

# Let Kids Be the Produce Picker (and Your Kitchen Helper)

Getting kids to eat more fruits and vegetables can feel like a daily battle. But what if the secret isn't what you serve – it's **how involved they are?**

When kids help choose and prepare food, they're more likely to try it...and even enjoy it!

## Start at the Store (or Market)

Give your child a job: **produce picker**.

- “Can you pick 2 fruits for this week?”
- “Find a vegetable we've never tried before.”
- “Help me choose the ripest strawberries.”

This simple shift gives kids a sense of **ownership and curiosity**. They're no longer just being told what to eat – they're part of the decision.

## Bring Them into the Kitchen

Kids don't need to cook a full meal to feel involved. Small tasks go a long way:

- Washing fruits and vegetables
- Tearing lettuce or herbs
- Stirring, mixing, or assembling
- Sprinkling cheese or toppings

| Ages 2-4     | Ages 5-7            | Ages 8+                |
|--------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Wash produce | Measure ingredients | Help cook simple meals |
| Stir batter  | Set the table       | Read recipes           |
| Pick snacks  | Tear lettuce        | Pack lunches           |

Even picky eaters are more likely to try foods they helped make

## Why It Works

When kids are involved:

- They feel **in control** (instead of pressured)
- They're more **open to trying new foods**
- They build **confidence and skills**
- They learn that healthy food is part of everyday life

It turns mealtime from a struggle into a **shared experience**.



# Let Kids Be the Produce Picker (and Your Kitchen Helper)

## Keep It Low Pressure and FUN

Not every attempt will be a win...and that's okay.

- Let them explore, touch, and even reject foods at first
- Avoid forcing bites or making separate meals
- Keep offering new foods alongside familiar favorites
- Try a “**rainbow challenge**” (pick different color produce)
- Let them name a recipe they helped create
- Turn it into a weekly tradition: “**You pick it, we cook it**” night

Exposure over time is what builds acceptance.

Kids are more likely to eat what they help choose and prepare.

By giving them a role – at the store and in the kitchen – you're not just making meals easier. You're helping them build **confidence, curiosity, and healthy habits that last.**

And if you need more ideas or support, your UPMC CCP care team is always here to help.