

live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home, and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at StoudtAdvisors.

Fruits and Vegetables, Part 1 of 4

Essential for a healthy life

A growing body of research shows that fruits and vegetables are critical to promoting good health. Most people need to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables they currently eat every day.

Daily Necessities

Fruits and vegetables contain essential vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other naturally occurring substances that may help prevent chronic diseases. Other important factors:

- Most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat, sodium, and calories. None have cholesterol, although it is important to remember some sauces or seasonings may add any of the above.
- Vitamin C is important for growth and repair of body tissue, helps heal cuts and wounds, and aids in iron absorption. It is found in such foods as kiwi, strawberries, oranges, sweet potatoes, tomato juice, and cauliflower.
- Diets rich in potassium help to maintain healthy blood pressure and decrease bone loss, as well as reduce the risk of developing kidney stones. To get more potassium, try carrot juice, lima beans, or white potatoes.
- Folate (folic acid) helps the body form red blood cells. This is especially important for pregnant women (or those who wish to become pregnant), as

folic acid reduces the risk of many birth defects. Asparagus, cooked spinach, and black-eyed peas are all good sources.

- Fiber is a key factor in reducing blood cholesterol levels and may lower the risk of heart disease. It is also extremely important in proper bowel function. Of course you can find fiber in many grains, but it's also in soybeans, chick peas, lentils, black beans, navy beans, and artichokes.

How Much Do You Need?

Recommended amounts differ depending on age, gender, and food type.

Fruits – Children should have 1 to 1½ cups of fruit per day. Teenagers and adults alike need 1½ to 2 cups.

Vegetables – In general, children should have about 1 cup of vegetables a day. Teenagers require 2 to 2½ cups, and adults 2½ to 3 cups a day. For an in-depth look at this, visit www.mypyramid.gov.

What Counts As A Cup?

It is quite easy to get the recommended amount of fruits

and vegetables a day if you consider that each of the following all equal 1 cup:

- 1 small apple
- 1 large orange
- 8 large strawberries
- 12 baby carrots
- 1 large banana
- 1 medium pear
- 2 large or 3 medium plums
- 1 small wedge watermelon
- 1 cup cooked greens or 2 cups raw (spinach, collards, mustard greens, turnip greens, etc.)
- 1 large ear of corn
- 2 large stalks of celery
- 1 medium potato
- 1 medium grapefruit

When taking all the key benefits of fruit and vegetables into consideration, the familiar adage “An apple a day keeps the doctor away” is perhaps not so old-fashioned after all!



10-Minute Recipe: Carrot Raisin Salad

Shred 4 medium carrots. Combine in a medium bowl with ¼ cup raisins, 2 teaspoons of sugar, and the juice from 1 lemon. Mix thoroughly. Recipe is for 4 people and should be served chilled. Equals 1 serving of fruit and 1 serving of vegetables.

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Fruits and Vegetables, Part 2 of 4

Helping to manage weight

There are many different ways to lose or maintain a healthy weight. Eating more fruits and vegetables along with whole grains and lean meats, nuts, and beans is a safe and healthy one.

Low-Calorie Options

To lose weight, you must eat fewer calories than your body uses. This doesn't necessarily mean you have to eat less food. You can create lower-calorie versions of some of your favorite dishes by substituting fruits and vegetables in place of higher-calorie ingredients. The water and fiber in fruits and vegetables will add volume to your dishes, so you can eat the same amount of food with fewer calories, yet feel just as full. Here are some simple ways to cut calories for each meal:

Breakfast—

- Cut back on the amount of cereal in your bowl to make room for some cut-up bananas, peaches, or strawberries.
- Substitute spinach, onions, or mushrooms for one of the eggs or half the cheese you would have in an omelet.

Lunch—

- Add a cup of chopped vegetables such as carrots in place of 2 ounces of the meat or 1 cup of noodles in your favorite broth-based soup.
- Substitute vegetables such as lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers,

or onions for 2 ounces of the cheese and 2 ounces of the meat in your sandwich, wrap, or burrito.

Dinner—

- Take a good look at your dinner plate. Vegetables, fruits, and grains should take up the largest portion of your plate. Remember to use a normal- or small-sized plate, not a platter.
- Add in 1 cup of chopped vegetables while removing 1 cup of pasta or rice in your favorite dish.

Snacks—

- Try hummus and whole wheat pitas or baked tortilla chips with black bean and corn salsa instead of potato chips and dip.
- Top a cup of fat-free or low-fat yogurt with sliced fresh fruit.
- Store cleaned, cut-up vegetables in the fridge at eye level and keep a low-fat or fat-free dip on hand.

Tips for Children

Fruit and vegetable consumption is crucial for children, especially if they are overweight. It can be difficult to persuade them to eat their fruits and vegetables, when

there are so many other attractive high-calorie options. But it's all about encouragement and presentation. Some pointers:

- Pack a 100% juice box in their lunch instead of soda pop.
- Make fruit kabobs with pineapple chunks, bananas, grapes, and berries.
- Decorate plates or serving dishes with fruit slices.
- While shopping, allow children to pick out a new fruit or vegetable to try with dinner.
- Most importantly, set a good example by eating fruits and vegetables every day.

Remember, substitution is the key. Eat fruits and vegetables instead of some other higher-calorie food, and your body will thank you for years to come!



10-Minute Recipe: Raspberry Smoothie

Blend 1 cup unsweetened, frozen raspberries with $\frac{3}{4}$ cup 100% orange juice and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plain low-fat yogurt. Serve and enjoy! For variations, try frozen strawberries, blueberries, mixed berries, mangoes, or peaches and combine with pineapple juice, orange-tangerine juice, or any other 100% juice blends. Recipe serves 1 and equals 1 fruit serving.

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Fruits and Vegetables, Part 3 of 4

Disease prevention

Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables is not only important in maintaining weight and general health, but it actually prevents chronic diseases and conditions, including:

Cardiovascular Disease

- Heart disease is the world's number-one killer.
- All fruits and vegetables are good choices for the prevention of heart disease and stroke, but the best choices are green leafy vegetables (such as spinach) and citrus fruits (such as oranges and grapefruit.)

High Blood Pressure / High Cholesterol

- High blood pressure is a primary risk factor for heart disease and stroke.
- The manner in which fruits and vegetables lower cholesterol is still a bit of a mystery. However, some experts think that the soluble fiber in them blocks the absorption of cholesterol from other foods.

Cancer

- Cancer is the second-most common cause of death. In the United States, it accounts for 1 out of every 4 deaths.
- It appears that eating more fruit likely lowers the risk of cancers of the esophagus, stomach, and lung, and reduces the risk of cancers of the mouth, pharynx,

colon-rectum, larynx, kidney, and bladder.

- Eating more vegetables lowers the risk of cancers of the mouth, pharynx, stomach, larynx, lung, ovary, and kidney.

Gastrointestinal Conditions

- Indigestible fiber that comes from fruits and vegetables is important for preventing intestinal ailments.
- As fiber passes through the digestive system, it soaks up water and expands. This can calm the irritable bowel and decrease pressure inside the intestinal tract.

Cataracts / Macular Degeneration

- Usually related to aging, a cataract is the gradual clouding of the eye's lens. Macular degeneration is damage to the center of the retina.
- Dark green leafy vegetables contain two pigments (lutein and zeaxanthin) that aid in protecting the eye.
- Another note: Just as you always heard growing up, the Vitamin A found in carrots (but in cantaloupe and pumpkin as

well) aids in night vision!

Birth Defects

- Neural tube defects (NTDs) are major defects of a baby's brain or spine.
- Folate (folic acid) is a B vitamin used in the body to make new cells. Most NTDs can be prevented if a woman has enough of this in her body before becoming pregnant. Folic acid is found in asparagus, cooked spinach, and certain fortified breakfast cereals.

Other diseases and conditions that can be prevented are coronary artery disease and osteoporosis, as well as dental problems and skin infections. The next time you get hungry, put down that candy bar and grab some carrot sticks!



Sources / For More Information:
www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/
www.cdc.gov/ www.cancer.org

10-Minute Recipe: Apple Tuna Sandwich

Mix 2 6-oz. cans of unsalted tuna in water with 1 medium chopped apple, 1 chopped celery stalk, ¼ cup low fat vanilla yogurt, 1 teaspoon mustard, and 1 teaspoon honey. Spread the mixture onto 3 whole wheat bread slices. Top each with lettuce, tomato, and 1 more slice of bread. Makes 3 servings; equals 1 cup each of fruit and vegetables.

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Fruits and Vegetables, Part 4 of 4

Try some unconventional choices

When it comes to fruits and vegetables, most people likely think of common choices such as apples or corn. But there are a wide variety of others that can provide the same amount of nutritional value – if not more.

Alternative Fruit Options

Pluots[®] and Apriums[®] - Pluots are complex hybrid fruits that are part plum and part apricot. Apriums are also plum and apricot hybrids, but more apricot in heritage. They include Vitamins A and C, as well as some iron and calcium. However, their sugar content is fairly high.

Star Fruit – This is a tropical fruit gaining popularity in the U.S. There are two types: tart and sweet, although they are virtually indistinguishable in taste. Star fruit is an excellent source of Vitamin C, and naturally sodium- and cholesterol-free. A whole star fruit is equal to about 2/3 cup.

Persimmons – The origins of this fruit go back to ancient China. It is tart until it becomes soft and ripe. The persimmon is an excellent source of Vitamins A and C, and is rich in fiber.

Kiwi – Did you know kiwifruit is more than 700 years old? In China, where it began, it was considered a delicacy. Its flavor is a mixture of peach, strawberry, and melon. The skin of a kiwi can be either eaten or peeled. It

provides 140% of the recommended daily value of Vitamin C, but also has Vitamin A, iron, and calcium.

Alternative Vegetable Options

Tomatillos – These are technically small fruits enclosed in a husk, but are grouped as vegetables. They are in the same family as tomatoes. The flesh is slightly acidic with a hint of lemon, and is used most often in salsas and soups. A tomatillo has Vitamins A and C, and also provides iron.

Leeks – This vegetable is a member of the onion and garlic family. It is slightly sweet-tasting, and often served as a side dish. Leeks provide Vitamins A and C, calcium, and iron.

Edible Cactus – It is most popular in Mexico and other Central American countries. Cactus has a soft but crunchy texture and it tastes similar to a slightly tart green bean, asparagus, or green pepper. It contains beta carotene, iron, some B vitamins, Vitamin C, and calcium.

Okra – This vegetable is also known as gumbo, and is a

member of the cotton family. It is commonly used in Southern, Creole, and Cajun cooking. Okra is a good source of Vitamin C and is fat-free.

Comfortable Favorites

Just want to stick with what you know? Study the list below for the commonplace fruits and vegetables that pack the most nutritional benefits:

Fruits – Cantaloupe, oranges, apricots, strawberries, and grapefruit

Vegetables – Artichokes, kidney and black beans, broccoli, lentils, spinach, sweet potatoes, tofu, tomatoes, sweet peppers, chili peppers, and pumpkin.

Whether you prefer to be adventurous or stick with tried-and-true favorites, the choice to eat fruits and vegetables is always a great one.



10-Minute Recipe: Kiwi Mango Salsa

Peel 1 kiwi, cut into eighths, and dice. Place in a bowl and mix with ¼ cup mango, 1 tablespoon chopped cilantro, 2 teaspoons lime juice, ½ teaspoon minced chilies, and a pinch of salt. As an alternative, try substituting ¼ cup dried figs for the mango. Serves 1 person and equals 1 serving of fruit. This is a fat-free recipe.