

Hi there, broccoli!



Do you find it difficult to introduce new foods to your kiddo? M&B comes to the rescue

BY ARUNDHATI NATH

FOR the majority of us, the very thought of food is equally appealing and appetizing. Our festivals, celebrations or parties are incomplete without scrumptious food and drink. We celebrate every happy piece of news with sweets and our guests are always fed well.

Though we adults like to try new foods and enjoy them at our convenience, most toddlers grow to have an aversion to new foods. Deborah Colson, MSc DipION Nutritional Therapist, Thinking Nutrition and author of *Optimum Nutrition For Your Child* explains, “Babies grow neophobic as they grow more mobile into toddlers; it is a built-in self-protection mechanism to stop them from trying to eat new

foods, unsupervised, which might be poisonous.” As parents, we need to keep this in mind while introducing new foods to our tiny tots.

START SMALL: Deborah feels that the best approach to get a toddler to like a new food is to introduce it very gradually. “Mix the new food into a food that the child already likes. For example, this might mean blending a new food and stirring a pea-sized amount into a whole cup of a sauce. Eventually, you will be adding a large amount of the new food and no longer blending it, then finally giving the food whole and unmixed,” she says. A toddler will start eating new foods this way because he can’t tell that the food is new to him.





PHOTOGRAPHS: AKSHAY KULKARNI

ASK HIM TO SELECT: The next time you're going shopping for veggies at the supermarket, ask your tot to select which fruit or vegetable he would like to buy. Introduce your child to new foods at the supermarket and take her opinion on which one to select. The child is more likely to eat a vegetable he has selected on his own. You could also involve him in the serving process like in decorating the fruit salad with a little cream or cherries.

FUN FOOD: You must have observed that products aimed at children are attractively packaged. The colour and look of these packaged foods make them appealing to kids. "As a mum you need to make the new food colourful, attractive, tasty and fragrant to entice

the senses," says Amitabh Pandit, leading nutritionist and author of *Superfoods: Make your Child a Genius*. You can add cut veggies in attractive shapes; add a little cheese, vanilla essence, cherries or spices like cardamom and cinnamon to make a new food appealing.

MEALS ARE FAMILY TIME: You cannot expect a child to eat carrots if he hears his mum say, "I hate carrots!" Make sure you're eating right while trying to make your kid eat right. Make a meal a daily family ritual where all family members eat the right foods.

Neha Chopra, film maker at Out of Focus Pictures and mum to two and a half years old Noor started following the Baby-Led Weaning technique. BLW

is a great way of introducing solid foods that allow babies to feed themselves—there's no force feeding and no purées. The baby sits with the family at mealtimes feeding herself first with her fingers and later with cutlery. "This method helped me to introduce many tastes, textures, colors and smells to my baby. It might seem messy to begin with but the joy of seeing your child developing a sense of independence and developing their hand-eye coordination and chewing skills is very fulfilling," Neha says.

HIDDEN NUTRITION: Amitabh Pandit explains that hidden nutrition means adding some nutritious fruits or veggies to their favourite foods. You can make the gravy of *matar paneer* with *lauki* and tomato, add carrots and radish to her favourite *aaloo paratha* or chop small bits of fruits with the cornflakes. This won't make the child fussy and he will easily relish eating a new food.

BE PATIENT: "Getting kids to eat the right foods requires a lot of persistence," Amitabh says. A child would need time to form a habit. Counselling also helps him change his eating habits. If a child wants to be good at sports, he should be told that he must drink milk for strong bones even if he dislikes it. You'll be surprised to see how children respond to such explanations especially when they want to achieve a particular goal. ■

