
For Parents: Shopping for Healthy Foods for Your Child

Shopping for nutritious food is the first step in practicing healthy eating habits. Your child can help pick out healthy foods with you. Read on to learn more about what to look for while you shop.



What to look for

Here are some foods to look for at the grocery store:

- Colorful fruits and vegetables
- Lean meats, such as chicken, turkey, and fish
- Whole-grain breads and crackers
- Low-fat or nonfat milk, yogurt, and cheese

What kids can do

At the store, kids can help pick foods the family will eat together. Ask them to pick one or two fruits or vegetables. They will learn that their food choices are important. They may also be more interested in eating new foods that they chose themselves. As the parent, you still control what kinds of foods will be brought into the house. It may be cheaper to buy canned, frozen, bulk, or in-season produce.

Another option is growing a small vegetable garden. Research shows that when children help grow fruits and vegetables, they are more likely to eat them and also try different kinds. Check with your local cooperative extension service for more information on gardening.

Stop the nagging before it starts

Kids often beg and nag for junk foods at the store. In the past, you may have given in just to get some quiet. How do you stop the nagging?

- Remember: You are the parent. Your role is to see that healthy foods make up the biggest part of your food list. Set the rules and stick to them.

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- Let your child pick one food item. Don't restrict what kind of food your child picks, even if it's a sugary snack. But do limit the item to a small size. Allow your child to pick one small food item per week if you shop for food more often.
 - Shop when the store is not so crowded, like mid-morning or later at night. You and your child won't spend as much time in line in front of the candy bars. Also, don't shop hungry. Try to shop after a regular meal or filling snack.

To learn more

These websites can tell you more about food groups and what to look for when you go shopping:

- [USDA at www.nutrition.gov](http://www.nutrition.gov). Buying food can be expensive. This [website can also give you information on food assistance programs](#).
- [USDA at www.myplate.gov](http://www.myplate.gov)
- [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics at www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)