

Healthy Eating: Eating More Fruits and Vegetables



Why eat more fruits and vegetables?

Fruits and vegetables are important parts of a healthy eating plan. By following a healthy eating plan, you give your body the nutrients it needs to stay strong and work well. And you lower your risk for high cholesterol, heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, stroke, cancer, and other health problems.

How do you get started?

Start with small goals you can achieve easily. Then set larger goals as you go. For example, you might want to start by eating one extra serving of fruit or vegetables a day. When you have achieved that goal, your next goal could be to include an extra serving of fruit or vegetables at most meals.

It's also helpful to keep track of how many fruits and vegetables you eat each day. You are more likely to eat more fruits and vegetables if you write down how many servings you get.

How can you eat more fruits and vegetables?

Start with these five easy tips

- Keep a bowl of fruit within reach so that you can grab a piece of fruit when you're hungry.
- Buy packaged, ready-to-eat fresh vegetables and fruits. These cut down on preparation time.
- Keep dried fruit on hand for a snack that is easy to take with you when you're away from home.
- Use the microwave to quickly cook vegetables.
- Cut up raw veggies and keep them in your fridge. If these are ready to eat, you're more likely to grab them instead of something else.

Take some small steps

- Mix sliced fruit or frozen berries with yogurt or cereal. Add dried or fresh fruit to oatmeal, pancakes, and waffles.
- Add apple chunks, pineapple, grapes, or raisins to tuna or chicken salad.
- Make fruit smoothies by blending together fresh or frozen fruit, fruit juice, and yogurt.
- Add colorful vegetables, such as red cabbage, carrots, and bell peppers, to salads. You can also top salads with dried cranberries or raisins, or with sliced fruit such as oranges or strawberries.
- Add vegetables, such as zucchini or spinach, to pasta sauces and soups. And add vegetables to sandwiches. Lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, and avocado slices are flavorful choices.

Pump up the flavor

- Dip raw vegetables in low-fat salad dressing, hummus, or peanut butter. Try red, yellow, and orange bell peppers. Broccoli,

cauliflower, and cherry tomatoes are also good choices.

- Toss raw or cooked broccoli and cauliflower with low-fat Italian dressing and Parmesan cheese to make a flavorful side dish.
- Roast vegetables and fruits to bring out their flavor. Brush a small amount of olive oil on them and bake them in the oven until they are tender.
- Season cooked vegetables with lemon juice and a small amount of olive oil. For extra flavor, add herbs such as basil, tarragon, and sage.
- Try baked apples or pears topped with cinnamon and honey for a delicious dessert.

Eat well when eating out

- Order a veggie pizza. Or ask for vegetables on your pepperoni pizza.
- Order vegetable soup instead of cream-based soup.

- Ask for salsa with a baked potato instead of sour cream, butter, cheese, or bacon.
- Substitute vegetables or a baked potato for french fries. At fast-food restaurants, ask if you can have a salad or fruit instead of french fries.
- Try vegetarian menu options. Indian, Thai, or Japanese restaurants often have a wide variety of vegetarian choices.

Make a plan

It's helpful to plan your meals in advance. Be sure to include a vegetarian meal or a fruit or vegetable side dish on your menu plan.

You can also plan for healthy snacks. If your shopping list says to buy fresh fruits or vegetables for snacks, you won't be tempted to buy less healthy snacks.