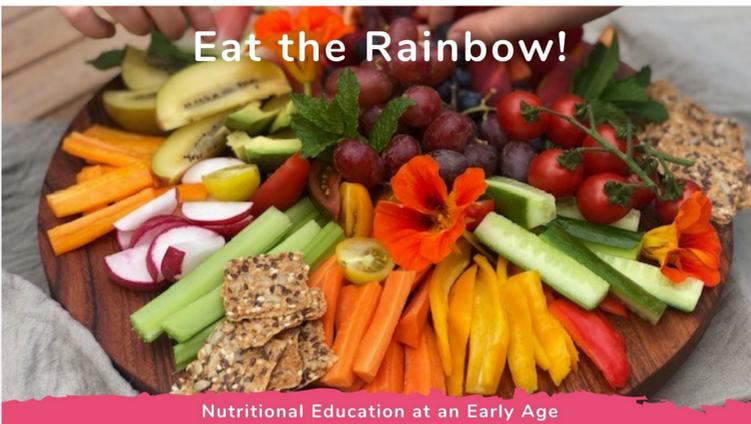


# News & Events



Nutritional Education at an Early Age

## Eat the Rainbow! Nutritional Education at an Early Age

Lauren Burns / 18/09/2020 / Blog, Nutrition

### Eat the Rainbow!

Eat the Rainbow is a wonderful, simple way to remind us all to eat a variety of different coloured fruits and vegetables, and at Niño ELA we're passionate about the importance of nutritional education at an early age.

Plants contain phytonutrients. Phytonutrients are natural chemicals produced by plants which have a whole host of health benefits. They are also known as phytochemicals, meaning plant-chemicals. These plant-chemicals can be found within colour pigmentation of fruits and vegetables.

Colour pigments in plant-foods have different mechanisms of action in the body. For example, red foods such as tomatoes, are high in lycopene which is great for heart health. Green leafy veggies are a fabulous source of folate which is good for cell growth and function, and orange fruit and vegetables contain carotenoids such as beta carotene, which converts to vitamin A and is excellent for our immune system, skin and eye health.

At Niño ELA, our menu provides a platter of mixed vegetables which is served multiple times during the week. We pair the vegetables with homemade nutrient dense dips or oven baked pita chips. We prepare vegetable platters for a few reasons:

- To encourage consumption of different phytonutrients
- To provide a variety textures
- To normalise fresh vegetables being served in their natural state on a regular basis

Eating the Rainbow can be a fun way to increase variety and volume of vegetables. A great way to increase fibre and a diversity of plants are great for gut health and memory. A Rainbow Food Tracker is a game you can play at home. How many different colours of the rainbow can you eat in one day?

Remember, our language around food is important. This is meant to be fun so if they don't want to eat a particular colour or vegetable, that's ok. Continue to provide it, normalise it and move on. We're in for the long haul right?

Here are some suggestions for language around food and meal times.

- **Instead of:** "You don't like that food"
- **Try:** "You're learning to like this food"
- **Instead of:** "You're not allowed lollies"
- **Try:** "Here's your lunch" (provide usual options)
- **Instead of:** "Can you drink your water"
- **Try:** "Can you drink to the rubber band" (pop a rubber band on the drink bottle to show where you'd like them to drink to)

Language you can use when children say they don't like particular foods:

- "You can try it when you're ready"
- "Well done. I can see you're learning to like this food, just try a little bit"
- Model the behaviour you would like to see in your child e.g. "Eggplant is not my favourite, but I'm learning to like it"

Some examples of rainbow meals:

- Fruit and vegetable platter served with protein such as humus, boiled eggs or tofu
- Gado Gado
- Stir-fry veggies. You can add beef, chicken, tofu
- Fried rice
- Okonomiyaki

Some examples of rainbow fruits and vegetables:

**Red:** beetroot, red capsicum, apples, pomegranate, tomato, strawberries, raspberries, rhubarb

**Orange:** carrots, sweet potato, pumpkin, oranges, turmeric root, mandarin

**Yellow:** yellow capsicum, nashi, lemons, ginger, pineapple

**Green:** kale, spinach, apples, cucumber, avocado, bok choy, grapes, snow peas, chard, celery, zucchini, spring onion, broccoli

**Purple:** grapes, figs, eggplant, purple cauliflower, yam, plums

**Brown/tan:** onions, mushrooms, taro root, jerusalem artichokes, pear, kohlrabi, potato, ginger

**White:** garlic, coconut, mushroom, turnip, cauliflower, celeriac, potato, daikon radish

Download your Rainbow Food Tracker here.

Lauren Burns is the Niño ELA Nutritional Ambassador, an Olympic gold medallist and a leading nutritionist who shares our passion for building healthy eating habits for life.

[Learn more about Niño ELA's nutrition program »](#)

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