

Be a Healthy Role Model

Article written by Cami Wells, MS, RD, Extension Educator, camiwells@unl.edu

Young children love to follow what their parents and caregivers do. They are likely to copy your table manners, your likes and dislikes and your willingness to try new foods. Here are tips on how to be a healthy role model:

1. **Go shopping together.** Grocery shopping is a perfect time to teach your child about food and nutrition. Discuss where vegetables, fruits, grains, dairy, and protein foods come from. Encourage children to help select healthy foods from the store.
2. **Cook together.** Provide opportunities for young children to help prepare meals and snacks. Not only is cooking a fantastic way to spend time together but a wonderful time for teaching valuable skills in the kitchen.
3. **Keep things positive.** Let your child see you enjoying new and healthy foods. Discourage your family members from making faces or negative comments about unfamiliar foods.
4. **Serve the same meals for everyone.** Avoid being a “short-order cook” by preparing various dishes just to satisfy children. This approach reinforces the idea that they don’t need to be open to trying new foods. Planning family meals becomes simpler and less stressful when everyone enjoys the same dish.
5. **Set a good example for physical activity.** Let them see you be active. Make play time, family time. Walk, run, and play with your child rather than sitting on the sidelines.

Yummy Roasted Broccoli and Red Peppers

5 cups fresh broccoli florets (1 large bunch), gently rubbed under running water
1 red bell pepper, gently rubbed under running water & cut into bite-sized pieces
2 teaspoons olive or vegetable oil
½ teaspoon lemon pepper
1 clove garlic, minced

1. Wash hands with soap and water. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. Add broccoli, pepper, oil, lemon pepper and garlic to a self-sealing plastic bag; shake until ingredients are combined (or mix together in a bowl).
3. Spread the mixture out in an even layer on a baking sheet.
4. Bake in the preheated oven until vegetables are tender enough to pierce with a fork, 15 to 20 minutes. Makes 6 servings. Each serving contains 40 calories, 2g fat, 45mg sodium, 5g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 2g protein.



Cook’s notes: Feel free to use a combination of other vegetables such as cauliflower, carrots, Brussels sprouts, etc.

Source: Healthy Eating for Preschoolers, MyPlate from the United State Department of Agriculture:
<https://www.myplate.gov/tip-sheet/healthy-eating-preschoolers>.

For more information check out Food Fun for Young Children at: <http://go.unl.edu/food-fun>