



Fuel with Fruits & Vegetables: Activities and Tips

1. Eat at least 5 servings of fruits & vegetables in a day

What is a serving? Sometimes they're smaller than you think!

- 1 cup raw vegetables or fresh cut up fruit (about the size of a softball)
- whole fresh fruit about the size of a baseball
- ½ cup cooked or canned vegetables or fruit
- 6 ounces of 100% juice
- ¼ cup dried fruit

For specific information on serving sizes: <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/fruits> and <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/vegetables>

Tips for fitting in fruit & vegetables

- Start your day with fruit or vegetables, to fit in more! Add fruit to your cereal, oatmeal, waffles or pancakes at breakfast. Add veggies to eggs or have a smoothie.
- Keep fruits and vegetables in sight - if you see them, you will eat them! Grapes, oranges, bananas, and apples make a colorful bowl arrangement on the table. Or put a bowl of washed fruit in the center of the refrigerator, so it's easy to grab (and enjoy cold).
- Save money on fruit by purchasing those in season. Find what's in season: <https://fruitsandveggies.org/stories/whats-in-season-2/> or <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/seasonal-produce-guide>
- Freeze your produce! Frozen fruit makes a tasty cold treat and it is also a good way to preserve fruit that is starting to get overripe or is about to go bad. Frozen fruit can be used in smoothies or partially thawed and stirred into yogurt or oatmeal. Fresh spinach and kale can be frozen to use in smoothies, soups, stews or casseroles.
- Pureed fruit can substitute for half of more of the oil in baked goods. Try applesauce, mashed banana or mango, pumpkin or other soft or cooked fruit.
- Throw vegetables (fresh or frozen) into soup – add to canned soup or use prepared broth to make your own soup. Time saver: cook extra veggies at other meals to add to soup later in the week!
- Stir fry a mixture of veggies for a colorful, tasty side dish; for more color and flavor variety, add pineapple or mandarin orange slices. Time saver – use a frozen vegetable mix or packages of pre-cut vegetables from the produce aisle.
- Add frozen veggies to any pasta or noodle dish – throw them in to cook with the pasta or noodles during the last few minutes. Reduces cooking time and clean up!

2. Have a vegetable or fruit as a snack

Munch on raw vegetables, fresh or frozen fruit as a snack or try some of these ideas:

- Celery with peanut butter
- Bake or microwave a sweet potato or make baked sweet potato fries (see [recipe section- link](#))
- Microwave a single-serve frozen vegetable package
- Raw veggies with a healthy dip like hummus, guacamole or Greek yogurt dip. [Greek yogurt dip = stir dry packet of salad dressing mix (like Ranch or other favorite) into about 2 cups of plain Greek yogurt. Or stir together plain Greek yogurt and salsa, add a little chili powder, red pepper or hot sauce for extra zing.]
- A smoothie is a great snack! Use frozen fruit or vegetables for thickness - Smoothie Tip: Pick up a few ice cube trays and buy a variety of greens. Puree greens in a food processor or blender, adding a little water to create a smooth consistency. Pour into the ice cube tray and freeze. Once the cubes are frozen, you can leave them in the trays or pop them out into freezer bags. When you're ready to make your smoothie, just grab a few and throw them in your blender — it's a great time saver!
- Layer fruit, yogurt and granola for a tasty parfait
- Dip it – in yogurt, nut butter, chocolate sauce or pair with a mild flavored cheese



3. Include a fruit or vegetable with breakfast

Start your day with a veggie or fruit to make sure you get them in – it's easier than you think! Veggies and fruits provide many vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that help maintain good brain health.

- Add veggies such as mushrooms, peppers, spinach, kale or broccoli to your morning omelet.
- Top oatmeal with chopped apple or banana or dried fruit; or stir applesauce or pumpkin into the oatmeal
- Drink a glass of 100% fruit or vegetable juice (orange, tomato, V-8, carrot, etc.)
- Smoothies - great way to fit in veggies or fruit – any time of day!
- Put salsa on your eggs or in a tortilla with cheese or cottage cheese (heat for 30 seconds). Did you know, a ¼ cup of salsa is a vegetable serving?
- Make peanut butter toast with banana slices
- Spread reduced fat cream cheese on a bagel, top with sliced strawberries or apple and maybe a dash of cinnamon

4. Try a new fruit or vegetable or prepare one in a new way.

Variety makes our food more interesting and provides a wider range of nutrients. Different colors provide different nutrients, so try something new. Or prep a fruit or veggie in a new way and find a different way to enjoy those nutrients!

Find some new ideas at your local grocery store or the Farmers Market (video on Farmers' Markets: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=S7ZaVZpFSMM&t>). Think you've tried all the fruits and veggies out there? Look here for some new ones: <https://fruitsandveggies.org/stories/fruit-and-veggie-color-list/>

Here's some ideas for new ways to try your fruits or vegetables:

- add grapes or chopped apples to chicken or tuna salad
- grate vegetables like carrots, squash, zucchini and sweet potatoes into things like hamburger patties, meatballs or meatloaf, pasta sauce, pancakes or muffins – even the pickiest eater may eat them this way!
- add a variety of chopped veggies (raw or cooked) or fruit to tacos, sandwiches, wraps or pitas – greens, tomatoes, carrots, peppers, cucumbers, apples, mango, pineapple, raisins or raisins
- oven roast a sheet pan of fresh or frozen vegetables – eat them warm or cold or add to other dishes such as a salad, in a tortilla, on a sandwich, tossed with pasta, added to rice

- bake chicken or pork chops with apple wedges, figs, dates, dried apricots or prunes
 - top a sweet potato with salsa or chopped dried fruit
 - add slices of pineapple or apple on a pizza
- See the recipe section for more ideas! Or **attend our Cooking Workshop on Tuesday, September 28 at 7:00 pm at CRWC, Meeting Rm 1A&B** – sample something new there!

5. Eat at least 3 different colors of vegetables and fruits on 1 day

Different colors provide different nutrients – mix up the colors you eat for a variety of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. Antioxidants are important for building your immune system, improving recovery from workouts and supporting brain function - including mental health. Here's some ideas to add color:

- Buy a variety of colors of vegetables and fruits when shopping
- Eat a different one at each meal
- Chop up a variety of vegetables and/or fruits as a salad
- Add fruit or vegetables to other dishes such as dried fruit to oatmeal, tomato slices and greens in a sandwich, mixed peppers in pasta
- Make a smoothie with 2 or more fruits or vegetables
- Stir some cooked mixed veggies into your rice

See tips above or the [recipe section \(link\)](#) for more ideas!

More info: <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/food-nutrition/what-color-is-your-food>



6. Eat only the fruits and vegetables you truly love!

Eating should be enjoyable, as well as to meet our needs for fuel and nutrients! Take a day and focus on eating only your favorite fruits and vegetables. Mindfully notice what you like about them such as the sweetness or savoriness, temperature or texture, smoothness or crispiness, or how they make your body feel by providing fullness and some fluid.

If you don't truly love them, we hope some of the tips above can help you find more ways to enjoy fruits and vegetables. Keep working on finding ones you like and focus on appreciating all the good things they do for your body such as providing energy, fiber, volume for fullness, nutrients for metabolism and boosting your immune system!



More tips

<https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/what-is-myplate>

<https://fruitsandveggies.org/>

<https://www.fruitsinfo.com/>

<https://www.nutrition-and-you.com/vegetable-nutrition.html>

<https://www.nutrition-and-you.com/fruit-nutrition.html>

Food safety tips (for fruits and veg): <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/communication/steps-healthy-fruits-veggies.htm>

Please know eating more fruits and vegetables isn't going to resolve mental health problems like anxiety, depression or disordered eating, or decrease the impact of external factors such as trauma or systemic oppression. If you are struggling with these challenges the University of Iowa has professional resources to support you. Start here to find resources:

<https://mentalhealth.uiowa.edu/>

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