

winners & sinners: flushing out the bad guys

Toronto

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# enviroguide

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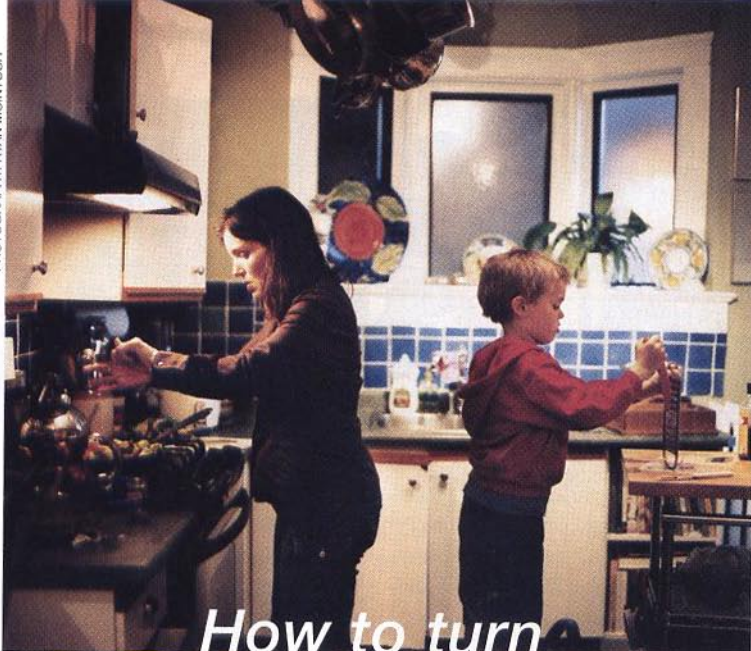
**Get your kids  
to eat right—  
here's how...**

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WHO TO CALL

PHOTOGRAPHY: RYAN MCINTOSH



How to turn

# YUCK into YEAH!

*Develop the right habits early and you too just might have your kids pleading for parsley*

By Gillian Deacon

It may seem like an insurmountable challenge to help your children eat what's good for them but it's worth it—you're establishing habits that will support their good health long after they've left home. My kids are good eaters. There, I've said it. I can't join the chorus of parents bemoaning their children's picky eating habits. My sons asked loudly for "More tomorrow (tamari)!" and "More Indian tofu!" before they could put their shoes on the right feet. When our herbs are newly planted, my children plead with me for some of the parsley. "OK!" I finally capitulate, "But only one handful each, guys, the parsley needs to grow." My friend with children the same age laughs and shakes her head, "This just isn't a problem I'd have. My kids don't beg to eat parsley."

Having kids who like to eat healthy and varied food is valuable currency these days, when children's overall health is in decline. The Canadian government's *National Longitudinal Survey on Children and Youth* recently reported that one in four children in Canada is obese, a number it says has doubled over the

past two decades. The picture from the Canadian Diabetes Society is no rosier: "A decade ago, type 2 diabetes was an adults-only disease. Today, childhood obesity, unhealthy eating habits and inactivity are leading to more and more children, as young as nine years of age, being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes."

While there are many contributors to childhood obesity, including too much time playing video games and not physical activity, another culprit that is often cited is pre-packaged snacks and meals. They are as high in sodium and saturated fats as they are convenient. Many children have grown accustomed to these kind of fast-food meals and have established poor eating habits, ones that they will have to overcome as adults if they are to maintain a healthy weight and, in general, support good health.

Good habits start in childhood. Therefore, parents should not throw up their hands and say their kids are lousy eaters. It's too important to give up, particularly because I believe that good eaters are made, not born.

