

The Positive Power of Fruits and Vegetables – More Matters!

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So, how does your plate rate? Americans in general average 2.1 servings per day of fruits and vegetables combined. The Center for Science in the Public Interest has recommended for years that we eat 5-9 servings per day. The American Institute for Cancer Research is so convinced of the cancer-fighting abilities of fruits and vegetables that they've been recommending 9-11 servings each day. The 2005 federal dietary guidelines call for as many as 13 half-cup servings of fruits and vegetables. (And you thought 5 a day was a lot!)

In order to better reach everyone where they currently are, the Produce for Better Health Foundation kicked off a new campaign in March 2007 that promotes, "Fruits & Veggies—More Matters." So even if you're already eating 8 a day—strive for more.



But even with all this support and encouragement for eating fruits and vegetables, we can still struggle in finding ways to actually consume all we need each and every day. It's actually not as hard as you may think with these easy and creative tips for getting more fruits and veggies on your plate. Just remember . . . more matters.

Simple Tips for Getting MORE Fruits and Veggies

- First of all, I always recommend to first aim for at least 5 a day WITHOUT counting juice servings since juice does not contain important fiber. If you can achieve 5 servings a day and then drink 8 ounces of juice each day (2 fruit servings), you'll be up to 7 servings before you know it.
- Double your "token" portion of vegetables at dinner and you're up again.
- Always plan to eat a fruit or vegetable at every snack and every meal. While it may seem tough at first, just take it one meal and one snack at a time.
- Begin by trading pre-dinner snacks of cheese and crackers for raw veggies and light dip. This daily 300-calorie savings will help you shed 31 pounds in a year, while shielding you from diabetes, heart disease and cancer.
- Add shredded or chopped carrots, zucchini, red and green peppers or spinach to spaghetti sauce.
- Add many more vegetables to tossed salad than what your mother did and use romaine, spinach or dark-leaf lettuce instead of iceberg. And trade in your small salad bowls for large salad bowls.





- Make a veggie salad using no lettuce, just chopped vegetables. Experiment with tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, green and red peppers, celery, etc.
 - Bake or microwave butternut, buttercup or acorn squash.
 - Make Sunshine Carrot-Raisin Salad and Crunchy Apple Salad frequently, using nonfat yogurt and Miracle Whip Light. (Both recipes can be found in my *Lickety-Split Meals* cookbook.)
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- Don't wait for holidays to prepare a fresh veggie and dip platter. Make it a tradition to always have a fresh veggie tray in the fridge for snacking, and keep a favorite low-fat or fat-free salad dressing on hand for dipping.
 - Shred cabbage and carrots frequently to use in slaw, stir-fry and soup.
 - Declare one night a week as "stir-fry" night. This is a great way to consume a larger-than-normal portion of vegetables.
 - When making dinner, steam a large batch of broccoli, cauliflower and carrots to provide "planned-over's" for tomorrow's lunch. (These are also delicious tossed in scrambled eggs for breakfast.)
 - Keep a huge bowl full of fresh fruit in plain sight for easy grabbing. Just as candy in a visible candy dish seems to magically disappear, so will the fruit if it's in sight and easy to grab.
 - Add berries, bananas and apples to yogurt and cold or hot cereal.
 - Make blended fruit drinks with frozen or fresh fruit, nonfat yogurt, tofu or soy milk for a healthy "milkshake."
 - Make Carrot Cake and Carrot Muffins often. Be sure to use low-fat recipes or smart substitutions. (Recipes are found in my *Lickety-Split Meals* cookbook.)
 - Use lots of fresh or canned pumpkin by making pumpkin bread, muffins, bars, cookies, pie, and even pudding.
 - Fruit is truly nature's candy so complement your dinner with fruit slices, cubed melons, strawberries and pineapple. Frozen fruit like grapes, blueberries, strawberries and cherries and dried fruit like apricots, peaches and apples make excellent snacks.
 - Put fruit in your dessert by making apple, peach and blueberry cobblers or crisps using reduced-fat recipes and by serving Angel Food cake mounded with fresh or frozen strawberries, blueberries or raspberries.





One Serving of Fruit or Vegetable Looks Like . . .

- 1 small apple, pear, orange, nectarine, kiwi
- ½ banana
- 2 plums
- 4 apricots
- 15 grapes
- 2 T raisins
- 4 dried apricots
- ½ cup applesauce (unsweetened)
- ½ cup canned fruit (in own juice & drained)
- 1 cup berries or melon
- 1 tomato
- 6 baby carrots
- ½ cucumber
- ½ red, yellow, orange or green pepper
- ½ small (8 oz) sweet potato
- ½ cup cooked vegetables
- 1 cup raw vegetables
- 2 cups raw leafy vegetables
- ½ cup canned vegetables
- ½ cup salsa (preferably fresh for sodium control)
- 4 oz 100% fruit juice
- 8 oz 100% vegetable juice

