

Fruit and Vegetable Benefits

Almost Everyone Needs to Eat More Fruits and Vegetables

A growing body of research shows that fruits and vegetables are critical to promoting good health. To get the amount that's recommended, most people need to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables they currently eat every day.

Fruits and Vegetables Can Protect Your Health



Fruits and vegetables contain essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber that may help protect you from chronic diseases. Compared with people who consume a diet with only small amounts of fruits and vegetables, those who eat more generous amounts as part of a healthful diet are likely to

have reduced risk of chronic diseases, including stroke and perhaps other cardiovascular diseases, and certain cancers.



Whole Foods or Supplements?

Nutrients should come primarily from foods. Foods such as fruits and vegetables contain not only the vitamins and minerals that are often found in supplements, but also other naturally occurring substances that may help protect you from chronic diseases.

For some people, fortified foods or supplements can be helpful in getting the nutrients their bodies need. A fortified food contains a nutrient in an amount greater than what is typically found in that food.



Fruits and Vegetables and Weight Management

Substituting fruits and vegetables for higher-calorie foods can be part of a weight loss strategy.

Fruits and Vegetables on the Go!

Busy lives can benefit from food that's nutritious, yet easy to eat on-the-go, like fresh fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are a natural source of energy and give the body many nutrients you need to keep going.



The Colors of Health

Fruits and vegetables come in terrific colors and flavors, but their real beauty lies in what's inside. Fruits and vegetables are great sources of many vitamins, minerals and other natural substances that may help protect you from chronic diseases.

To get a healthy variety, think color. Eating fruits and vegetables of different colors gives your body a wide range of valuable nutrients, like fiber, folate, potassium, and vitamins A and C. Some examples include green spinach, orange sweet potatoes, black beans, yellow corn, purple plums, red watermelon, and white onions. For more variety, try new fruits and vegetables regularly.

Chart below lists specific nutrients and tells you how these nutrients contribute to good health. You can also find out which fruits and vegetables are good and excellent sources of these nutrients.



Nutrient Information

Fruits and vegetables are sources of many vitamins, minerals and other natural substances that may help protect you from chronic diseases. Some of these nutrients may also be found in other foods. Eating a balanced diet and making other lifestyle changes are key to maintaining your body's good health.

Fiber	
Diets rich in dietary fiber have been shown to have a number of beneficial effects including decreased risk of coronary artery disease.	Excellent vegetable sources: navy beans, kidney beans, black beans, pinto beans, lima beans, white beans, soybeans, split peas, chick peas, black eyed peas, lentils, artichokes
Folate*	
Healthful diets with adequate folate may reduce a woman's risk of having a child with a brain or spinal cord defect.	Excellent vegetable sources: black eyed peas, cooked spinach, great northern beans, asparagus
Potassium	
Diets rich in potassium may help to maintain a healthy blood pressure.	Good fruit and vegetable sources: sweet potatoes, tomato paste, tomato puree, beet greens, white potatoes, white beans, lima beans, cooked greens, carrot juice, prune juice
Vitamin A	
Vitamin A keeps eyes and skin healthy and helps to protect against infections.	Excellent fruit and vegetable sources: sweet potatoes, pumpkin, carrots, spinach, turnip greens, mustard greens, kale, collard greens, winter squash, cantaloupe, red peppers, Chinese cabbage
Vitamin C	
Vitamin C helps heal cuts and wounds and keep teeth and gums healthy.	Excellent fruit and vegetable sources: red and green peppers, kiwi, strawberries, sweet potatoes, kale, cantaloupe, broccoli, pineapple, Brussels sprouts, oranges, mangoes, tomato juice, cauliflower

Good sources: These foods contain 10 to 19 percent of the Daily Value per reference amount.

Excellent sources: These foods contain 20 percent or more of the Daily Value per reference amount.

*The Institute of Medicine recommends that women of childbearing age who may become pregnant consume 400 micrograms of synthetic folic acid per day to supplement the folate they receive from a varied diet. Synthetic folic acid can be obtained from eating fortified foods or taking a supplement.