



# Eat More Fruits & Vegetables

**CHALLENGE**  
Eat enough servings of fruits & veggies daily.

## Why fruits and vegetables are important for your health

Fruits and vegetables protect your health in many ways. The first nutritional guideline of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans states, “Use plant foods as the foundation of your meals. Eating a variety of grains (especially whole grains), fruits, and vegetables is the basis of healthy eating.”

Many organizations – including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Institutes of Health, the American Heart Association, and the Harvard School of Public Health – recommend that you eat 5 or more cups of fruits and vegetables daily! Here’s why:

## Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Keep a written record of how many servings of fruits and vegetables you eat each day. Record the activity on the **Health Challenge Calendar**.
2. Read “Why fruits and vegetables are important to your health.”
3. To complete the Challenge, eat at least 2 cups of fruits and at least 2.5 cups of vegetables on at least 22 days this month.
4. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

## What is a serving?

### One cup of fruit is:

- ✓ 1 medium fresh fruit, such as an apple, banana, and orange
- ✓ 1 cup frozen or canned fruit
- ✓ ½ cup dried fruit
- ✓ 1 cup pure, unsweetened fruit juice, such as orange, apple, or grape juice



### One cup of vegetables is:

- ✓ 1 cup raw or cooked vegetables, such as carrots and broccoli
- ✓ 1 medium potato or large tomato
- ✓ 2 cups raw leafy greens, such as a fresh spinach and arugula salad
- ✓ 1 cup of vegetable juice, such as tomato or carrot juice



The amount of fruits and vegetables recommended is 4-5 cups daily. Your specific goal depends on your age, gender, and activity level. Go to <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov> to see how many cups are recommended for you to eat daily.

## 1. They are low in calories and packed with nutrients

Fresh fruits and vegetables are high in water and fiber and tend to fill you up without too many calories. A typical serving of vegetables may have only 25-35 calories! Filling up on fruits and vegetables is an excellent way to keep from gaining weight. They are also packed with vitamins and minerals required for good health. This is just the opposite of most snack foods and sweets that are high in calories and low in nutrients.

- ✓ **Beta carotene and vitamin A** help keep your eyes healthy and able to adjust to dim light. They also contribute to healthy skin and help keep the lining of your mouth, nose, throat, and digestive tract healthy and resistant to infection.

The best sources are: beet greens, carrots, collard greens, cress, kale, mangoes, mixed vegetables, mustard greens, peas, pumpkin, red chili peppers, sweet red peppers, Swiss chard, spinach, sweet potatoes, turnip greens, winter squash.



- ✓ **Vitamin C** makes your blood vessels stronger, helps you heal faster, and helps you resist infections. It also helps your body absorb the iron from the foods you eat.

The best sources are: berries (all kinds), broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cantaloupe, cauliflower, chili peppers (red and green), citrus fruits and juices, guavas, kale, kiwi, papayas, sweet peppers (red and green), tomatoes.

- ✓ **Folate** (folic acid – a B-complex vitamin) helps keep your blood healthy, prevent anemia, and reduce the risk for clogged coronary arteries.

Good for heart health, folate is found in legumes and vegetables such as: asparagus, avocado, beets, boysenberries, broccoli, cauliflower, collard greens, mustard greens, okra, oranges, papaya, romaine lettuce, spinach, turnip greens.



- ✓ **Thiamine** (vitamin B1) helps the body cells convert carbohydrates into energy. It is also essential for the functioning of the heart, muscles, and nervous system. Fruits and vegetables are not very high in thiamine, but when consumed in large amounts, they become a significant source of this B vitamin.

Good sources of vitamin B1 include sunflower seeds, legumes, and tuna. Some fruit and vegetable sources are: asparagus, olives, spinach, Brussels sprouts.

- ✓ **Iron** contributes to healthy blood and strong muscles. Young women during childbearing years may be low in iron. Whole grains and legumes are good iron sources, but did you know that many fruits and vegetables contain iron too? Fresh fruits and vegetables that are high in vitamin C help your body absorb the iron in your food.

Some fruit and vegetable sources are: asparagus, apricots, avocado, beets, beet greens, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, collard greens, cherries, dried fruits (apples, apricots, dates, figs, peaches, prunes, raisins), grapes, kale, mustard greens, parsnips, peas, pumpkin seeds, spinach, sweet potatoes, Swiss chard, tomatoes, turnip greens, winter squash.



- ✓ **Vitamin E** contains antioxidants, which are important in the formation of red blood cells. It also helps your body use vitamin K. Sunflower seeds and nuts, such as filberts (hazelnuts) and almonds, are an excellent source of vitamin E. Some fruit and vegetable sources are: asparagus, mustard greens, olives, papaya, romaine lettuce, spinach, tomato.
- ✓ **Vitamin K** plays an important role in blood clotting and is instrumental in helping bones stay strong. Some excellent fruit and vegetable sources are: asparagus, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collard greens, kale, mustard greens, spinach, Swiss chard, turnip greens.
- ✓ **Potassium** is essential for the proper functioning of the heart, kidneys, muscles, nerves, and digestive system. Some fruit and vegetable sources are: bananas, cantaloupe, grapefruit, oranges, tomato, honeydew melons, prunes, potatoes, Swiss chard, spinach, winter squash.
- ✓ **Fiber** helps regulate your intestinal health, cholesterol and blood sugar levels, and a healthy weight.

Lentils and whole grains are excellent fiber sources, as are: acorn squash, apples, artichokes, blackberries, blueberries, broccoli, cauliflower, collard greens, mustard greens, pears, raspberries, turnip greens.

- ✓ **Manganese** helps keep your bones and nerves strong and healthy, your blood sugar and cholesterol levels normal, and your thyroid functioning well.

Beans and whole grains contain high amounts of manganese. Some fruit and vegetable sources are: collard greens, kale, mustard greens, pineapple, pumpkin seeds, romaine lettuce, raspberries, spinach, sweet potatoes, Swiss chard, yams.

- ✓ **Vitamin B12** is found primarily in milk and dairy products, eggs, meats, and food fortified with B12, such as some soy milks. Animal foods are high in saturated fat and cholesterol. If you avoid or limit these foods, be sure you have other good sources of B12 or take extra B12 from a tablet.

### Get your ABCs!

Learn the nutritional value of specific fruits and veggies: [www.wellsources.com/wn/fruits-veggies.pdf](http://www.wellsources.com/wn/fruits-veggies.pdf)

## 2. Fruits & veggies help prevent high blood pressure, stroke, and heart disease

The National Institutes of Health endorses the DASH diet to reduce blood pressure. This diet recommends 4-5 cups of fruits and vegetables daily along with an overall diet that is low in saturated fat and high in fiber. Fresh fruits and vegetables are low in sodium and high in potassium – a combination that helps reduce high blood pressure.

Large population studies show that the higher the intake of fruits and vegetables, the lower the risk for heart disease and stroke. Vegetables are very low in saturated fat and are cholesterol- and trans fat-free. So when large studies looked at heart disease – such as the INTERHEART study, which included 52 nations – the results showed that people who ate the most vegetables and fruits had 30% fewer heart attacks.

By eating 4 or more cups of fruits and vegetables daily, you can decrease your risk of stroke by as much as 30-50%. The best foods for preventing high blood pressure, stroke, and heart disease are green, leafy vegetables and citrus fruits, which are high in folate and vitamin C. Researchers estimated that for each serving of citrus fruit eaten daily, the risk of heart disease dropped 6%. Each serving of greens dropped the risk by an amazing 23%. Another vitamin that can protect your heart is B6, found in bananas, whole grains, milk, fish, and chicken.



Continued ->

### 3. Fruits & veggies are high in fiber

A high-fiber diet helps slow the rate of absorption of sugars and carbohydrates which helps normalize blood sugar levels and prevent diabetes. Fiber also traps cholesterol and bile salts (made from cholesterol) in the gut preventing their absorption and increasing the excretion of cholesterol from the body. In fact, this is essentially the only way the body has of getting rid of cholesterol from the body. For every 5-10 grams of viscous (soluble) fiber that you eat, your LDL cholesterol levels drop by 5%. For every 1% your LDL cholesterol level drops, your risk of death from heart disease also drops 2-3%.

High-fiber fruits and vegetables also promote digestive health. As fiber passes through the digestive system, it soaks up water and expands to form soft, bulky stools. Soluble fiber can calm irritable bowels, relieve constipation, and may prevent diverticulitis.

Fruits and vegetables are full of fiber. A cup of red raspberries contains 8 grams of fiber. Blackberries and dates contain more than 7 grams of fiber per serving.

### 4. Fruits & veggies help prevent cancer

Hundreds of studies show that people who eat the most fruits and vegetables have the lowest rates of cancers, including prostate, colon, lung, and stomach cancers. The World Health Organization estimates that as many as 30% of all cancers are caused by poor eating habits. They recommend that everyone eat an abundance of fruits and vegetables. The first recommendation by the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research regarding cancer prevention is, "Choose a predominantly plant-based diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and legumes.

Vegetables in the cabbage family (called cruciferous vegetables) contain protective phytochemicals that stimulate the body's production of enzymes that help prevent cancers. The Health Professionals study found that men who ate the most tomatoes and tomato-based foods (such as spaghetti sauce) lowered their risk of prostate cancer by 35% compared to men who ate the least tomato-based foods. Other vegetables that seem to be especially protective against cancer include leafy greens, onions, and carrots.



### 5. Fruits & veggies promote long life

In the Cancer Prevention 2 Study, which included nearly a million people, researchers found that those who ate the highest amounts of fruits and vegetables lived longer than those who ate the least – cutting their overall risk of death from any cause by 38% in women and 30% in men.

Berries are rich in antioxidants, which help prevent naturally occurring cell damage due to aging, environmental factors, and genetics. Antioxidants might also help prevent chronic diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular disease which can lead to heart attacks and stroke. Cranberries, blueberries, strawberries, in fact, all berries are excellent food choices – and a great substitute for sweets that lack healthy nutrients.



## Ways to eat more fruits and vegetables

- ✓ **Keep ready-to-eat raw vegetables handy** in a clear container in the front of your refrigerator (easily within view).
- ✓ **Keep a fresh supply of fruit on the table or counter:** oranges, apples, kiwi, bananas, etc.
- ✓ **Eat more salads,** including a variety of raw vegetables in the salad: broccoli, peppers, green onions, carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes, greens such as spinach, cauliflower, celery, beets, etc.
- ✓ **Enjoy stir-fried vegetables.** Add tofu or other source of protein to make a whole meal.
- ✓ **Add a variety of vegetables to soups and stew.**
- ✓ **Eat fruit salads often.** Finish a meal with fruit as a natural dessert: berries, melons, dates, grapes, pineapple, papaya, mangos, and watermelon.

There are many ways to maximize your benefit from fruits and vegetables without breaking your budget. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers 30 ways in 30 days to Stretch Your Fruit & Vegetable Budget while staying healthy! [www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/downloads/Stretch\\_FV\\_Budget.pdf](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/downloads/Stretch_FV_Budget.pdf)

#### Sources:

- *Center for Disease Control and Prevention. 2009.*
- *Harvard School of Public Health. 2009.*
- *U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). MyPyramid.gov. 2009.*
- *Journal of the National Cancer Institute. 2007;99:1074-1085.*
- *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians. 2006 Sep/Oct;56(5):254-281.*
- *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. 2006 May;83:1126-1134.*
- *Lancet. 2004 Sep 11;364:937-952.*
- *Fruits & Veggies More Matters. Produce for Better Health Foundation. 2009.*
- *The George Mateljan Foundation for the World's Healthiest Foods. 2009.*
- *American Institute for Cancer Research. 2009.*







# Eat More Fruits & Vegetables

**CHALLENGE**  
 Eat enough servings of fruits & veggies daily.

**Instructions**

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of servings of fruits and the number of servings of vegetables you eat each day. Put an "X" in the box on those days you met your Health Challenge. Use this calendar to also record weight and any other items you may want to track.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you eat 2 cups of fruits and 2½ cups of vegetables. You must meet this goal at least 22 days out of the month to complete the Challenge. Then keep up this healthy practice for a lifetime of best health!
4. Turn in your Health Challenge™ if requested, or enter your completion of this Health Challenge™ on the Health Activity Tracker report for the month, if applicable. Keep this record for evidence of completion.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	
HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	HC <input type="checkbox"/> ex. min. _____	

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I ate 4+ servings of fruits and vegetables.

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking

**Other wellness projects completed this month:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

