Perseverance
- Offer fruit and vegetables in a calm and positive manner.
- Ensure that the child sees his or her parents, siblings and other role models eating and enjoying fruit and vegetables.
- Keep serving it - research has shown that children need to be introduced to a new food up to eight times before they will accept it.
- Offer new foods alongside familiar ones.
- Praise your child for trying new foods and offer encouragement for doing so.
- Eat together as a family as often as possible. Meals should be an enjoyable and social occasion. Turn the TV off.
- Some children may respond to a behaviour chart for trying new foods or eating more fruits and vegetables (see My Fruit and Vegetable Chart for an example). All rewards should be negotiated in advance and should be non-food based as well as realistic (affordable, desirable etc).
- Do not react when your child refuses to eat. Instead respond calmly to send the message that they cannot use food to seek attention.
- Be consistent otherwise it can become confusing for a child.

Involvement
- Involve your child in meal preparation and let them choose the fruits and vegetables they prefer as much as possible – children are more likely to eat something they have helped to create.
- Take your child fruit and vegetable shopping and let them see, smell and feel the fruit and vegetables with you. Use this opportunity to explore new colours and shapes.
- Grow some vegetables or herbs in the garden or a pot. Let your child water and nurture the plant.

Disguise
- Grated vegetables can be used in meat dishes such as Bolognese sauce, meat patties, meatballs, Shepherds’ pie and tacos.
- Add vegetables to quiches and omelettes.
- If your child picks out the vegetables from their meal, try blending them into sauces instead.
- Add extra vegetables such as mushrooms, capsicum and pineapple to pizzas.
- Add mashed pumpkin or sweet potato to mashed potato.

Presentation
- Children may be more likely to eat fruit and vegetables if they are cut into small, manageable pieces.
- Offer appropriate serving sizes – too much food can overwhelm a child.
- Some children will prefer raw vegetables to cooked ones; try offering sticks of raw carrot, capsicum, celery or cucumber with a dipping sauce.
- Offer different coloured fruits and vegetables to make meals look more attractive.
- Add chopped banana or stewed apples to cereal or porridge.
- Serve sliced salad vegetables alongside a sandwich.

Strategies to Get Children to Eat Fruit and Vegetables

You can guide your children in their eating habits by providing healthy options, but it is them alone who choose what and how much they will eat.

There are four main strategies for encouraging kids to eat their fruit and vegetables.