

Fruits and Veggies

Eating more fruits and vegetables is easy with a little creativity and planning. Here are some ideas:

Vegetable Tips

Use a variety of salad fixings. Don't be satisfied with boring iceberg lettuce. Add spinach, watercress, romaine, or other dark greens. They get high marks for nutrients and flavor. But don't stop there—add more color and flavor with green pepper strips, turnip slices, cold cooked peas, corn, chickpeas, or beets. Vary salads even more by serving greens tossed with fruit, like oranges, apples, and pears. Use salad dressings and mayonnaise in moderation, because they may add more fat and calories than you want.

Try low-fat veggie dips, sauces, and dressings. Keep low-fat dips and salad dressings on hand to top your vegetables. Try flavored vinegars, nonfat or low-fat sour cream, nonfat or low-fat yogurt, cocktail sauce, soy sauce, low-calorie soups, salsa, broth, stewed tomatoes, tomato sauce, and grated parmesan.

Go beyond carrots and celery sticks for dippers. Try raw cauliflower, broccoli, green peppers, turnips, rutabaga, green beans, red peppers, zucchini, or snow peas.

Cook new combos. Get ideas from the vegetable combos in the frozen food case at the grocery store. Then invent some of your own, too. Think about contrasting colors, shapes, and textures.

Try steaming solutions. Put a steamer basket into a saucepan with a small amount of water. Cover the pan with a tight fitting lid, and steam the vegetables until tender but still crisp and brightly colored. Water should not touch the steamer basket. You can also steam vegetables in a microwave oven. Check a cookbook for instructions.

Fitting Fruits and Veggies into Your Busy Schedule

- Next time you eat out, order an extra side order of vegetables or fruit.
- Have lunch at restaurants that offer well-stocked salad bars, but steer clear of high-fat dressings.
- Keep ready-to-eat, bite-size vegetables and fruit in your refrigerator for snacks and side dishes.
- If you have a microwave at work, consider bringing canned or frozen vegetables for lunch.
- Keep canned fruits on hand (with a can opener), at home and at work. For fewer calories, choose fruits canned in juice, not syrup.
- Team up with friends and co-workers for mutual support in adding fruits and vegetables to your diets.
- For road trips, bring fruit and cut vegetables in a cooler. When you arrive at your destination, visit a local grocery store, farmers' market, or roadside stand for fresh produce.
- Before flying, ask your airline for a veggie plate, fruit plate, or low-fat meal.
- At breakfast add fruit in cereal, muffins, or pancakes.
- Take an apple, banana, orange, or canned fruit in your lunch.
- Put an apple in your briefcase for a snack.
- Add fruit to low-fat, plain yogurt or cottage cheese.
- Try veggie sandwiches.

The Simpler, The Better

Many processed foods are high in fat. Compare these fresh vegetables with servings of processed food:

How Much Fat is That?	
Unprocessed	Calories
8-ounce baked potato with 2 tablespoons low-fat sour cream	200
2 cups steamed broccoli	80
1 cup sliced, steamed carrots	45
Processed	Calories
4 ounces French fries with 1 tablespoon ketchup	355
1 bowl (2 cups) cream of broccoli soup	450
1 cup sliced, steamed carrots with 1 pat butter	95
Highly Processed	Calories
4 ounces potato chips	600
2 cups broccoli with cheese sauce	600
1 slice carrot cake with icing	810

Fiber

Fiber is a key to good health, although it has no vitamins or minerals. Vegetables, fruits, and grains contain fiber.

One type of fiber, called insoluble fiber, helps move waste out of the bowels. A lack of this kind of fiber can lead to constipation, colon and bowel cancer, and diverticulosis. You can get insoluble fiber by eating whole-grain products.

The other kind of fiber, called soluble fiber, helps lower your cholesterol level. You can get soluble fiber by eating fruit, as well as beans, peas, and oats.

How Much Do You Need?

The average American eats only about 10 grams of fiber a day, while the recommended amount of fiber is 25–30 grams of fiber a day. If you do not get enough fiber in your diet, begin to eat more fiber gradually. A sudden increase in the amount of fiber in your diet can lead to diarrhea or some intestinal discomfort.

Here's How to Eat More Fiber:

- Make sure you are getting five servings of fruits and vegetables each day. You can get more fiber by eating fruits with edible skins (like apples) or seeds (like raspberries), and by eating more of the stems of vegetables like broccoli.
- Choose whole-grain baked goods, pasta, and tortillas—the whole-grain ingredient should be listed first or second on the ingredient label and list 3 grams of fiber or more.
- Try a breakfast cereal that has 2 or more grams of dietary fiber a serving—hot oatmeal or wheat flakes, for example.

- Add dry beans, peas, and lentils to soups. They have the highest fiber content. Try including cooked or canned beans in salads.
- Try eating popcorn, a high-fiber food, for a snack (without adding butter).