



Fruit & Vegetables

Americans are not eating enough fruit and vegetables. A CDC report found that 33 percent of adult Americans ate fruit two or more times a day and 27 percent ate vegetables three or more times a day. Also stated was that men ate more fruit and vegetables than women.

Fruit and vegetables should make up a large portion of your diet. They are low in calories and high in vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals, and fiber. A diet high in fruit and vegetables can help ward off heart disease and stroke, as well as control blood pressure and cholesterol. According to two Harvard studies, increasing fruit and vegetable intake by as little as one serving per day can have a real impact on heart disease risk.

- * A diet rich in fruit and vegetables appears to reduce the chances of developing cataract or macular degeneration, two common causes of vision loss. Free radicals generated by sunlight, cigarette smoke, air pollution, infection, and metabolism cause much damage. Dark green leafy vegetables contain two pigments that appear to be able to kill free radicals before they can harm the eye's sensitive tissues.
- * Fruit and vegetables pack fewer calories for the equivalent volume of processed foods, a diet high in these ingredients helps people keep their weight down.
- * A component of fruit and vegetables is indigestible fiber. As fiber passes through the digestive system, it sops up water like a sponge and expands. This can calm the irritable bowel and trigger regular bowel movements.
- * According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer, which is part of the World Health Organization, eating more fruit probably lowers the risk of cancers of the esophagus, stomach and lung, and possibly reduces the risk of cancers of the mouth, pharynx, colon-rectum, larynx, kidney, and urinary bladder. Eating more vegetables probably lowers the risk of cancers of the esophagus and colon-rectum, and possibly reduces the risk of cancers of the mouth, pharynx, stomach, larynx, lung, ovary, and kidney.

Experts suggest that you eat five to nine servings of fruit and vegetables every day. If you start eating fruit and vegetables in addition to what you usually eat, you are adding calories and may gain weight. The key is substitution. Eat fruit and vegetables instead of some other food higher in calories.

* Most healthy eating plans allow for one or two small snacks a day. A medium-sized apple is 72 calories. A medium-sized banana is 105 calories. A cup of blueberries is 83 calories and a cup of grapes is 100 calories. One cup of carrots is 45 calories.

* Cut back on the amount of cereal in your bowl to make room for cut-up fruit. Add vegetables to your sandwich or wrap at lunch. Vegetables, fruit, and whole grains should take up the largest portion of your dinner plate. Drink 100 percent fruit juice instead of soda. Eat a salad as a meal once or twice a week.

* Pack fruit, carrots and celery for snacks. Keep fruit in plain view on your countertop and keep the cookie jar out of sight.

* 5aday -- as do many other nutrition guides -- stress the importance of eating fresh fruit and vegetables in a range of colors, since this is a good way to ensure you get the variety of minerals and vitamins you need.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control, Harvard School of Public Health, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, nutrition.about.com, Medical News Today, and Washington and Shady Grove Adventist Hospitals. This Health Bulletin is for educational purposes only. For additional information, consult your physician. Please feel free to copy and distribute this health resource.