

# FITNESS: Let's talk fruits and Vegetables

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Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy eating plan. But is getting enough sometimes a challenge?

You've heard it before, Americans just aren't getting enough fruits and vegetables. Your parents may have told you to eat all of your vegetables, but in adulthood you're responsible for giving yourself and your family that constant reminder.

Almost all fruits and vegetables are low in the things you don't want (like sodium, calories and fat) but still pack a powerful punch of nutrients, vitamins and fiber. Even if you have picky eaters to feed, these tips will help you add more of the good stuff to your meals and snacks.

- Try something new. If you're bored with your fruits and vegetables, chances are you're not getting enough variety. Next time you go grocery shopping, try fruits or vegetables you've never had before; for example, papaya, lychee, guava, bamboo shoots and kale.
- Save time with frozen. While fresh is best, frozen fruits and vegetables are good alternatives. Be sure you have some handy for when you're short on time. And while they have about the same nutritional value as fresh, check the label to ensure that there's no sugar or syrup added and that veggies have no salt added.
- Soup it up. Soups are a great way to get more vegetables into your eating regime, and your children's. Puree squash, broccoli, carrots, peppers, or just about any vegetables you can think of, and add them to your favorite soup recipe. But don't stop there: Find and try recipes for fruity soups that use melon or apple.
- Add zing to tomato sauce or chili. Another way to get more vegetables into the mouths of picky eaters is by grating carrots, broccoli, mushrooms or zucchini into their favorite tomato sauce or chili. Chances are they won't even notice. Adding vegetables to homemade or store-bought sauce will add flavor and nutrients.
- Keep healthy snacks within reach. Keep a bowl of fresh fruit, fruit salad, cut up

vegetables, carrots, snow peas or celery sticks on the most visible shelf in your refrigerator. The next time you or a family member head to the fridge for a snack, you will have a snack waiting.

- Mix them up. Choosing fruits and vegetables of different colors is a good way to reduce your risk of cancer, heart disease and stroke. So mix up dark green, orange and red items to make a colorful salad. Don't be afraid to mix fruits with vegetables; for example, try a spinach salad with orange slices and strawberries. Another suggestion is to juice.

One of the best ways to energize your body and get nutrition in quickly is to juice your fruits and vegetables.

Freshly made juice from your own juicer is definitely the best. When you drink fresh juice, the nutrients are quickly absorbed into the bloodstream and used by the body.

The rest of the plant is the fiber. There are no nutrients or enzymes in the fiber. Any pesticides or sprays are also left behind in the fiber.

When we eat the fruits and vegetables, we only absorb 30 percent of the nutrition from them, and we use up a lot of energy digesting the food. When we juice the same fruits and vegetables we absorb 90 percent of the nutrients, and they are absorbed into the bloodstream within minutes. Fresh juice contains the important enzymes that help digestion and build the body.

Fruit juices are cleansing to the human body whereas vegetable juices are nourishing and building to the body. Go ahead, try it!

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