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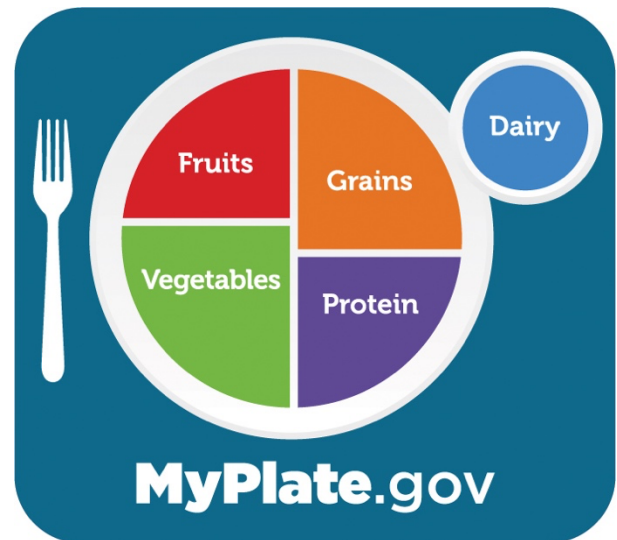
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## Sensory Exploration – Take Home Activity

As a pediatric dietitian one of the most common issues I see in my office is parents expressing the difficulty of getting their children to consume fruits and vegetables. The recommendation per USDA's My Plate is that half of a child's plate, 3 meals per day, should be composed of fruits and vegetables to meet their growth and nutrient needs. Sensory preferences play a significant role in food choices, and they can sometimes contribute to a lower intake of fruits and vegetables. We use all of senses to eat! Some reasons that children may find it difficult to consume fruits/vegetables:



### Taste Preferences

- Children have more taste buds than adults and can taste foods more intensely.
- Fruits and vegetables are inconsistent in taste and texture. Fruits and vegetables will be a little different each time you try them.

### Texture Issues

- Some individuals dislike the crunchiness of raw vegetables or the mushiness of cooked ones.
- Fruits with seeds, pulp, or slimy textures can be challenging for kids that had issues with processing senses.

### Smell Sensitivity

- Certain vegetables, like broccoli or cabbage, release sulfur compounds that some people find unpleasant.

### Visual Appeal

- People often prefer vibrant, uniform foods, whereas bruised or oddly shaped fruits and vegetables may seem unappetizing (lack of consistency)

Multiple exposures to a new food have been found to ultimately achieve food acceptance. It has been found that up to 10+ exposures to the new food (in the same form) promote clear changes in acceptance of the food- so when in doubt try and try again! (Sullivan & Birch, 1994) Research suggests that most caregivers try on average only 2.5 times before giving up (Curruth, 1998).

I always remind the families in my practice **we are learning** to eating these items.

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## Sensory Exploration Home Activity

### Activity Materials

- 3 fruits or veggies your child likes
- 3 fruits or veggies your child has never tried or that aren't their usual favorite
- Cupcake liners (6), glass of water, napkin
- Blindfold
- Handouts included in this worksheet
- Pencil

### Activity Instructions

1. Prepare the foods into small/bite-sized pieces
2. Place in muffin liners in a container not visible to child
3. Instruct child to be seated and read them the following instructions:

*"Today we are going to complete a challenge called "Exploring our senses". As a human being we eat with our eyes first, however we also judge our foods before we eat them with our eyes. The goal of this activity is to try some foods you know and to try some foods that you don't while removing sight. It has been found that we need to try something sometimes up to 10 times before we like it! I will ask you to place your blindfold over your eyes at the beginning of the activity and I will be introducing some foods to you. I encourage you to try them all. When you receive the foods you may smell and touch it, then as you place it in your mouth think about the sound it makes when you chew, the texture of the food and the flavors that you can taste. Does it taste salty, sour, butter, sweet? Does it taste familiar? I will ask you to remember these feelings and write them down later. Once you have finished it, we will fill out the worksheet together – guessing which food you tried, asking if it was an accepted food or one we are still working on and writing down the smell, feel, sound and taste."*

4. Instruct child to place blindfold over eyes
5. Place first muffin liner in front of child
6. Encourage child to try the food and guide them through: Smell, touch, sound and taste
7. Allow child to remove blindfold and guess what the food was
8. Fill in worksheet
9. Repeat with foods 2-6 + Have fun!

### References

Curruth, B.B, Skinner, J., Houck, K., Moran J., Coletta, F., & Ott, D. (1998) The phenomenon of the "picky eater": A behavioral marker in eating patterns of toddlers. *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*, 17, 180-186. Sullivan, S. & Birch, L. (1994). Infant dietary experience and acceptance of solid foods. *Pediatrics*, 93, 271-277




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# Kid vs. Food Challenge

## Blindfold Taste Test

### Food 1:

-  I like it!
-  I'm unsure
-  Not my favorite




It smells: \_\_\_\_\_

It feels: \_\_\_\_\_

It sounds: \_\_\_\_\_

It tastes: \_\_\_\_\_

### Food 2:

-  I like it!
-  I'm unsure
-  Not my favorite




It smells: \_\_\_\_\_

It feels: \_\_\_\_\_

It sounds: \_\_\_\_\_

It tastes: \_\_\_\_\_

### Food 3:

-  I like it!
-  I'm unsure
-  Not my favorite

It smells: \_\_\_\_\_

It feels: \_\_\_\_\_

It sounds: \_\_\_\_\_

It tastes: \_\_\_\_\_




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## Kid vs. Food Challenge

### Blindfold Taste Test

#### Food 4:

-  I like it!
-  I'm unsure
-  Not my favorite




It smells: \_\_\_\_\_

It feels: \_\_\_\_\_

It sounds: \_\_\_\_\_

It tastes \_\_\_\_\_

#### Food 5:

-  I like it!
-  I'm unsure
-  Not my favorite




It smells: \_\_\_\_\_

It feels: \_\_\_\_\_

It sounds: \_\_\_\_\_

It tastes \_\_\_\_\_

#### Food 6:

-  I like it!
-  I'm unsure
-  Not my favorite

It smells: \_\_\_\_\_

It feels: \_\_\_\_\_

It sounds: \_\_\_\_\_

It tastes \_\_\_\_\_