Healthier Eating Habits for Children  
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As a parent, I know how hard it is to get children to eat healthy foods that are good for them. After a long and endless debate, we as parents give in and let our children eat whatever makes them happy. So what do we do to get them to eat more fruits and vegetables? You make it fun!

North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, has a new and exciting program called 4-H Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) just for youth ages 5-19. EFNEP provides youth with practical, hands-on approaches to nutrition education and food preparation. The idea of learning by doing encourages positive eating habits and increased physical activity. Through six 4-H EFNEP classes, children learn how to make healthier food selections, increase their knowledge of human nutrition, increase their knowledge of food safety, and increase their preparation skills as well as become more self-reliant. EFNEP provides fun ways to help young people learn how to make wise choices that will prove to be beneficial to their overall health.

Research in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that in the past 20 years, the obesity rate has doubled among children ages 6 to 11 and tripled among adolescents’ ages 12 to 19. If we do not teach our young people how to choose healthier eating habits, they may face serious health problems such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases, and even cancer. The children are our future and it is up to us, as adults, parents, teachers, and caregivers, to stress the importance of fruits and vegetables along with physical activity for a healthier tomorrow.

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