

# Fabulous fruits... Versatile vegetables



*"I know I should eat more fruits and vegetables. But how??"*



*"How can I get my kids to eat more vegetables?"*



*"Are oranges the only foods with vitamin C?"*

**Putting the Guidelines into Practice**

June 2003

**Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion**  
United States Department of Agriculture

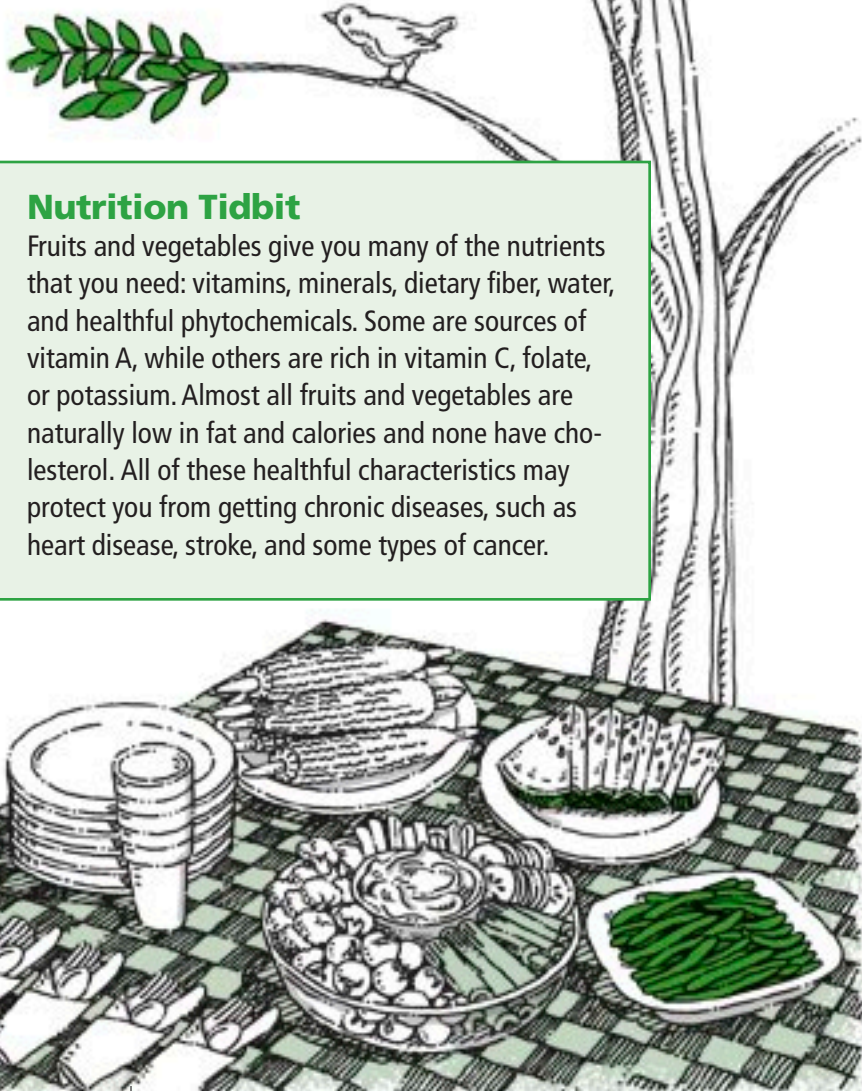
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Any of these questions sound familiar? Fruits and vegetables are key parts of your daily diet. Everyone needs 5 to 9 daily servings of fruits and vegetables for the nutrients they contain and for general health.

Nutrition and health may be reasons you eat certain fruits and vegetables, but there are many other reasons why you choose the ones you do. Perhaps it is because of taste, or physical characteristics such as crunchiness, juiciness, or bright colors.

You may eat some fruits and vegetables because of fond memories—like watermelon or corn at cookouts, your mom's green bean casserole, or tomatoes your dad brought in from the backyard garden. Or you may simply like them because most are quick to prepare and easy to eat.

Whatever the reasons you select certain fruits and vegetables, the important thing is that you eat them and encourage children to do the same. With such a large selection of fruits and vegetables to choose from—with colors across the rainbow—you can find a variety to eat. Look at Box 1 and check off some of your favorites.



### **Nutrition Tidbit**

Fruits and vegetables give you many of the nutrients that you need: vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber, water, and healthful phytochemicals. Some are sources of vitamin A, while others are rich in vitamin C, folate, or potassium. Almost all fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories and none have cholesterol. All of these healthful characteristics may protect you from getting chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancer.

## Fabulous fruits... Versatile vegetables

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### Fruits

Fruits taste great and they're bright and colorful, easy to find, and easy to prepare and eat. There are so many to choose from. Fruits are available in many different forms—fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and as juice. All are good ways to get the recommended 2 to 4 servings of fruits a day. (Check Box 2 to see how many *you* need.) Here are some ways you can eat more fruits throughout the day.

- **At breakfast**, top your cereal with bananas or peaches; add blueberries to pancakes; drink 100% orange or grapefruit juice.
- **At lunch**, pack a tangerine, banana, or grapes to eat, or choose fruits from a salad bar. Don't forget individual containers of fruits—they are easy and convenient. Kids think they're fun!
- **At dinner**, add crushed pineapple to coleslaw; include mandarin oranges in a tossed salad; have a fruit salad for dessert.
- **For snacks**, spread peanut butter on apple slices; have a frozen juice bar (100% juice); top frozen yogurt with berries or slices of kiwi fruit; snack on some dried fruit.

### Nutrition Tidbit

What vitamin do you associate with oranges and other citrus fruits? Vitamin C is correct! Citrus fruits are rich in this vitamin, but did you know that strawberries, mangoes, red peppers, and tomatoes are also sources of vitamin C? Vitamin C helps heal cuts and wounds and also keeps your gums healthy.



### Vegetables

For some of us, summertime just wouldn't be the same without fresh produce. Maybe you garden or take trips to a local farmers market. Even your grocery store may have more fruits and vegetables in the summer. With vegetables, you and your family are getting delicious food and, nutritionally, you are getting many of the nutrients needed for good health—vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber.

Like fruits, vegetables are available not only fresh, but frozen, canned, dried, and as juice. You can eat them raw, steamed, boiled, stir-fried, grilled, microwaved, or baked. Aim for 3 to 5 servings of vegetables a day. (Check Box 2 to see how many *you* need.) Here are some ways you can jazz up vegetables to make them even more flavorful... to help you eat the servings you need.

#### Spice it!

- Top corn or black beans with salsa or a dash of hot sauce.
- Add garlic to mashed potatoes.
- Add a dash of nutmeg to spinach dishes.

#### Slice it!

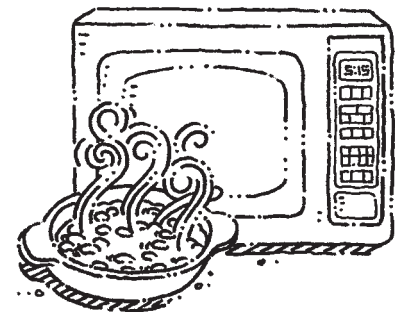
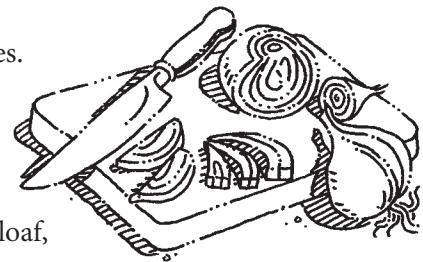
- Add cooked, chopped onions to cooked peas.
- Add sliced or diced vegetables to meatloaf, stews, or scrambled eggs.
- Make a grated carrot salad.

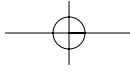
#### Mix it!

- Cook zucchini and stewed tomatoes together.
- Mix green beans, Italian dressing, and almonds together.
- Stirfry broccoli with chicken or beef.

#### Zap it!

- Microwave broccoli and sprinkle on Parmesan cheese.
- Microwave a sweet potato with ground cloves or cinnamon on top.
- Heat frozen mixed vegetables for a last-minute side dish.





**Fabulous fruits... Versatile vegetables**

**Box 1. Fruits and vegetables in a rainbow of colors**

**Check off the fruits and vegetables that you enjoy eating.  
Do you eat a variety, including some from each category?**

**Dark-green/leafy**

- Bok choy
- Broccoli
- Collard greens
- Endive
- Kale
- Mustard greens
- Romaine
- Spinach
- Turnip greens

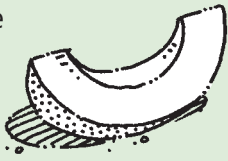


**Citrus and berries**

- Blueberries
- Cranberries
- Grapefruit
- Kiwi fruit
- Oranges
- Raspberries
- Strawberries
- Tangerines

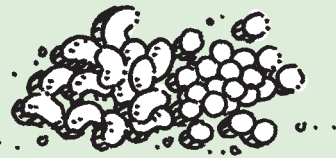
**Orange/deep-yellow**

- Acorn squash
- Apricots
- Butternut squash
- Cantaloupe
- Carrots
- Mango
- Pumpkin
- Sweet potatoes



**Dry beans and peas**

- Adzuki beans
- Baked beans
- Black beans (turtle beans)
- Black-eyed peas
- Chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
- Cranberry beans
- Dark- and light-red kidney beans (Mexican beans)
- Great Northern beans (white beans)
- Green and red lentils
- Soybeans (edamame)
- Kidney beans
- Lentils
- Lima beans
- Navy beans (pea beans)
- Pink beans
- Pinto beans
- Small red beans (Mexican red beans)
- Split peas
- Tofu (soybean curd)
- Yellow-eyed beans



**More choices**

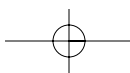
- Apples
- Asparagus
- Avocados
- Bananas
- Bean sprouts
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Corn
- Cucumbers
- Grapes
- Green beans
- Green peas
- Lettuce
- Mushrooms
- Onions
- Papaya
- Peaches
- Pears
- Peppers
- Plums
- Potatoes
- Raisins
- Sprouts
- Tomatoes
- Watermelon
- Zucchini

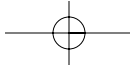


**What others do you eat?**

\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_

Fruits and vegetables differ in the nutrients they contain. To promote health, include some from each category regularly.





**Fabulous fruits... Versatile vegetables**

**Fruit and vegetable tips**

Tips to eating more fruits and vegetables

**Think about variety.**

There are so many fruits and vegetables to choose from. Try berries, half a grapefruit, or dried apricots for dessert or snack. Add kidney beans or black-eyed peas to your next soup, stew, or salad.

**Appeal to your senses.**



Most people prefer crunchy foods over mushy ones. Enjoy raw fruits, and serve vegetables raw or lightly steamed. This will also help retain more of the valuable nutrients that may decrease during cooking.

**Consider convenience.**

Nowadays, you can buy fruits and vegetables that are pre-cut and packaged for minimal preparation and quick eating. Pick up a bag of salad greens and some baby carrots and have a salad in seconds.

**Offer dips or dressings on the side.**

Many fruits and vegetables taste great with a dip or dressing. Try low-fat yogurt or pudding as a dip for fruits like melons. Try low-fat salad dressing with raw broccoli, red and green peppers, or cauliflower.



**Add vegetables to your favorite foods.**

Shred carrots or zucchini into meatloaf or casseroles. Include chopped vegetables in pasta sauce or lasagna. Order a veggie pizza.

**Keep fruits and vegetables around and "in sight."**

Studies show that families that have fruits and vegetables around eat more of them. So, keep fruits and vegetables visible. Put a bowl of fruit on the table and keep cut-up carrot and celery sticks in a clear container in the refrigerator.

**Use your blender.**

Make a fruit smoothie by blending low-fat milk or yogurt with fresh or frozen fruit. Try strawberries, bananas, peaches, and other fruits.

**Use fruits and vegetables as ingredients.**

Try applesauce as a fat-free substitute for some of the oil when baking cakes. Add pureed, cooked vegetables to thicken stews and soups. These add additional flavors and textures to foods.

**Think "salad."**



Try a chef's salad for lunch, a fruit salad for dessert, or mixed greens along with your dinner. Many vegetables taste great in salads—try something different, like baby spinach, garbanzo beans, cauliflower, or red cabbage.

**Snack on fruits and vegetables.**

For a crunchy snack, try baby carrots or a crispy apple. For smooth and sweet, have a banana. Need a flavor jolt? Munch on dried apricots. Treat yourself to the luxury of fresh raspberries.



**Helping kids enjoy more fruits and vegetables**

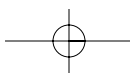
It can be tough to get kids to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables. Don't force the foods, but continue to offer a variety. Try these ideas:

**Set a good example by eating fruits and vegetables yourself.** You are a role model for your kids in so many ways. Eating is no exception. When your kids see you eating and enjoying fruits and vegetables, they will too.

**Offer lots of choices.** Give children a choice of fruits for lunch. Let them help decide on the dinner vegetables or what goes into the salad.

**Let your children help.** Kids enjoy helping in the kitchen, and are often more willing to eat foods they help choose and prepare. Depending on their ages, kids can help shop for, clean, and prepare fruits and vegetables.

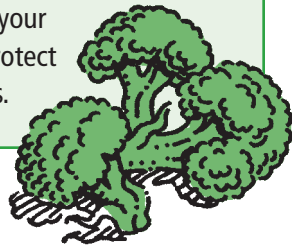
**Keep foods separate.** Kids often prefer foods served separately. If they want to mix peas and corn, let them do it themselves.



**Fabulous fruits... Versatile vegetables**

**Nutrition Tidbit**

You've heard that "carrots are good for your eyesight." That's because carrots contain carotenoids (beta-carotene, for example) that form vitamin A—a vitamin that helps keep your eyes healthy. Broccoli, spinach, pumpkin, winter squash, and sweet potatoes are also sources of carotenoids—so are tomatoes, apricots, and cantaloupe. In addition to your eyes, vitamin A is good for your skin and also helps protect you against infections.



**Dietary fiber... for your health**

We hear a lot about "dietary fiber" these days—and for good reason. Research suggests that it is important for proper bowel function by keeping us "regular." But what exactly is dietary fiber? It is the part of plants that the human digestive tract cannot break down. As a result, dietary fiber keeps waste moving through our intestines.

Most of us don't eat enough dietary fiber, and health experts suggest we eat more. Dry beans and peas are the best sources of fiber. There are a wide variety of these tasty foods in different sizes, shapes, flavors, and colors. Have you heard of (or tried) many of these different types of dry beans and peas in Box 1? Sounds like a pretty colorful list, doesn't it? Try a new one today!

In addition to dry beans and peas, many fruits and vegetables provide fiber. Be "fiber smart." Some forms of a food are better sources of fiber than others. (See Box 3.) Choose whole fruits and vegetables more often.

**Box 2. How many fruits and vegetables do you need each day?**

**Are you getting 5 to 9 servings a day?**

Sex/Age Groups	Approximate calories needed each day	Number of recommended daily servings*	
		Fruits	Vegetables
Children ages 2 to 6, women, some older adults	1,600	2	3
Older children, teen girls, active women, most men	2,200	3	4
Teen boys and active men	2,800	4	5

**\*What counts as a serving?**

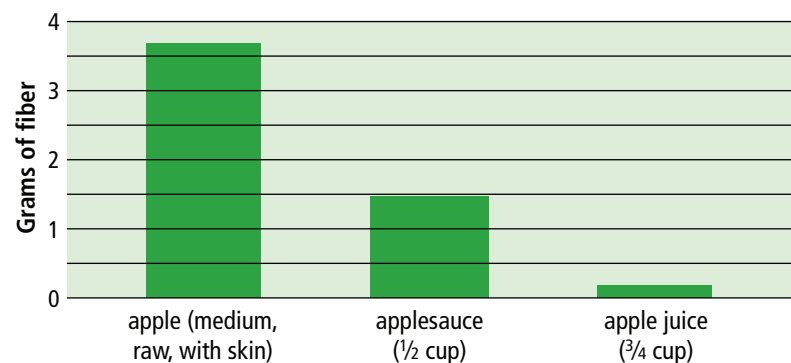
**Fruits**

- 1/2 cup fruit
- 1 medium piece of fruit
- 1/2 grapefruit
- 1/4 small cantaloupe
- 1/4 cup dried fruit
- 1/2 cup berries
- a dozen grapes
- 3/4 cup fruit juice (100% juice)

**Vegetables**

- 1/2 cup chopped vegetables
- 1 cup raw leafy vegetables (a small salad)
- 6-8 carrot sticks (3" long)
- 1 medium potato
- 1/2 cup cooked or canned dry beans or peas
- 3/4 cup vegetable juice

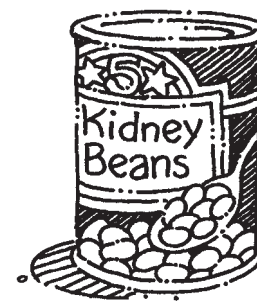
**Box 3. Did you know? The fiber content of different forms of food can vary.**

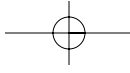


Check the Nutrition Facts panel on packaged foods for dietary fiber content.

**Nutrition Tidbit**

Cooked, dry beans and peas are good sources of dietary fiber and protein, and are low in fat and cholesterol-free. In addition, they provide magnesium, iron, zinc, and folate. Americans often don't get enough of these nutrients.





**Fabulous fruits... Versatile vegetables**



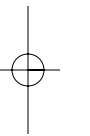
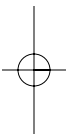
The **5 A Day for Better Health** program encourages all Americans to eat 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day for good health.

Look for the 5 A Day logo in the produce section of your grocery store and on packaged fruits and vegetables.

**The Bottom Line**



- Remember “5 A Day”: Aim for *at least* 2 servings of fruits and 3 servings of vegetables every day. See Box 2 to find out how many servings you need.
- Build your eating pattern according to the Food Guide Pyramid, including a *variety* of fruits and vegetables, to ensure that you get all the nutrients you need for a healthy diet.
- Choose whole or cut-up fruits and vegetables rather than juices most often; juices contain little or no dietary fiber.
- Set good eating examples for your children.



**Dietary Guidelines for Americans**

The Dietary Guidelines offer sound advice that will help to promote your health and reduce your risk for chronic diseases such as heart disease, certain cancers, diabetes, stroke, and osteoporosis.

The 10 Guidelines are grouped into the ABC's of nutrition:



**A: Aim for fitness**

- Aim for a healthy weight.
- Be physically active each day.

**B: Build a healthy base**

- Let the Pyramid guide your food choices.
- Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains.
- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Keep food safe to eat.

**C: Choose sensibly**

- Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat.
- Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars.
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.

To order Dietary Guidelines publications, call 888-878-3256. Ask for the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (40-page bulletin, \$4.75 per copy) or *Using the Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (5-panel brochure, \$.50 per copy).

You can also find out more about the guidelines and download these publications by visiting USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion website at [www.cnpp.usda.gov](http://www.cnpp.usda.gov).



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