

It is hard to argue with the health benefits of a diet rich in vegetables and fruits. When proper amounts of fruits and vegetables are consumed, they are known to lower blood pressure, keep blood sugar in control, and reduce the risks of heart disease, stroke, digestive problems, and some cancers.

* To reap the benefits of these foods, most people should consume 2-3 cups of vegetables and 1 ½ to 2 cups of fruits a day depending on age and gender. In general, 1 cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice, or ½ cup of dried fruit can be considered as 1 cup from the fruit group, and 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the vegetable group.



Nutrient Inventory

A variety of vitamins and minerals need to be consumed everyday to help the body function properly. Fruits and vegetables provide an abundant amount of the following nutrients:

- **Vitamin A** keeps eyes and skin healthy and helps to fight infection. Excellent fruit and vegetable sources include sweet potatoes, pumpkin, carrots, spinach, turnip greens, mustard greens, kale, collard greens, winter squash, cantaloupe, red peppers, and Chinese cabbage.
- **Vitamin C** helps to heal cuts and wounds and keeps your gums healthy. Excellent fruit and vegetable sources include red and green peppers, kiwi, strawberries, sweet potatoes, kale, cantaloupe, broccoli, pineapple, Brussels sprouts, oranges, mangoes, tomato juice, and cauliflower.
- **Potassium** may help maintain a proper blood pressure level. Good fruit and vegetable sources include sweet potatoes, tomatoes, beets, white potatoes, white beans, lima beans, cooked greens, carrot juice, and prune juice.
- **Fiber** helps with regularity and is known to reduce the risk of coronary artery disease. Excellent vegetable sources include a variety of beans, peas, lentils, artichokes, Brussels sprouts, pears, figs, apples, strawberries, blueberries, oranges, and apricots.



Be Colorful

When choosing nutrient dense fruits and vegetables, look for the more colorful choices. Dark green, red, yellow, and orange fruits and vegetables will provide you with an abundant amount of nutrients. Less colorful choices, like potatoes, tend to have fewer nutrients. Try to add a little color to your plate at each meal to increase your nutrient intake.



10 Ways to Get More:

1. Purchase a variety of forms. All kinds count – fresh, frozen, canned, and even dried
2. Make it a priority to have one every meal
3. Make a fruit smoothie for breakfast and include your favorite fruits
4. Add frozen or canned vegetables to your dinner casserole or soup
5. Choose 100% juice instead of soda for lunch
6. Toss dried fruits, like raisins, into baked goods, oatmeal, or yogurt
7. Add fresh fruit onto your salads.
8. Top your pizza with your favorite vegetables
9. Include lettuce, tomatoes, and other vegetable toppings on your sandwiches and wraps
10. Use applesauce as a quick snack or as a dip for other fruits; it can also be added in baked goods as a replacement for oil.

Don't forget these other great resources: For more information consult your Healthwise® Handbook, the 24-Hour Nurse Line, Online Nurse Chat, Audio Health Information Library®, and www.express-health.com.

From Express Health, a program of Spectrum Health Systems

* Source: www.mypyramid.gov.