

Tips for Eating More Fruits and Vegetables



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

Why is including more fruits and vegetables in my diet important?

Fruits and vegetables are full of essential vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fiber that may help protect you from chronic diseases. People who eat more fruits and vegetables have lower risks for chronic diseases, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease.

Also, fruits and vegetables are low in calories and high in fiber. Substituting fruits and vegetables for higher-calorie foods can be a part of a weight loss plan.



How many fruits and vegetables should I eat?

Fruit

Aim for **2 to 4 servings** of fruit each day.

1 serving of fruit =

- 1 cup fresh melon, raspberries, or strawberries
- 3/4 cup fresh pineapple, blueberries, or blackberries
- 1/2 cup fresh grapes
- 1 small fresh fruit, such as an apple, orange, kiwi, or nectarine
- 1 medium peach
- 1/2 of a large piece of fruit, such as banana, grapefruit, pear, or mango
- 2 tablespoons dried fruit
- 1/2 cup (4 ounces) fruit juice with no sugar added - be careful to not drink too much or too often as fruit juice has as much sugar as soda pop or soft drinks!



Vegetables

Aim for **3 to 5 servings** of vegetables each day. Choose nonstarchy vegetables more often. Examples of starchy vegetables include potatoes, beans, corn, and peas.

Examples of nonstarchy vegetables include:

- Artichoke
- Asparagus
- Bean sprouts
- Beets
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Cucumber
- Green or yellow beans
- Leafy greens (spinach, romaine, kale, bok choy, Swiss chard, mustard greens)
- Mushrooms
- Onions
- Peppers
- Radish
- Snow peas
- Sugar snap peas
- Tomatoes
- Turnips
- Yellow squash
- Zucchini

1 serving of vegetables =

- 1 cup raw vegetables
- 1/2 cup cooked vegetables
- 2 cups raw leafy greens
- 1 cup cooked leafy greens
- 1/2 cup vegetable juice



Tip: An easy way to eat enough fruits and vegetables each day is to fill half of your plate with fruits and nonstarchy vegetables at meal times.

Choose fruits and vegetables of different colors



To get a healthy variety, think color. There are 5 colors of fruits and vegetables: white, red, yellow/orange, blue/purple, and green. Each color offers different nutrients. If you include fruits and vegetables of different colors in your diet, you are more likely to have complete nutrition. For more variety, try new fruits and vegetables often.



Ways to increase fruits and vegetables in your diet

- Store ready to eat, cut up fruits and vegetables in clear containers at eye level in your refrigerator. They will be the first thing you see and eat.
- Stock your refrigerator, freezer, and pantry with fruits and vegetables. Fresh is often best, but frozen, canned, and dried varieties can be healthy and convenient.
 - **Frozen** fruits and vegetables are harvested at peak ripeness and frozen right away. They are just as healthy as fresh, but can last 3 months or more!
 - **Canned** vegetables can be high in salt, so look for versions that say “low sodium” or “no salt added”. This is very important if you have high blood pressure or heart failure. When shopping for canned fruit, avoid fruit canned in heavy syrup. Look for fruit in its own juice instead for fewer calories.
 - **Dried** fruits, vegetables, and beans are great options. Try to get dried foods with only one ingredient: the fruit or vegetable itself!
- Buy precut or prepared fruits and vegetables to decrease your work. For example, bagged lettuce mixes and precut fresh fruits and vegetables. If you are on a budget, it is often cheaper to buy whole and do the preparation yourself. Another tip is to buy produce that’s in season to get the best deal.
- Make the effort to have fruits and/or vegetables at every meal!

Easy and healthy preparation methods

- Use a microwave oven to shorten the time for cooking potatoes or frozen vegetables. You can easily steam vegetables in the microwave in just a few minutes.
- Create a meatless meal using fruits and vegetables. Grilled portabella mushrooms and eggplant are good options. Also, beans and lentils provide protein. Fresh or grilled fruit with yogurt dip is a tasty addition.
- Grilling and roasting brings out great flavor in vegetables. Try green beans, beets, potatoes, peppers, zucchini, cauliflower, carrots, onions, asparagus, and Brussels sprouts. The possibilities are endless!

To roast vegetables:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
2. Wash and dry vegetables.
3. Cut into pieces that are roughly the same size.
4. Coat a baking sheet and vegetables with a small amount of oil or cooking spray. Add seasonings if desired, such as garlic powder, onion powder, paprika, black pepper, rosemary, thyme, or lemon juice. Mix different seasonings together to find a flavor you like. Seasonings can be added before or after cooking.
5. Place in oven.
6. Cooking times will vary for different vegetables. Vegetables are done when they are crisp. Check on your vegetables every 20 minutes and taste to determine the doneness you prefer.

For more information

Visit these websites for more information about fruits and vegetables.

- www.choosemyplate.gov
- www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail **health-info@osu.edu**.