



Eat More Fruits and Vegetables!

Anyone ever remember your mother saying “Don’t get up from this table until you eat your veggies”? Or the old adage “An apple a day keeps the doctor away”? There are valid reasons we’ve heard these expressions for most of our lives. Fruits and vegetables should be a significant part of our daily diet. In fact, the USDA suggests men and women ages 19-30 consume 2 cups of fruit and 3 cups (men) or 2 .5 cups (women) of vegetables per day. The USDA also asserts that diets rich in fruits and vegetables may provide several health benefits:

- Reduces risk for heart disease
- Protects against certain types of cancers
- Reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes and obesity
- Lowers blood pressure
- Lowers risk of kidney stones

So how can you be sure to include more of nature’s goodness into your diet? Here are a few tips:

- Purchase bags of frozen vegetables (non seasoned) . These can be steamed for a quick meal component, used in healthy stir-fry, placed on top of homemade pizzas, tossed into soups, or made into a healthy vegetable lasagna!
- Buy fresh produce such as broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, celery, zucchini and bell peppers. Chop or slice as soon as you get home from the grocery store and place them into containers for quick access. These make great snacks alone or combined with hummus or low fat cottage cheese.
- When dining out, ask to substitute an extra side of vegetables in place of French fries, chips, etc.
- Consider soup- vegetable based soups are a great way to include more vegetables in your diet. Be sure to look for lower sodium versions.
- Incorporate a “meatless” day into your week. This will challenge you to open your mind to new and delicious recipes incorporating fruits and vegetables. (Try out the *Italian Veggie ball* recipe featured on Pocket Tools!)

For additional information on the health benefits of fruits and vegetables, check out our Health and Wellness Tips section for an article on “Phytochemicals.”

Remember, the nutritional choices you make today will give you the body you have tomorrow.

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