



# Healthy Eating Tip

## Disguising Vegetables for Kids

If your child would rather push vegetables around his or her plate or use the vegetables for food fights, you may have already considered sneaking a few vegetables into his or her favorite foods. While hiding vegetables in foods can encourage a child to eat more vegetables, it should not be your only strategy. By offering your child a variety of options, you will be more successful in growing a true vegetable lover. Below are some strategies to help you get started.

***Sneak in veggies (sometimes).*** Try not to get into a habit of always disguising vegetables in your child's meal plan. If you have a particularly picky eater who "doesn't like vegetables", disguising the vegetables can help introduce them to your child. However, when it comes to getting him or her to like vegetables, finding alternatives become key. There is no harm in adding mushrooms into meatloaf or shredding carrots and zucchini into spaghetti sauce.

***Don't be afraid to ditch the disguise.*** Serving vegetables in their undisguised form gives your child the opportunity to explore the tastes, textures, and aromas found naturally in vegetables. In addition, when kids see vegetables in this state, he or she also learns what a healthy plate should look like. These vegetables also naturally slow the child down and encourage eating mindfully, since most vegetables require lots of chewing.

***Mix it up.*** Eating the same old boring plate of vegetables would be a turnoff for anyone, so be sure to keep it interesting and diverse. Get creative and try different kinds of cooking methods, such as roasting, sautéing, grilling, or adding savory herbs and spices. If your child is still not a fan of cooked vegetables, try offering raw vegetables with dip or in a salad.

***Hide vegetables in plain sight.*** Using vegetables as an add-on is a helpful way to give vegetables more face time without the overwhelming pressure of eating a lot of them. Top pizza with onions and peppers, sprinkle tomatoes and avocados on tacos, or fold butternut squash into mac and cheese.

***Serve, eat, repeat.*** If you have tried offering vegetables with zero success, be patient. Similar to everything else, learning to eat and enjoy vegetables takes ample exposure and repetition. When you continue to serve vegetables and keep them readily available, children will eventually eat them.

*Continue to the next page for fun, easy recipes to help get you started!*



From Corporate Fitness Works Registered Dietitian, Emily Vong

# Healthy Eating Continued...



## **Carrot Fries**

**Makes:** 4 servings

### **Ingredients**

- 1 pound of carrots
- Cooking spray
- Salt and pepper to taste

### **Directions**

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Peel the carrots and cut them into strips about ¼-inch thick and a few inches long.
3. Coat a baking pan with cooking spray and spread the carrots onto it. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.
4. Bake 15 minutes. Flip them over and coat them with a bit more cooking spray and salt and pepper. Bake for another 15 minutes until lightly brown.

## **Tasty Tots**

**Makes:** 36 Tots

### **Ingredients**

- 5 cups of fresh sweet potatoes, peeled, coarsely shredded
- 2 1/3 cups of canned low-sodium garbanzo beans (chickpeas), with liquid
- 1/2 cup of fresh green onions, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon of salt
- 1/2 teaspoon of granulated garlic
- 1/4 teaspoon of ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon of onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon of ground cinnamon

### **Directions**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Place shredded potatoes on a large baking pan sprayed with a nonstick cooking spray. Bake at 350°F for 20 minutes or until slightly tender. Do not overcook.
3. Increase oven temperature to 400°F.
4. In a food processor or blender, purée garbanzo beans, including the liquid, until smooth.
5. In a medium mixing bowl, combine shredded sweet potatoes, puréed garbanzo beans, green onions, vegetable oil, salt, garlic, pepper, onion powder, and cinnamon. Mix well. Cover and refrigerate for 40-45 minutes to make tots easier to form.
6. Spray a large baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray. Using a cookie scoop or a spoon, roll 36 tots. Place 1 inch apart on baking sheet. Lightly flatten the tops of the tots with a spoon or a fork. Bake at 400°F for 10-12 minutes or until lightly brown. Serve hot.



Like these ideas? For more kid friendly recipes, including the ones above, check out:

<http://www.eatright.org/resources/kids-eat-right-listing/?active=recipes>

[www.usda.gov/whatscooking](http://www.usda.gov/whatscooking)

## **Resources:**

[www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

<http://www.eatright.org/>