

FYI: Fruits and Vegetables

Healthy eating behaviors are developed at a young age, and because these behaviors continue into adulthood children should be encouraged to eat adequate amounts of fruits and vegetables each day. Recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables for both adults and children can be obtained by visiting the MyPlate website at www.choosemyplate.gov.

Fruits and vegetables are important in the diet for many reasons, including:

- They provide a wide variety of vitamins and minerals.
- They provide energy.
- They are a good source of fiber.
- They are very low in calories and contain little or no fat.
- They contain phytochemicals and antioxidants that help reduce the risk of chronic diseases, including cancer and heart disease.
- Eating a low-fat diet that includes many fruits and vegetables can reduce a person's risk of becoming obese.
- They taste great!

There are many reasons people do not eat fruits and vegetables, including their perception that preparing them is too difficult and their desire for something quick and easy. Actually, preparing and eating fruits and vegetables can be very simple and tasty. Here are some quick and easy ways to get your recommended intake:

- Add fresh fruit to cereal, waffles, or pancakes.
- Add chopped vegetables to an omelet.
- Use fresh fruit as a topping for low-fat frozen yogurt.
- Prepare a vegetable stir-fry.
- Steam fresh vegetables and toss them with cooked pasta.
- When ordering pizza, ask for fruit and/or veggie toppings (pineapple, tomatoes, green peppers, mushrooms, onions).
- Make a fruit smoothie by blending fresh fruit, low-fat frozen yogurt, and ice.
- Add vegetables to dinner entrées such as lasagna, casseroles, tacos, and spaghetti sauce.
- Try tasty low-fat dips with raw fruits and vegetables.
- Grab a piece of fruit on the go!

There are hundreds of types of fruits and vegetables. Each time you go to the supermarket, pick out a few you have never tried before. Adding more fruits and vegetables to your diet will give you a greater variety of foods, while also giving your body many health benefits.