

# Getting Kids to Eat More Vegetables

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If you want a child to eat more vegetables, it might help to use plates illustrated with pictures of vegetables.

Researchers tested 235 preschoolers in day care centers. At lunchtime, they gave half the children a segmented plate with pictures of fruits and vegetables in the compartments. They explained that the pictures indicated where the foods were to be placed. The other half used plain white plates.

After three days, they switched plates — the first group got the plain plates, the second those with illustrations. The children served themselves from serving bowls and ate as much as they wanted.

Kids using the plain plates ate 20.63 grams of vegetables — the equivalent of about three packaged “baby” carrots — per meal. Those who used the illustrated plates consumed 28.17 grams, an increase of more than 36 percent. There was no significant increase in the amounts of fruits taken and eaten, probably because the children were already eating large amounts of fruits even before the experiment began. The [study is in JAMA Pediatrics](#).

“I don’t think we can say based on this that, yes, these plates will have a large effect,” said a co-author, Emily M. Melnick, of the University of Colorado Denver. “But this is an easy intervention. Even if it makes a small difference, it might be something to include in a larger toolbox.”