bad.”</p> <p>“Thawed frozen veggies work well in stir-fries, but be sure to drain excess water before adding.”</p>
Fall Vegetable Salad	Prep Time: 20 minutes Cook Time: 10 - 50 minutes	Prepare grain in advance. Prepare vegetables in advance. Focus lesson on assembling recipe and making dressing.	<p>“Substitute apples with dried fruit, and vary the vegetables according to what you have on hand and what's in season. Carrots, cabbage, and celery work nicely.”</p> <p>“Make it a meal – add leftover cooked chicken, roast beef, or beans for added protein. Canned tuna or salmon would also work well.”</p>
The Works Pizza	Prep Time: 30 minutes Cook Time: 25 minutes	Preheat oven. Have vegetables prepared in advance.	<p>“You can use any veggies you like. Try broccoli, red onion, zucchini, chopped cabbage, corn...the sky's the limit! It's a great way to let each family member pick which veggies they like best and add them to their part of the pizza before baking.”</p>

CLASS TIME

PAPERWORK (5 MINUTES):

As caregivers arrive, have them complete the demographics portion of the participant survey and sign a waiver.

MAIN COURSE: LESSON TOPIC (50 MINUTES):

INTRODUCTION: (5 MINUTES)

1. **Welcome caregivers.** Introduce instructors and any other volunteers or helpers.
2. **Set expectations.** Explain that caregivers will learn how to save money buying fruits and vegetables by using all forms, how to save time in the kitchen, and ideas for getting kids to eat more fruits and vegetables.
3. **Get acquainted.**



“What are you looking forward to learning in this session?” Write their responses on flip-chart paper and make an effort to cover as many of their questions as possible.

TASTE TEST, HANDS-ON COOKING AND DISCUSSION (45 MINUTES)

1. **Begin by having kids and caregivers eat a pre-prepared snack together.**
 - Have kids and caregivers serve themselves the snack.
 - As they serve the snack, point out the fruits and vegetables used in the recipes.



“What makes it hard to offer more fruits and vegetables as snacks?”

- Address 1-2 common challenges and let caregivers offer each other ideas to overcome that challenge. Use the following table to offer additional ideas as needed. If time permits, address other challenges mentioned by caregivers.

BARRIERS TO FRUIT & VEGETABLE SNACKING	
Caregiver Challenge	Ideas
"Packaged, less healthy snacks are more convenient."	Cut up and pre-package fruit and veggie snacks in zip-top baggies or small storage containers. Set them up front in the fridge for easy grabbing. Keep extra napkins in your car, purse, or even beside your snacks in the fridge, to help with messy hands and faces.
"I'm short on time."	Spend 10-15 minutes on a weekend (or another day you have the time) to create healthy snacks for the week. Involve kids in the process! Food time can double as family time and even learning time.
"Packaged, less healthy snacks seem less expensive."	Make some direct price comparisons. A bag of carrots is cheaper than a family-size bag of chips and makes enough carrot sticks to last all week. Look for fruits and veggies you can buy in bulk or on sale, and do the chopping yourself to save money.
"My kids beg for the packaged stuff."	Make fruits and veggies more fun with simple dips or sauces, or serve in fun ways like using cut-up fruits and veggies to make a clown face. Making fruits and veggie snacks together often gives kids what they want even more than sweet or salty snacks – time with you.

- Remind caregivers that it's not all or nothing! Even one or two more fruit- and veggie-filled snacks each week makes a difference! Encourage caregivers to start small and do what they can.



"I'd like to hear from the kids, what was your favorite dip or snack and what did you like about it?"

2. Next, have caregivers prepare a meal or side dish.

- Have caregivers and kids wash hands before handling any ingredients.

NOTE: *If you have a helper to lead children, this is a good time to pull kids into a separate activity of your choosing while caregivers continue the discussion. If not, identify a specific cooking task for kids or give them a designated area for independent play.*

- Introduce the recipes you have chosen and show caregivers the fresh, frozen, canned or dried produce you will use. Point out that most recipes can be used as a framework that can be adjusted to suit your family's budget and needs (such as using leftovers, things you have on hand, or items you find on sale). If you are substituting any ingredients in the recipe due to cost, convenience, or other reasons, point that out.
- Delegate different recipe steps as needed. While caregivers are working, introduce the idea of using fruits and vegetables in all their forms to save money while eating healthier. Have them brainstorm the pros and cons of different forms of fruits and vegetables. Prompt them to consider factors like cost, shelf life, taste, texture, nutrient content, and ease of preparation. If your hands are free, record their responses on flip-chart paper. Use the Fresh, Frozen, and Canned handout to facilitate your discussion as needed.



“What ideas do you have for different types of recipes, meals, or snacks best suited for either fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruits and vegetables?”

- Share examples like: defrosted frozen fruit mixes well in yogurt for a yummy at-home snack, while canned or fresh fruit might be a better on-the-go snack.
- Move on to discuss a common caregiving challenge: helping kids get plenty of colorful fruits and vegetables. Tell caregivers that two strategies have been proven to help kids develop good attitudes towards fruits and vegetables over the long term, and they are totally in caregivers' control:

- 1) Caregivers model an enjoyment of fruits and veggies.
- 2) Caregivers use patience instead of pressure.



“What does it mean to be a role model for your kids around fruits and veggies? How are you doing this already? How might you be modeling unhelpful attitudes or behaviors towards fruits and veggies? What's one modeling behavior you think you could try this week?”

- Wrap up the discussion on modeling, then explore the second strategy. Point out that caregivers are in charge of offering a variety of healthy foods, but in order to learn lifelong healthy habits kids need to make their own choices about which foods to try and how much to eat. Explain that kids are born with a natural suspicion of new foods, and it can take many times (12 or more!) offering a new food before they are willing to try it



If time permits:

- Offer additional age-specific ideas for stimulating children's interest in fruits and vegetables from the table below.

Getting Kids Interested in Fruits and Vegetables	
Age Range	Talking points
Infants (ages 0 -1)	Check out Feeding in the First Year: Beyond Baby Food lesson
Toddlers (ages 1–3) and preschoolers (ages 3–5)	Play with shapes and colors to highlight the visual aspects of fruits and vegetables. Have “rainbow night” to see how many colors you can get on one plate (use leftovers to cut costs!). Color-code meals (“Rockstar Red Night”) based on the fruit or veggie starring in the main dish. Use cookie cutters to arrange the meals' fruits and vegetables on the plate.
	Kids love to dip their foods. When old enough for small slices of raw fruits and veggies, whip up a quick veggie dip with yogurt and seasonings such as herbs. Or, fruit chunks go great with a yogurt and cinnamon or vanilla dip.
	Ask your child to name new veggie or fruit creations. Let them arrange raw veggies or fruits into a fun shape or design.
School-aged children and teenagers (ages 6–12; 13+)	Keep fruit and veggies washed, cut up, and in plain sight in the refrigerator.
	Make sure fruits and vegetables are easier to access than less healthy foods.
	Offer raisins or other unsweetened dried fruit instead of chewy fruit snacks or strips, which usually contain very little fruit.
	Rehab kids' favorites: spoon fresh, canned, or dried fruit over yogurt; mix dried fruit, applesauce or a mashed banana into oatmeal; add spinach to ground beef when making burgers, add vegetables to eggs or pizza, grate zucchini into tomato sauce.

3. If kids and caregivers have been separated, bring them back together for eating time.

- Model offering small amounts to kids at first and letting them get more if they like it and are still hungry. As kids and caregivers eat:



“What are some ways you can save time preparing recipes like the one just made?” As needed, add to the discussion with tips from the table below.

SAVING TIME PREPARING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- ❖ Chop fresh vegetables like carrots, celery, and peppers in big batches when you have more time, to use throughout the week or to freeze in zip-top baggies to use later.
- ❖ Use frozen or canned vegetables that require less preparation.
- ❖ Cook once, eat twice. Make bigger batches of cooked veggies and throw leftovers into pastas, stir-fries, soups, or other meals.
- ❖ Tear leafy greens like lettuce, spinach, and kale with your hands for use in salads and other dishes rather than cutting with a knife.
- ❖ Don't bother peeling all vegetables. Wash first then prepare as usual. By eating the skins of carrots, potatoes, yams, parsnips, and small beets you not only save time, but also get more nutrients and healthy fiber in your family's diet.
- ❖ Cook more "one pot" meals like vegetable soups, which are easy to make, leave fewer dirty dishes, and usually freeze and reheat well.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES):

- **ENCOURAGE:** Encourage caregivers to choose one thing they learned today that they will commit to trying at home this week. Have them share aloud if they are willing.
- **ASK:** Model mealtime conversation starters between families by asking kids to share with their caregivers their favorite part of today's session, the best food they tried, and/or something they want to try helping with in the kitchen at home.
- **TAKE:** Share handouts for caregivers to take home, as well as any incentive items you are providing. **Caregivers must complete the participant survey questions and return the forms to you before receiving their take-home items.**

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