

## Children's nutritional needs: vegetables!

We know good nutrition is essential for kids to grow and develop normally. Children aged 2–3 years need 2.5 serves of veggies each day, and children aged 4–8 years need 4.5 serves of veggies each day.

OSCAR Hospitality's Lead Dietitian, Ella Monaghan, advises *"Vegetables are an important component of the diet for all age groups, especially during youth as this sets the foundation for healthy eating behaviours throughout life."*

It is concerning to see that, according to the latest Australian Government research in Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, only 5% of children are eating the recommended serves of vegetables.

Ella recommends that *"When encouraging vegetable intake, it is important that you act as a role model by letting your child see you eat and enjoy a wide range of vegetables as children often mirror your behaviour. Remember that a child may need to be exposed to a food 10 or more times before they begin to accept and like a food – persistence is key!"*



## 12 ideas on how to boost children's veggie intake

### Breakfast

- Cooked eggs on toast with wilted **spinach**, grilled **tomato** and/or sautéed **mushrooms**.
- **Avocado** and vegemite or **Baked Beans** on toast.
- Brekky bruschetta made with **avocado**, **cherry tomatoes** and **basil**.
- Omelette with finely diced veg e.g. **capsicum**, **onion**, **zucchini**, **spinach**, **tomato**.
- Veggie fritters with **zucchini**, **peas**, **broccoli** or **corn**.
- Brekky wraps with scrambled egg, **avocado**, wilted **spinach**, grilled **tomato** and/or sautéed **mushrooms**.



## Lunch and Dinner

- Veggie slice: make frittatas or quiches packed with vegetable such as **zucchini, capsicum, spinach, corn**.
- Instead of butter, spread **avocado** in sandwiches or rolls for a creamy texture.
- Veggie bake: slice any veg (e.g. **capsicum, mushrooms, eggplant, zucchini, pumpkin, sweet potato, corn, onion**), layer with **tomato passata**, top with cheese and bake.
- **Veggie-packed soups** such as minestrone with onion, carrot, celery, zucchini, canned cherry tomatoes, five-bean mix, shell pasta, garlic and parsley.
- Puree, grate or finely dice **any vegetables (e.g. broccoli, carrot, capsicum, onion)** into meals made with a sauce or minced meat e.g. pasta sauces, bolognaise, tacos or burritos.
- Chop **any veg (e.g. peas, corn, mushrooms, green beans, carrots)** and add to meals that might traditionally not have much – such as pastas, risottos, homemade pizzas, casseroles and curries.



### References:

<http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/national/resource/easy-ways-get-more-fruit-and-veg-your-day>

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/australias-health-2018/contents/indicators-of-australias-health/fruit-and-vegetable-intake>



**Need help planning nutritious meals for children?**

This article was written in conjunction with OSCAR Hospitality Lead Dietitian, Ella Monaghan. Please call or email Ella via our contact details below.