

A SENSORY FOOD ADVENTURE

Oral health activity



Vegetables make great snacks – they are low in sugar and good for our teeth and bodies – but it can take some time and practice to learn to like them. Through this activity we can help children explore foods – whether familiar or novel – in a slow and pressure-free way using each of their senses. Exploring veggies by focussing on their sensory qualities can help children become more familiar and comfortable with them, and even spark curiosity to taste them!

What you need

1-3 types of vegetables - several of each type

- Keep one of each type whole and raw.
- Parboil or lightly steam the other veggies that should not be eaten raw, e.g. potatoes, pumpkin, eggplant.
- Cut these other veggies into small pieces for children to explore. Consider grating or even mashing.
- Make servings (which can be one piece or multiple pieces per child) large enough that each child can take several small bites (about a tablespoon).

IMPORTANT: Always prepare food with clean hands, and be sure to avoid choking hazards - do not cut hard foods like carrots into round sections and do not serve whole cherry tomatoes.



What children are learning
(links to the VEYLDF)

Outcome 3: Wellbeing

Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing

What to do

- Ask all participants to wash their hands.
 - Discuss the meaning of the word “explorer” and what a “food explorer” might do. *They might study and try a new food, or a familiar food prepared in a different way.*
 - Talk about the 5 senses that we can use to explore the world around us: sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing
- Introduce the first whole vegetable. Ask if anyone knows what it is called and which part of the plant it comes from (root, stem, leaf, seed pod or fruit).
 - Pass each child a serve of the first vegetable (enough to take several small bites). Instruct them to not eat it just yet, but to hold onto it while you explore the vegetable together.
 - Guide the children through talking about the food using all of their five senses. (See over the page for more details of how to do this.)

REPEAT FOR EACH VEG

MORE ACTIVITY IDEAS

Talking with families

- Encourage your child to try a food and learn about its taste and texture without feeling pressured to eat it.
- It's not so important that children are chewing and swallowing the food that you present; what's important is having positive interactions with food.

Let's read a book

- **Growing Vegetable Soup**
by Lois Ehlert
- **Handa's Surprise** by Eileen Browne
- **I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato**
by Lauren Child
- **How Do Dinosaurs Eat Their Food?**
by Jane Yolen & Marc Teague
- **See & Eat ebooks** - each shows a different vegetable's journey from "farm to fork"



Fingerplay: 'Five Little Peas'

Five little peas in a pea pod pressed,
(hold fist tightly closed)

First one grew, (raise thumb)

then another, (uncurl index finger)

Then all the rest. (open up all fingers)

They got bigger, and bigger, and bigger,
(place palms together then start moving them further and further apart)

Until POP (clap) the pea pod burst!

(From page 1)

Exploring vegetables with all the senses



Sight

Start by using your **EYES** to look at the vegetable and describe how it looks.

- What colour is it?
- What shape is it?
- Is it smooth? Bumpy? Rough?



Smell

Bring the vegetable to your **NOSE**, take a sniff and describe what you smell.

- Can you smell anything?
- How would you describe the smell?
Or does it remind you of anything?



Touch

Take the vegetable in your **HANDS** and describe how it feels with your fingertips.

Then bring the piece of vegetable to your **LIPS**. Use your lips and **TONGUE** to feel the vegetable... but don't bite it or eat it just yet. How does it feel now?



Taste

Take a little bite with your **FRONT TEETH** and chew it with your **BACK TEETH**.

- How does it feel in your mouth - is it juicy, soft, crunchy, cold?
- What does it taste like? Is it a strong taste or a mild flavour? Does it taste like any other foods?



Hearing

Use your **EARS** to listen to the sound when you bite and chew the vegetable.

- What sound can you hear when you bite it? Does it crunch?