



Food For Thought

Healthy Ideas for Preschoolers



Vegetable Group

Last month we began our study of MyPyramid as it relates to preschoolers. We discussed the Grain Group. This month we are going to talk about the Vegetable Group.

Vegetables are an important part of our diet because of the vitamins and minerals that they provide along with fiber. Many vegetables, especially the dark green and dark yellow ones, are a good source of vitamin A. Vitamin A promotes good vision and also helps form and maintain healthy skin and teeth. Vegetables are also a good source of fiber, which aids in digestion.

Vegetables should be eaten every day because they are naturally low in fat and contribute to the goal of reducing fat in the diet.

Vary Your Veggies

Eat a variety of vegetables. Different vegetables are rich in different nutrients.

- *Dark green* – broccoli, kale, spinach, romaine, and greens
- *Orange* – sweet potatoes, carrots, winter squash, and pumpkin
- *Legumes* – lentils, dried beans, and dried peas
- *Starchy* – white potatoes, corn, green peas, jicama
- *Other* – tomatoes, onions, green beans, and lettuce

Kids in the Kitchen

Children like to help in the kitchen. Have them help you with simple tasks. They can learn from helping and it gives you a chance to talk with your child. Ask your child to set the table. At first they may need some help, but will soon be able to do it by themselves.



How much do we need?

Children 2-3 year-old need a cup of vegetables a day, 4-8 year-olds need 1 ½ cup a day and adults should eat 2-3 cups a day.

Food Tips

Help your child enjoy vegetables by following some of these tips:

- Don't overcook vegetables, kids usually like them crunchy – not soft.
- Try serving strong flavored vegetables with cheese or sauce.
- Kids often like raw vegetables and dip.
- Set a good example by eating vegetables yourself.
- Offer vegetables prepared in a variety of ways, cooked, baked, grilled or raw.
- Try different vegetables, have sweet potatoes instead of white potatoes.
- Provide a dark green (spinach, broccoli) or dark yellow (carrots, sweet potatoes) vegetable at least every other day.

Vegetable Ideas

An orange vegetable that is very good for us is pumpkin. There are lots of ways pumpkin can be used. Here are a couple of ideas to use pumpkin

Pumpkin/Peanut Butter Dip

¾ cup peanut butter
¾ cup canned pumpkin
¾ cup brown sugar
½ teaspoon vanilla

Combine all of the ingredients above. Cut apples, bananas, and other fruit into bite-size pieces to serve with the dip. Serve as a snack or with the meal.

Nutrition information for 1 tablespoon of dip: 50 calories, 2.5 g fat, 40 mg sodium, 25% daily vitamin A.

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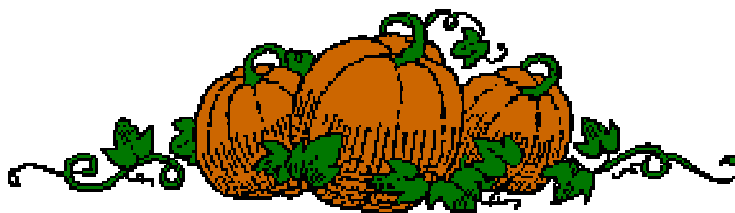
Pumpkin Muffins

1 ½ cup flour
½ cup sugar
1 teaspoon baking power
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon nutmeg
½ cup milk
½ cup canned pumpkin
¼ cup melted margarine
1 egg
½ cup raisins or nuts

Grease bottom of 12 medium muffin cups. Mix all ingredients just until flour is moistened. Batter should be lumpy. Fill muffin cups 2/3 full. Sprinkle ¼ teaspoon sugar over batter in each cup.

Bake at 400° for 18-20 minutes. Immediately remove muffins from the pan.

Nutrition information per muffin: 180 calories, 4 g fat, 250 mg sodium, 3 g. protein, 50% daily vitamin A.



**For personalized nutrition
information visit
www.mypyramid.gov**

