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Fruits and Vegetables

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*Benefits, kitchen tips,
picky eaters, recipe*



Fruits and Vegetables

Are You Getting Enough?

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

If your plate is always half-filled with vegetables and you snack on fruit between meals, you are likely getting the recommended minimum of 2 cups of fruits and 2½ cups of vegetables you need daily. But many Americans fall short of this goal.

Produce on your plate is a necessity: Getting enough vegetables and fruit can help combat high blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar, all of which are risk factors for developing heart disease. If you are looking at a plate of beige, add some color with these ideas:

Start with salad. Use dark green leafy lettuces (spinach, romaine, kale) and add your favorite vegetables or fruit on top. Add vegetables where there were none before. Try layers of meaty mushrooms and eggplant in lasagna, or squash in macaroni and cheese.

Roast those vegetables. Add some olive oil and balsamic vinegar to purple cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, beets or broccoli, and cook until tender-crisp about 30 minutes.

Enjoy fruit for dessert and breakfast. Try tropical fruit salad, cinnamon-baked apples, spiced poached pears, pineapple, grapefruit, bananas or a simple bowl of berries.

Keep sliced vegetables in the fridge. Studies show we eat 29% more vegetables when they are in our sight line. Plus, they are easy to add to bagged lunches when they are pre-cut. No time to slice and dice? Use frozen vegetables in stir-fries, pasta, pizza and side dishes.

AUTUMN KALE AND APPLE SOUP



1 tbsp olive oil
1 small onion, chopped
1 clove garlic, chopped
6 cups kale, stemmed and chopped
4 cups no-salt-added broth

¼ tsp salt
1 large apple, peeled,
cored and chopped
¼ cup plain Greek yogurt
Freshly ground black
pepper

Add olive oil to a large pot set over medium heat. **Add** onion and garlic, cook 3 minutes. **Add** kale, broth, salt and apple. **Bring** to a boil and cook 10 minutes. **Use** an immersion blender (or transfer in batches to regular blender) to purée until smooth. **Garnish** with a dollop of yogurt and fresh black pepper.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving:

129 calories | 6g protein | 4g total fat | 0.5g saturated fat | 3g mono fat
0.5g poly fat | 21g carbohydrate | 8g sugar | 6g fiber | 62mg sodium

Wield Produce Power

Decades of research have shown that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables is associated with a lower risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke and some cancers. For health protection, eat at least 2 cups of fruit and 2½ cups of vegetables daily. (Your needs may differ, depending on your calorie intake and activity level.) Find fun videos on selecting, storing and preparing fruits and vegetables at fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/video/VideoCenter.php.



Cooking for Nutrition

Preserving valuable vitamins.

For optimal health, our bodies require vitamins from fruits and vegetables. Vitamins break down when exposed to light, heat, water and air. You can preserve them by following these guidelines.

Vegetables

Prior to cooking vegetables, quickly rinse them, so fewer vitamins are lost in the water. When cooking veggies, use little or no water; this reduces the loss of water-soluble vitamins B and C. Cook quickly by steam, microwave or stir-fry, which require minimal water and cooking time.

Tip: Cover your pot to retain vital nutrients as the vegetables cook. Cook until vegetables are tender-crisp. Boiling results in the highest nutrient loss of any cooking method. Of course, the best way is to eat vegetables whole and raw.

Fruit

Air may degrade the vitamin content in fresh-cut fruit, especially vitamins A and C. One great trick is to cut fruit into large chunks. This creates less surface area exposed to air. Eat fruit soon after it is cut. Store leftovers in well-sealed containers and avoid direct light.

Keep these tips in mind and you'll enjoy the taste — and nutritional benefits — of your favorite foods.



Q: Help for picky eaters?

A: Children often start restricting food choices around 18-24 months. Picky eating is a normal phase, and most kids outgrow it, but addressing it early helps establish lasting healthy eating habits.

Here's how:

1. Model good habits: Eat a variety of healthy foods yourself and try new foods.
2. Eat early dinners together (before kids get tired). Stay positive; don't battle over food or label kids as picky eaters.
3. Talk about different foods at the market, and let them help select recipes or prepare meals.
4. Keep meals on schedule and limit snacks so children are not overly full at mealtime.
5. Introduce new foods when hunger strikes so children are more likely to try them.
6. Serve the family meal along with a kid-friendly food. Children often need 10 or more exposures to new foods before they will start to like them.
7. If food temperature or texture is the problem, offer it in a different form (e.g., raw vs. cooked vegetables).

— Eric Endlich, PhD



Leafy Greens

Hearty, leafy greens are rich in health-protecting vitamins, minerals and fiber — and suitable for cooking or enjoying raw. Steam or sauté with other produce (see recipe on front page) or add to pasta, soups and omelets. Chard, kale and mustard, turnip, beet and collard greens can be used almost interchangeably in recipes. Store unwashed greens in moistened paper towels in a plastic bag (with a few pinholes for air), and refrigerate for 2 to 3 days.



— Cara Rosenbloom, RD