

Fruits and Vegetables—Try for More



Why do health professionals nag you to "Eat your fruits and vegetables?" Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables can help you ward off heart disease and stroke, control blood pressure and cholesterol, prevent some types of cancer, avoid a painful intestinal ailment called diverticulosis, and guard against cataracts and macular degeneration, two common causes of vision loss.

How much do you need?

Most of us need about 3 cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruit a day. It is important to eat a wide variety of fruits and vegetables including dark-green, leafy vegetables; yellow, orange, and red fruits and vegetables. Canned, fresh, frozen and dried fruits and vegetables all provide important nutrition.

Getting started

Not sure how to increase your fruit and vegetable intake? Start the day with 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice. Slice bananas or strawberries on top of your cereal. Have a salad with lunch, and an apple for an afternoon snack. Include a vegetable or two with dinner and a piece of fruit for a snack after dinner. When you keep fruits and vegetables visible and easily accessible you tend to eat them more; for instance, store cut and cleaned produce at eye-level in the refrigerator, or keep a big bowl of fruit on the table.

At restaurants, try

- Veggie pizza
- Pasta with vegetables (but watch out for those high fat cream sauces)
- Fresh vegetable "wrap"
- Vegetable soup
- Small salad (instead of fries)
- Plenty of fresh vegetables from the salad bar.

Pack and go!

Fruits and vegetables are nature's original fast food. When it's snack time, grab

- Fruit—an apple or orange, or a zip-lock bag filled with sweet cherries, grapes, dried dates, figs, prunes, raisins, or apricots
- Vegetables—baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, cauliflower, broccoli, or some red, yellow, and green peppers. Try dipping your vegetables in low-fat or non-fat salad dressing.

In a hurry for a healthy treat? Pick fruits and vegetables that require little peeling or chopping, like baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, cauliflower, grapes, apples, broccoli spears, bananas, or a box of 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice.

Add fruits and vegetables to salads or pasta

Try these tasty additions to add flavor to your salad:



- Green or red pepper strips, broccoli florets, carrot slices, or cucumber add crunch to your pasta or potato salad.
- Baby carrots, shredded cabbage, or spinach leaves bring color to a green salad.
- Apple chunks, pineapples, and raisins perk up coleslaw, chicken or tuna salads.
- Orange, grapefruit, or nectarine slices add extra flavor to any salad.

Wake up with fruits and vegetables! Add sliced banana, blueberries, or raisins to cereal. Add fresh fruit and vegetables to foods you already eat—like berries and bananas to yogurt and cereal; vegetables to pasta and pizza; and lettuce, tomato and onion to sandwiches.

Cooking with fruits and vegetables

- Make a quick smoothie in the blender by puréeing peaches and/or nectarines, a touch of your favorite fruit juice, crushed ice, and a light sprinkling of nutmeg.
- Make homemade salsa with tomatoes, mangoes, avocados, red onions, cilantro, and lime juice.
- Looking for a fun appetizer when you entertain? Try making spears of fruit by attaching strawberries, grapes, melon slices, or pineapple chunks onto small skewers. Use low-fat or non-fat yogurt for a dip.
- Here's a quick fruit salad you can make in less than a minute. Open a can of juice-packed mandarin oranges and empty into a bowl. Add a sliced banana, a sliced apple, and some blueberries or raisins. There you have it—a quick way to a delicious fruit salad.
- Sometimes you can eat some of your fruits and vegetables in their own containers. Kiwifruit comes with its own serving cup and cantaloupe with its own serving bowl. Just cut them in half through the middle and scoop out each half with a spoon.

Fruit and vegetable fun for kids

- Top off a bowl of cereal with a smiling face from sliced bananas for eyes, raisins for a nose, and an orange slice for a mouth.
- You can use broccoli florets for trees, carrots and celery for flowers, cauliflower for clouds, and a yellow squash for a sun. When you're all done, you can eat your healthy masterpiece!
- Make frozen fruit kabobs for kids using pineapple chunks, bananas, grapes and berries.
- Go shopping with your children. Take them to the grocery store or farmers market to let them see all the different sizes and colors that fruit and vegetables offer. Let them pick out a new fruit and vegetable to try. By making it fun and involving your kids, they'll be more likely to eat healthy foods.

Are fruits and vegetables expensive?

Some people think fruits and vegetables are expensive, but if you compare them to other snacks they are a bargain. You get about 3 medium apples, pears, oranges, bananas, peppers in a pound so you need to divide the cost/pound by 3 to get the cost for each item. If apples cost \$.89/pound that means each apple is about \$.30. Compare that to a candy bar, chips, et cetera and you find the fruit costs less, and has a whole lot more nutrition.

Produce	Servings/Unit	Cost	What can you buy for about \$2.00?
Apples	3 medium/pound	\$0.68/lb	9 apples
Bananas	3 medium/pound	\$0.59/lb	9 bananas
Grapes	3 cups/pound	\$0.99/lb	6 cups
Oranges	3 medium/pound	3 for \$2.00	3 oranges
Pears	3 medium/pound	\$0.77/lb	9 pears
Baby Carrots	5 servings/pound	\$1.19/lb	2 servings (11 carrots in a serving)
Broccoli	3 servings/pound	\$1.59/bunch	About 6 cups broccoli florets
Kiwi	5 medium/pound	3 for \$1.00	6 kiwi
Orange Juice	½ cup serving	\$1.48/ ½ gallon	About 24 – ½ cups servings

Prices gathered in Ames, Iowa, September 2009.

For more information about nutrition, home, and family, call: **Answer Line: (800) 262-3804**
Monday-Friday, 9 am–Noon; 1-4 pm.

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