

Eat More Vegetables and Fruit

Did you know that people who eat five or more servings of vegetables and fruit per day are healthier? Scientists are learning that the health benefits of vegetables and fruit go beyond nutrients and fibre. They also contain substances which protect you from disease.

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating recommends 5 to 10 servings of vegetables and fruit every day. The average person eats only 3 servings daily, so most of us have room for improvement. This newsletter will inform and encourage you to eat more vegetables and fruit. It's easier than you think and definitely worth the effort!

Plant Foods Against Disease

Studies from around the world show that populations eating five or more servings of vegetables and fruit per day are less likely to develop heart disease and some types of cancer. A term used to define these health enhancing but non-nutrient components in plants is phytochemicals.

Although antioxidants and other phytochemicals are available in pill form, research suggests that supplements do not provide the same health benefits as food. For one thing, the chemical form of the protective factors may be different. There may be additional beneficial substances in food, which are not yet known. So, it's best to eat a variety of vegetables and fruit every day.

What About Pesticides, Waxes and Other Residues?

Pesticides are chemicals used to control insects on vegetables and fruit. Wax coatings are sometimes used on vegetables and fruit such as turnip, cucumbers, and apples. The wax keeps the produce looking fresh and appealing but can also seal in pesticides and other contaminants.

It is important to remember that Canada has one of the safest food supplies in the world. The pesticides and waxes used on produce sold in Canada undergo strict testing before being approved for use. The health benefits of eating a diet rich in vegetables and fruit far outweigh the risk of residues.

Buying organic produce is not necessarily a way to decrease contaminants. If you buy "organic", the seller should be able to show you a certificate to back up the claim. Agriculture Canada is coordinating efforts to develop a common standard for certifying produce as "organic".

Here are some tips to minimize your intake of residues on vegetables and fruit:

- When possible, buy local produce that is in season. These do not usually need as many of the pesticides, waxes and other anti-spoilage chemicals as imported vegetables and fruit.



Nutrition
Matters

- Wash all produce carefully under cold running water. Don't forget the inner leaves of lettuce and other leafy vegetables.
- Trim the tips and outer leaves from celery, lettuce and other leafy vegetables.

Fresh, Frozen, Dried or Canned - The Choice is Yours

Fresh produce often has the best flavour and texture. Buy produce at farmer's markets and Pick-Your-Own farms whenever possible. Buy large quantities in season and freeze or can for future use.

Frozen is a convenient and nutritious choice. Commercially frozen produce is picked at peak ripeness and quickly frozen so its nutritional value is as good as or better than fresh produce.

Dried fruits like raisins, apricots, apples and sun-dried tomatoes are popular and can be added to many recipes.

Canned vegetables and fruits are convenient although the flavour is not as authentic as frozen. Canned vegetables may be high in salt, so choose lower salt varieties when possible. Read labels to choose fruit that has been canned in its own juices.

How to Get Children to Eat More Vegetables

Many of us expect children to resist vegetables but, in fact, they are often curious about and attracted to their bright colours, interesting shapes, and sweet flavours. Here are some tips for getting your children to eat vegetables:

- Avoid forcing your child to eat all his vegetables. Present vegetables matter-of-factly, and eat them yourself.
- Introduce a new vegetable several times rather than assuming that an initial rejection is a fixed dislike. Changes in

acceptance of foods occur slowly, and may take up to ten exposures to a new food before it is accepted.

- Involve your child in growing, buying and preparing vegetables. Children will then be more interested in eating them.
- Cook vegetables until they are just tender. Crunchy vegetables served raw are much more appealing to children.

Getting Your 5 to 10

It is easier than you think to get the 5 to 10 servings of vegetables and fruit that *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* recommends.

The following menu gives some suggestions for increasing your daily intake.

Menu for 9 Servings
<p>Breakfast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cereal • Banana (1 serving) • Milk • 125 mL (1/2 cup) Fruit juice (1 serving)
<p>Lunch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuna sandwich with lettuce and tomato slices (1/2 serving) • Carrot sticks (1 carrot) (1 serving) • Yogurt mixed with 60 mL (1/4 cup) canned peaches (1/2 serving) • Tea
<p>Snack</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apple (1 serving)
<p>Dinner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken breast • Sweet potato (1 serving) • 250 mL (1 cup) Broccoli and cauliflower (2 servings) • Whole wheat bun • Cake with 125 mL (1/2 cup) strawberries (1 serving) • Milk