Should children be paid to eat their greens?

Brussels sprouts, beans and broccoli are good for us, but not everyone likes eating them.

What you need to know

- **Experts recommend that we eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day as part of a healthy, balanced diet.**
- **A 2016 Government report revealed that only 8% of children aged 11–18 in the UK achieve this.**
- **Obese is a term to describe someone who is very overweight. Being obese can lead to serious health problems.**

YUM OR YUCK?

A 2015 survey revealed that liver, fish, Brussels sprouts and mushrooms are among the foods that British people hate the most.

Eating a variety of veg is good for you.

GOOD TO KNOW

A "portion" of fruit or vegetables for a child is roughly the amount that would fit in the palm of their hand.

Lots of people don't like eating their veggies, but would you be more tempted to gobble them down if you were paid to? According to the World Health Organisation, we should all eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day. This will ensure we get some of the vitamins and minerals we need for a healthy diet. Eating fruit and veg can help prevent problems like heart disease and obesity. However, a survey by the children's TV programme *Newsround* in 2015 revealed that more than half of children don't even have one portion of veg a day, and 44% have no fruit at all. The National Obesity Forum, an organisation that works to prevent obesity, has recently proposed that parents should put a small amount of money into their children's bank accounts to reward them for eating vegetables and to encourage them to eat more.

Being healthy is the most important thing

If a cash reward persuades children to eat vegetables, then parents and adults stump up. The most important thing is making sure children are healthy, no matter what it takes. It could also be a way of getting them into good habits. A 2016 study in the US showed that when schoolchildren were paid to eat healthily at lunchtime, the number of them who had at least one portion of fruit or veg doubled, and many pupils carried on eating healthily afterwards. Some adults use sticker rewards or promise a nice pudding to make children eat well – why is offering money any different? Putting money into a bank account might encourage children to foster other skills, like saving money. What's more, if you have a deal to eat your greens, there won't be any more arguments at the dinner table.

Money is not the answer

If parents or adults give children money to eat vegetables, they might refuse to eat healthily once the adults decide to end the deal. It's also not fair on siblings who already dutifully eat their greens – they might start demanding money, too. Paying children as a reward puts too much focus on money, which might make children greedy, and it isn't fair on adults who might not have that much money. It would be better to give rewards like watching a family film. Some people say that offering children any kind of reward for eating healthily sends the wrong message. You should eat well because being healthy and full of energy is a reward in itself. Besides, adults usually know what's best for you. If they tell you to eat your veg, you should do it, without needing any money to sweeten the deal.

YES 3 reasons why children should be paid to eat their greens

1. **If paying children gets them to eat healthily and to try new foods, it's worth it.**
2. **Offering money to get children to do something is no different to offering them more TV time or a sweet treat. It's a fair deal.**
3. **If children have agreed to eat their greens for money, it could stop arguments at dinnertime.**

NO 3 reasons why children should not be paid to eat their greens

1. **Children may expect to get money every time they eat veg – if the payments stop, the healthy eating might stop too.**
2. **Being healthy and full of energy is a reward in itself.**
3. **Adults know best – children should listen to them and do what they say without a reward.**

THE WEEKLY POLL

To find out what everyone is voting on this week visit:

theweekjunior.co.uk/polls

YES NO

What do you think?

Each week we ask our readers to vote in our The Big debate poll. You can find out what we're voting on at the moment by visiting theweekjunior.co.uk/polls.