

Do It for Your Child!

We know that eating vegetables and fruits are important for good health. Unfortunately, most of us, including children, are not consuming enough of these nutrient-rich foods. The lack of vegetables and fruits in the diets of children and young adults mean that they can be missing out on important vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals needed to ward off serious health problems, including diabetes, heart disease and certain forms of cancer.

How do we get children and young adults to eat more vegetables and fruits? Make sure that you have vegetable snacks on the shelf of the refrigerator. Carrots, celery, and cucumber with dip and a bowl of fruit are easy to have on hand. Nuts or seeds and dried fruits on top of yogurt are fast and easy.

Most importantly, make the effort to prepare vegetables (but not French fries!) with every meal. Try something new each week to introduce your family to vegetables. Have a back up vegetable that most family members like. And, never force a child to eat something they don't want to try, as this becomes a negative experience.

Instead, encourage children by gardening with them or bringing them to the Farmers Market with you. Children are naturally curious about what foods taste like or how to prepare them, if they are involved with the process of growing the food or if they can have a relaxed atmosphere in which they are allowed to sample food. When food is harvested just hours before the market it is at its peak of flavor and farmers will often have slices of a vegetable or a fruit available for tasting.

Recent research shows that the mineral magnesium, for instance, is one that is critical to our diet to prevent stroke (American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, February 2012), reduce blood pressure, reduce instance of Type 2 diabetes and reduce heart disease. Magnesium acts in some way to help every cell of our bodies, but, despite research showing how important it is, we seem to be getting less and less of it. Why? Diet choices make the difference.

To improve the magnesium levels in our diet, eat pumpkin seeds, spinach, okra, Swiss chard, soybeans, dried beans, green beans, Southern peas, and whole grains and nuts. Come see us at the San Juan Farmers Market today for an assortment of "good for you" vegetables, including Southern peas and two variety of fresh green beans. We also have several types of squash (great fiber and few calories), eggplant and lots, lots more!

We are in the North San Juan Park, behind the Hidalgo County Community Center, on Nolana Loop, just east of Raul Longoria. Turn into the Community Center parking lot and you will see the entrance to the North San Juan Park. Our hours are 9:00 to noon. You will find us on Facebook at [grow.n.growers](https://www.facebook.com/grow.n.growers). And, bring the children with you.

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