

Eat 1

[Steps in our story and ideas for yours]

1. **Eat Real Food.** This took awhile for us. I had to stand in the produce section at Whole Foods and just stare at things for a long time. I didn't know what most of it was much less what to do with it or how it tasted. So, I would try one new thing each week. Just one thing and try to incorporate it in our diet. Fruits and veggies must become a staple in your diet.
2. **Put something green on their plate at dinner.** I would love to say at every meal. I try to always do a veggie or fruit for every meal, but the green option would usually come once a day. There are so many different lettuces to try and great dressing options. I also would do spinach roll-ups. I would stack the spinach leaves together, roll them up and then let them grab them, dunk them in their dressing and eat away. It was so much easier and faster to gobble down those greens. They will still ask one of us - "mommy, will you roll my spinach up?"
3. **Stop buying crap.** If it is in your pantry, they will eat it.
4. **Clean and cut up your veggies soon after you buy them.** Put them in a tupperware with a little water in the bottom. This is a must if things are going to get eaten at our house. Then, pull it out at meal times and play "pick 3" or whatever number you like. In our house, they had to choose 3 different veggies to eat from the tupperware. You can determine how much; it just seemed to go over better giving them some control and options.
5. **Presentation is such a great trick.** Cutting the carrots with a crinkle cutter, using a melon baller, finding some fun dishes or dip sauce bowls, giving them colored toothpicks to use, making faces out of their veggies, etc. - all of these tricks have really worked in our house. Make it look fun or make it fun to eat.
6. **Create a snack drawer in your fridge or basket in your pantry of healthy options.** This is a place that is always a "yes" in our house. I fill it with great options of yogurt, fruit, veggies already cut - up, granola bars, pretzels, etc.
7. **Keep putting it in front of them.** Consistency is key. And suddenly they realize it is not so bad. Sometimes, I will just put one small little slice of a new veggie on their plate - just a taste, but it is a step. And next time they might want 2 slices. The rule is that they must at least try the bite I have given them, but they don't have to ask for seconds. I remember doing that with a radish, cucumber and jicama. Now my son will eat almost the whole jicama and share it with his friends at lunch!
8. **Work out your own ideas of food as a reward or escape.** Big topic, I know. Father God has given us food for our health and certainly enjoyment at times too! But we can lose the balance and his intentions! When you promise a bag of skittles for good behavior, you are creating some systems here of challenging habits. As well, when you rush to the chocolate or bag of cheetos after you have put them all to bed, then there are some bigger things to work out. Food empowers our bodies to work well. Food is also fun and a great part of Father's creation. There is nothing I enjoy more than a great meal of great tastes with great friends. We just need to think through how we use food and if there are other issues here that need some time.
9. **Remember the goal of "one thing, one step."** I can easily tackle too much and get lost in the expectation of perfection. When failing, I then throw in the towel or waste time in condemnation. So, prevent this wicked cycle or at least do battle with it by focusing on the "one thing, one step." Choose one thing to try new each week. Or choose one step to make. Instead of eating a whole bag of cheetos, pour a serving in a bowl and stop there. Maybe next week, you could find some veggie chips and try a bowl of those. Instead of fast food for three meals that week, decrease to one meal. Instead of buying white bread with high fructose corn syrup, buy a wheat bread without high fructose corn syrup. There is momentum in forward movement, and you can build on these wins! Keep moving in the right direction!

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10. **Look at the ingredients list on the foods you buy.** The fewer the ingredients, usually the better. And you will be amazed at some of the things you are feeding your family. If there are more than 5 ingredients, you might want to reconsider. If you can't even pronounce the words, you might want to hesitate giving that to your kids. So much of our food is filled with preseveratives to increase the shelf life. The motive is not the health of your children, the motive is increasing their ability to make money. Protect your children. You want real food in as simple a format as you can get!
11. **Involve your kids in the process - planning the meal and making the meal.** There is a great ownership and willingness to eat great options if you invite them on the journey. My girls ate avocado coleslaw, because I let them make it. They had such a great time mixing all the ingredients; they had to try their creation. And so on. I have so many stories of them helping me in the kitchen and then enjoying the fruit of their labor!!!! It is a win-win!
12. **Talk about the beauty and adventure of food.** Father God has given us so many different things to eat and enjoy. I mean have you ever just sat back and gazed at the produce section? The colors and array of textures is overwhelming. Share that joy with your kids. There is much to explore!
13. **And don't get me wrong - I still need my boxes.** I just buy smart. When I buy granola bars, I buy the organic ones without high fructose corn syrup and such. When I buy cereal, I buy the organic options with less sugar. When I buy peanut butter and jelly, I buy organic ones without the sugar and preseveratives. When I buy chips, I buy as natural as I can get with as few ingredients as I can get. And the list goes on.

If you are interested in talking more, coming to an Eat Event or cleaning out your pantry together, just let me know.

