

Your Health Matters

IT'S OKAY TO PLAY WITH YOUR FOOD

A lizard gets preschoolers to eat more fruit and vegetables. Despite what your mom said.

Learning About Nutrition through Activities, or LANA is a new nutrition program that encourages preschoolers to explore foods and create snacks that look like mice, stoplights and silly faces, all in an effort to introduce new fruits and vegetables and develop good eating habits at a young age.

Lana the Iguana introduces children to eight fruits and vegetables, like broccoli, snap peas, apricots and cherry tomatoes. It is Lana the Iguana, a green hand puppet who encourages fruit and veggie exploration with games, stories and activities in math, reading, art and tasting.

Kathie Hoette, our Nurse Educator reports, "The kids can't wait until Lana comes out and talks to them. They just love Lana. She's a hit. Buddy Broccoli was also introduced to the preschoolers this month."

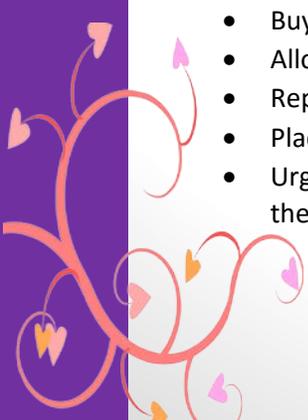
You can help ensure your children eat nutritious foods in the correct portion size. A portion is the amount of food you serve your child at each meal. The portion size may be only a fraction of the recommended daily serving for your child. For example, if your child should have five servings of fresh fruit and vegetables each day, offer him a half cup at each meal and snack. It's important to receive all the recommended daily servings, just not all in one meal.

Your child's age, stage of growth and development, activity level, and appetite all factor into determining the appropriate food portion size. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a toddler's portion size be about a quarter of an adult portion size, and a portion size for children four to eight years old be about a third of an adult portion size. Older children and teens may have portion sizes closer to that of an adults'.

To stay within recommended portion sizes, encourage your children to use visual images. For example, a half cup of fresh vegetables would be about half of a baseball. One fourth cup of raisins would be the size of a golf ball. A three-ounce hamburger would be the size of a deck of cards. If children add butter to toast, they should add no more than the size of a postage stamp.

Other ways you can help children control portion size and choose healthier eating habits include:

- Ask them to put a single portion into a separate bowl rather than eating out of the package.
- Fill their plates with the appropriate portion size and then offer extra salad or fresh vegetables if they are still hungry.
- Buy only single serving snacks, or separate portions into smaller baggies when you arrive home.
- Allow kids to snack between meals if they are hungry so they won't overeat at the next meal.
- Replace the candy bowl with a fruit bowl.
- Place tempting foods like cookies up high or behind healthier foods, out of sight.
- Urge kids to pay attention to feelings of hunger and stop eating when they are satisfied, not when they feel full.



Remember some children eat when they are stressed, upset, tired or bored. Make sure they get the recommended amount of sleep. Ask them to think about whether they are truly hungry. Sometimes a set of jumping jacks, outside play time, or a new coloring project will fill the “hunger”. If it doesn’t, then you can offer a healthy food option like celery or low-fat yogurt with fruit.

The Montgomery County Health Department loves taking care of your family, and works every day to protect, promote and improve health in our community. To learn more, call 573-564-2495 or visit us online at www.montgomerycountyhealth.org or on Facebook or Twitter @healthymoco. ■

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Harman". The signature is written in a dark ink on a light-colored background.

3.1.16