



## Healthy Eating Booklist for Children

Children learn about food and eating habits through a variety of means, such as family food preferences, role modelling by parents and peers, and marketing and media. Reading books to children is another way to teach about food and healthy eating habits while also developing literacy skills.

Registered Dietitians at Ottawa Public Health reviewed a variety of children's books to create a list of books that promote healthy eating messages consistent with current nutrition recommendations. The result is this list of 16 books for children that focus on food – growing, preparing and eating.

Also included in this resource is a *conversation guide* for group facilitators to talk about the messages in one of the books with both parents and children.

*Enjoy your story time!*



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## Healthy Eating Booklist for Children: Book Summaries

***Blueberries for Sal*** by Robert McCloskey Ages 2-5  
Features a little girl, Sal, and her mother as they go and pick blueberries for winter. The book shows young children where fruits and vegetables come from and can be a valuable resource for parents hoping to explain to their children the source of some foods.

***D.W. the Picky Eater*** by Marc Brown Ages 5-8  
"D.W. the Picky Eater" shows what can happen when a picky eater ends up surprisingly loving the one vegetable she hates the most - spinach! This book is great reading fun for the whole family and discusses how to respect your child's eating preferences.

***Eating the Alphabet*** by Lois Ehlert Ages 2-4  
"Eating the Alphabet: Fruits & Vegetables from A to Z" is a delightful picture book that helps children learn about the different types of fruits and vegetables available while also helping them learn their ABCs.

***Let's Go Nuts!*** by April Pulley Sayre Ages 2-5  
The accompaniment to "Go, Go, Grapes!", "Let's Go Nuts" is also meant for slightly younger children in the 2-5 year old age range. Just as fun to read aloud, the book helps kids learn about the different types of nuts available.

***Go, Go, Grapes!*** by April Pulley Sayre Ages 2-5  
This third book from April Pulley Sayre teaches young children about the names for different fruits. Colourful pictures are shown as well.

***Growing Vegetable Soup*** Ages 2-5  
A father and a child grow a variety of vegetables together in their own garden to make a vegetable soup. It encourages children to eat a variety of vegetables, grow their own food, and enjoy it with family.

***I Really Like Slop*** Ages 2-5  
Two friends enjoy different kinds of foods. Piggie encourages Gerald the elephant to try some of his 'slop', a popular meal in his culture. This book encourages young children to try new foods that may be unfamiliar to them.

***Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!*** Ages 2-5  
After planting his long awaited garden full of delicious foods, Mr. McGreely seeks a solution to the continuous disruption of his crops by bunnies. This book encourages young children to consume a variety of vegetables like lettuce, carrots, peas and tomatoes.



***One Watermelon Seed*** by Celia B. Lottridge Ages 2-5  
One Watermelon Seed is not just a great counting book for kids, but it also helps them see where their fruits and vegetables come from. The book teaches children what produce can be grown in their own backyard, such as watermelons, tomatoes, and corn.

***Rah, Rah, Radishes!*** by April Pulley Sayre Ages 2-5  
A fun read-aloud book for young children to learn about the different types of vegetables available. The high-quality photos really whet the appetite, too!

***The Carrot Seed*** by Ruth Krauss Ages 2-8  
A brilliant story about how patience and perseverance can yield wonderful and tasty results. This classic children's book by Ruth Krauss centres on carrots, gardening, and hard work.

***The Very Hungry Caterpillar*** by Eric Carle Ages 2-5  
A young insect hatches from its egg, is suddenly hungry and hopes to eat as much as it needs. The book shows children how important it is to eat when hungry and to stop when full, as well as trying to have lots of non-processed foods.

***Today is Monday*** by Eric Carle Ages 2-7  
Introduces to young children (and their parents) the variety of different foods one can consume during the week, all the while encouraging eating with others, listening to one's hunger cues, and the consumption of many non-processed foods.

***What's For Lunch*** by Sarah L. Thomson Ages 8+  
Presents children with a colourful illustration of the different food groups and what healthy and nutritious foods fall into each. The book encourages the consumption of a variety of different vegetables and fruits, while also reminding children of the importance of drinking water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages.

***What's So Yummy? All About Eating Well and Feeling Good***  
by Robie H. Harris Ages 8+  
This book offers both children and adults a fun and educational read about many different topics in healthy eating and nutrition, such as a balanced diet, hunger cues, allergies, as well as food security initiatives. A great learning tool for parents and teachers alike.

***Who's Hungry?*** by Dean Hachen Ages 2-5  
Focuses on having children both recognize their hunger cues and listen to them. The various animals eat when hungry and until they are full, making this a great learning tool for young children.

## Healthy Eating Booklist by a Topic

Book Title	Eating a Variety of Foods	Eating Vegetables and Fruit	Eating Together	Avoiding Processed Foods	Growing Food	Trying New Foods	Eating when Hungry and Stopping when Full	Drinking Water
<a href="#"><u>Blueberries for Sal</u></a>					✓			
<a href="#"><u>D.W., the Picky Eater</u></a>						✓		✓
<a href="#"><u>Eating the Alphabet: Fruits &amp; Vegetables From A to Z</u></a>		✓						
<a href="#"><u>Go, Go, Grapes!</u></a>	✓	✓						
<a href="#"><u>Growing Vegetable Soup</u></a>		✓	✓		✓			
<a href="#"><u>I Really Like Slop</u></a>			✓			✓		
<a href="#"><u>Let's Go Nuts</u></a>	✓							
<a href="#"><u>Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!</u></a>		✓			✓			
<a href="#"><u>One Watermelon Seed</u></a>	✓				✓			
<a href="#"><u>Rah, Rah, Radishes!</u></a>	✓	✓						
<a href="#"><u>The Carrot Seed</u></a>					✓			
<a href="#"><u>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</u></a>				✓			✓	
<a href="#"><u>Today is Monday</u></a>		✓	✓	✓			✓	
<a href="#"><u>What's for Lunch?</u></a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<a href="#"><u>Who's Hungry?</u></a>							✓	
<a href="#"><u>What's So Yummy? All About Eating Well and Feeling Good</u></a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

# Conversation Starters for Story Time

## Get Talking about *Growing Vegetable Soup* by Lois Ehlert

*Growing Vegetable Soup* written and illustrated by Lois Ehlert is about a father and a child growing a variety of vegetables together in their own garden to make a vegetable soup. It encourages children to eat a variety of vegetables, grow their own food, and enjoy it with family.

After reading the story with children and/or families, use the following questions to facilitate a conversation to enhance their learning about growing and eating vegetables. Some potential answers and concluding messages are provided for each question.

## Conversation Starters for Parents

### Q1: What are some of the benefits of growing vegetables with your children?

*Answers:*

- It's an activity that will get your child moving outside.
- It's a great way to build a child's knowledge of science as well as the environment.
- It helps them learn about different types of vegetables and where they come from.
- Homegrown produce served in meals and snacks giving your child a sense of achievement. Chances are if your child has planted, watered and tended a tomato for three months they will be excited to try it when it's ready to be eaten.

*Concluding Message:*

There are many benefits for your children when you involve them in growing and preparing food together as a family. If you aren't growing your own food, head out to a local farmer's market to learn about different types of vegetables and where they come from. Load up your bag with some fresh produce and include these vegetables and fruit at all meals and snacks.

### Q2: How can you get your child involved in growing vegetables?

*Answers:*

- Planning what to grow and when to harvest
- Selecting the seeds at the store
- Preparing the soil
- Planting the seeds or seedlings
- Watering



- Picking
- Cooking

*Concluding Message:*

There are many stages required to get food growing and then on to your plates. Involving the whole family in these different stages of food preparation helps build nutrition knowledge and essential life skills.

**Q3: How can you get your child involved in cooking and preparing food?**

*Answers:*

For ages 2 to 5:

- Washing fruits and vegetables
- Wipe tables
- Tear salad greens
- Break apart broccoli or cauliflower
- Carry and wash unbreakable dishes
- Help find ingredients in the fridge and sort them
- Assemble vegetables on a homemade pizza or sandwich
- Count foods
- Weigh, measure, add and stir ingredients
- Apply soft spreads
- Pick fresh herb leaves off the stem
- Mash soft foods, bananas, cooked beans, potatoes
- Mix-using either a spoon or hands to mix together ingredients
- Roll, shape and cut dough using plastic cutters and a small rolling pin
- Peel foods e.g. hard boiled eggs, fruits, shelling shrimp
- Add items to the dishes (such as chopped cucumber to a salad)

*Concluding Messages:*

You can involve your child at any age. Involving your child in cooking and preparing food helps build confidence, independence, and lifelong healthy lifestyle habits. The kitchen can act as a classroom to allow your child to develop practical skills and learn about:

- Math: work with fractions, measure and count
- Science: how cooking changes food to make it softer, harder, tastier
- Social skills: work as a team and share tasks to do something concrete
- Language: read a recipe, write a grocery list

What your child learns today stays with them in the future. Keep in mind their abilities as they are constantly developing. Assign a task that your child can complete independently. Make sure to allow extra time for them.



## Conversation Starters for Children

### Q1: What would you like about growing your own vegetables and fruit?

*Answers:*

- Playing outside and being in the sun.
- Watching the plant grow.
- Watering the plant.
- Eating the food.

*Concluding messages:*

Growing your own food can be a fun and tasty activity! You can also ask your parents to visit a local farmer's market to learn more about growing your own food or go berry picking at your nearest farm.

### Q2: What are some of your favourite vegetables?

*Possible Answers:*

- Beets
- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Cucumber
- Eggplant
- Peppers
- Spinach
- Squash
- Sweet potatoes
- Tomatoes
- Zucchini

*Concluding messages:*

It is important to eat a variety of vegetables throughout the day. Ask your parents to include new vegetables in your meals. Try to eat a new vegetable from every colour of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple).

### Q3: Where do vegetables come from?

*Answers:*

- The ground
- Plants
- Bushes
- The dirt

*Concluding messages:*

- Some vegetables like sweet potatoes, carrots, radishes, beets and turnips grow under the ground. These are called root vegetables.
- Leafy vegetables grow above ground. These include spinach and lettuce, broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts and kale.

