

EAT FRUITS & VEGGIES



YOUR CHALLENGE: Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables (combined) daily. Report the completion of your goal at www.dmba.com with a simple “yes” or “no.”

WHY FRUITS AND VEGGIES?

Fruits and vegetables are protective to your health in many ways. Large research studies have found that people who eat more fruits and vegetables have better health, less disease, and live longer.

The first nutritional guideline of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans states, “Use plant foods as the foundation of your meals. ... Eating a variety of grains (especially whole grains), fruits, and vegetables is the basis of healthy eating.”

Here are some of the key reasons why nutritionists encourage people to eat more fruits and vegetables:

- They're low in calories and packed with nutrients.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are high in water and fiber and tend to fill you up without eating too many calories. Vegetables and fruits are also packed with vitamins and minerals required for good health. This is opposite of most snack foods and sweets that are high in calories and low in nutrients.

- **They may help prevent cancer.**

Studies show that people who eat more fruits and vegetables have lower rates of cancers, such as prostate cancer, bowel cancer, lung cancer, stomach cancer, and many more. The World Health Organization recommends that everyone eat an abundance of fruits and vegetables. “Choose predominantly plant-based diets rich in fruits, vegetables, and legumes.”

- **They may help prevent high blood pressure, stroke, and coronary heart disease.**

Fresh fruits and vegetables are low in sodium and high in potassium, a combination that helps reduce high blood pressure.

WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR INTAKE OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Keep ready-to-eat raw vegetables handy in a clear container in the front of your refrigerator (easily within view).
- Keep a fresh supply of fruit on the table or counter: oranges, apples, kiwis, bananas, etc.
- Eat more salads, including a variety of raw vegetables in the salad: broccoli, peppers, green onions, carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes, greens, such as spinach, cauliflower, celery, beets, etc.
- Enjoy stir-fried vegetables. Add tofu or another source of protein to make a whole meal.
- Add a variety of vegetables to soups and stew.
- Eat fruit salads. Finish a meal with fruit as a natural dessert: berries, melons, dates, grapes, pineapple, papaya, mangoes, and watermelon.

VITAMINS, MINERALS, AND MORE

Fruits and vegetables are a major source of vitamins and minerals. They are also bursting with hundreds of phytochemicals and antioxidants (cancer-fighting agents.) A few examples include:

Vitamin A

- Helps keep your eyes healthy and able to adjust to dim light
- Contributes to healthy skin and helps keep the lining of your mouth, nose, throat, and digestive tract healthy and resistant to infection
- Best sources are: beet greens, carrots, collards, cress, dandelion greens, kale, mangoes, mixed vegetables, mustard greens, peas, pumpkins, red chili peppers, sweet red peppers, Swiss chard, spinach, squash (winter, acorn, Hubbard, butternut), sweet potatoes, and turnip greens



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Vitamin C

- Makes your blood vessels stronger
- Helps you heal faster and helps you resist infections
- Helps your body absorb the iron from the foods you eat
- Best sources are: acerola, broccoli, brussels sprouts, chili peppers (red and green), guavas, kiwi, orange juice, oranges, papayas, and sweet peppers (red and green)

Iron

- Contributes to healthy blood and strong muscles
- In addition to whole grains and legumes, some other sources of iron are: asparagus, avocado, beet greens, broccoli, brussels sprouts, chard, collards, dried fruits (apples, apricots, dates, figs, peaches, prunes, and raisins), kale, mustard greens, parsnips, peas, pumpkin seeds, rice, spinach, sweet potatoes, tomato (juice, paste, puree, and sauce), turnip greens, and winter squash.

Folic acid

- In addition to other B vitamins, folic acid helps to lower a substance in the blood called homocysteine. High levels of homocysteine damages arteries, increasing the risk for clogged coronary arteries.

- In addition to legumes, some other sources of folic acid are: asparagus, avocado, boysenberries, okra, orange juice, papaya, spinach, and turnip greens.

As you can see, fruits and vegetables are important to a well-balanced diet. Review the serving guidelines that follow. Getting enough of the good stuff may be easier than you think.

SO WHAT'S A SERVING OF FRUITS OR VEGGIES?

Fruits

- 1 medium fresh fruit, such as an apple, banana, orange, etc.
- 1 cup fresh fruit
- ½ cup cooked fruit, such as applesauce or peach slices
- 6 ounces of pure fruit juice, such as orange, apple, or grape juice

Vegetables

- 1 cup raw vegetables
- ½ cup cooked vegetables, such as spinach or squash
- 1 medium fresh salad
- 6 ounces of vegetable juice, such as tomato, carrot, or V8

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

- American Heart Association <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living>
- WebMD <https://www.webmd.com/living-healthy>
- CDC Healthy Living <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyliving/index.html>

Note: If you can't complete this challenge because of a medical condition, let us know and we'll come up with an alternative for you.

