

Food For Thought

Teaching Children How To Eat Smart

(NAPSA)—During the school year, children are challenged with academic and extracurricular achievement, so parents want to be sure they make the grade with their dietary choices as well. Studies show that many children do not get enough of the right foods while more and more are overweight and at risk of obesity-related diseases.

Fortunately, with a little help, children can acquire a taste for healthy foods.

In fact, research supports that given repeated exposure, a child's aversion to a particular healthy food can actually come full circle. A recent paper published in the journal *Appetite*, from researchers at University College in London, reported the effect of parents offering a daily taste of a vegetable for which the child had indicated a dislike. Youngsters who had everyday exposure increased their liking and consumption of the food. In some cases, foods they once would not touch became their favorites.

"A healthy, balanced daily diet for kids may sound like simple common sense, but many parents feel handicapped by the forces that draw children toward junk food," says Doug Woolsey, founder of Et Tu Salad Kits and a public outreach program promoting family health and welfare called Family Mealttime.

Parents may care to consider these suggestions to encourage kids to eat more fruits and veggies:

- Pack fresh fruits, and vegetable crudité's or a salad, in their daily school lunch. Frequency of inclusion helps them develop a taste for healthful foods.



Parents can help their children learn to love fresh vegetables and fruits.

- Take kids to the produce section to have them help pick out fruits and vegetables with you. Encourage them to select something they have never tried and make an event of preparing it and enjoying it together.

- Add vegetable purées to pasta sauces, soups, casseroles and meat loaf, increasing the nutrition in the food and avoiding resistance to "more vegetables."

- Add vegetables into a variety of "kid-fave" foods. Load a pizza with a delicious mix of seasoned vegetables, put a chicken Caesar salad into whole wheat wraps or create mixed veggie, bean and brown rice tacos.

- Promote fresh fruit as the basis for desserts and occasional sweet treats. Once kids become accustomed to the taste of fresh fruit, sugary foods may become too sweet for them.

More suggestions on making "Family Mealttime" a regular celebration, as well as ideas and recipes to foster children's appetites for fresh produce, can be found at www.ettu.com/familymealttime.