

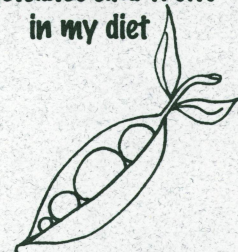
# Getting More Vegetables and Fruits in Your Diet

Kathryn S. Keim

**Currently** most Americans do NOT eat enough vegetables and fruits. Because of this fact, most Americans do not get enough dietary fiber in their diet. Dietary fiber is the part of plants we can't digest and absorb. Most American consume about 12 to 17 grams of fiber a day and we should be getting almost twice that amount, or 20 to 30 grams each day.

You should increase your intake of vegetables and fruits because plants are the only foods that have dietary fiber. Vegetables and fruits are also good sources of vitamin A, vitamin C, and carotenoids.

I've been hearing that I should increase the amount of vegetables and fruits in my diet

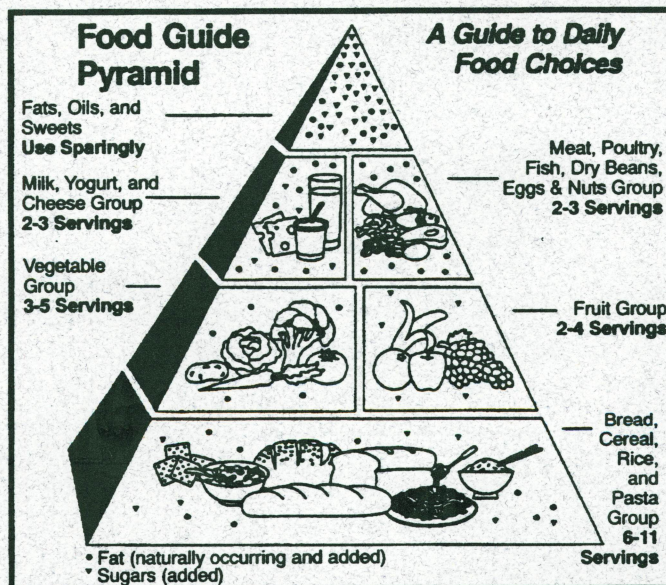


to at least five servings a day. Why?

## Eating more vegetables and fruits can:

- Protect a person from becoming constipated,
- Help to lower blood cholesterol,
- Help in the management of *diabetes mellitus*, and
- Help keep you and your digestive tract healthy.

For more information about how fiber affects your health read *Fiber and You, Misc. Series 138*. You can get this at your county Cooperative Extension System office.



The Food Guide Pyramid developed by the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) suggests you eat:

- three or more servings of different vegetables each day; and
- two or more servings of different fruits each day.

**About the Author**  
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**What is a serving of vegetables and fruits?**



**What can I do to increase the amount of vegetables and fruits in my diet?**

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**One Vegetable Serving**

- 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables
- 1/2 cup of other vegetables, cooked or chopped raw
- 3/4 cup of vegetable juice

**One Fruit Serving**

- 1 medium apple, banana, orange
- 1/2 cup of chopped, cooked, or canned fruit
- 3/4 cup of fruit juice

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**Here are some general tips to increase vegetables and fruits in your diet.**

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- Eat 1 to 2 servings of vegetables and fruits at each meal.
- Eat vegetables and fruits for snacks any time.

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**Here are some tips to help you when shopping for vegetables and fruits.**

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- Be adventurous at the supermarket and take home a new vegetable or fruit each week. You may discover some new favorites. Try jicama, radicchio, and bok choy for starters. Jicama and radicchio can be used in salads and bok choy is a nice vegetable addition to a stir-fry dish. Take home some kiwi fruit or a kumquat.
- Substitute new and different vegetable or fruit varieties for those you already like. Scallions, leeks, or red onions add variety to dishes that normally call for yellow onions. Red-skinned potatoes or sweet potatoes offer a change of pace from white potatoes. Try a comice pear instead of a bartlett pear.

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**Increase the amount of vegetables and fruits at meal time by doing the following:**

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- Feature one or two vegetarian meals per week, such as beans and rice or pasta, or spaghetti squash and tomato sauce.
- Add grated vegetables such as carrots or zucchini to meatloaf, casseroles, and sauces.
- Use pureed vegetables to thicken soups.
- Add more vegetables to soups, salads, and main dishes. Leafy greens, for example, make delicious additions to soup. Fresh spinach is terrific in salads. Or try adding chopped vegetables to your favorite recipes, such as chopped broccoli in a meatloaf mixture.

- Use vegetables as a base for your meals. Stuff baked potatoes, fresh tomatoes, or cucumbers with low-fat ground beef, tuna, low-fat cheese, beans or other vegetables.
- Put grated carrots, zucchini, or cucumber into coleslaw, chicken, or tuna salad.
- Toss raw or steamed vegetables into potato salad, pasta, or rice. Try broccoli or cauliflower florets, mushrooms, peas, carrots, corn, or peppers.
- Add fruit to your breakfast cereal.
- For a quick lunch, layer apple slices in a low-fat cheese sandwich and toast in the oven.
- Use fresh or canned fruit as a topping for puddings, yogurt, cottage cheese, hot or cold cereal, and frozen desserts.
- Put raisins, grapes, apple chunks, pineapple into coleslaw, chicken, or tuna salad.
- For a quick dessert, microwave until tender a cored apple in a little apple juice.

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**Be daring when eating out to help increase vegetables and fruits in your diet.**

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- Add broccoli, spinach, or other vegetables to your pizza.
- On sandwiches, remember lettuce and tomato are just the beginning. Add slices of cucumber or zucchini, bean or alfalfa sprouts, spinach, shredded cabbage, carrot slivers, or snow peas.
- Be creative at the salad bar. Try fresh spinach, leaf lettuce, red cabbage, bean and alfalfa sprouts, broccoli, carrots, zucchini, yellow squash, cauliflower, peas, mushrooms, or red and yellow peppers. All of these add interest to a lettuce salad.

Below is a list of selected fruits and vegetables and the amount of total dietary fiber in a serving.

Fruits and vegetables	Serving size	Grams of total dietary fiber
<b>Fruits, raw</b>		
Apple, with skin	1 medium	3.7
Banana	1 medium	2.7
Cantaloupe	1/4 melon	1.1
Grapefruit	1/2 average	1.3
Grapes	1 cup	1.6
Orange	1 medium	3.1
Peach	1 medium	1.7
Pear	1 medium	4.0
Strawberries	1 cup	3.4
Watermelon, diced	1 cup	0.8
<b>Legumes</b>		
Beans, lima	1/2 cup	4.5
Blackeye peas, canned	1/2 cup	4.0
Kidney beans, canned	1/2 cup	6.5
Lentils, cooked	1/2 cup	7.8
Pinto beans, canned	1/2 cup	4.2
White beans, cooked	1/2 cup	6.3
<b>Fruits, dried</b>		
Raisins, seedless	1/4 cup	1.7
<b>Fruits, canned</b>		
Applesauce, unsweetened	1/2 cup	1.5
Fruit cocktail	1/2 cup	1.4
Peach, light syrup	1/2 cup	1.3
<b>Vegetables, raw</b>		
Broccoli, chopped	1/2 cup	1.3
Cabbage, green, shredded	1 cup	1.6
Carrot	1 medium	2.2
Celery, diced	1/2 cup	1.0
Mushrooms, pieces	1/2 cup	0.4
Onions, chopped	1/2 cup	1.4
Tomato, chopped	1 cup	2.0
Pepper, green, chopped	1/2 cup	0.9
Lettuce, iceberg	1 leaf	0.3
<b>Vegetables, cooked</b>		
Beans, green	1/2 cup	2.0
Broccoli, chopped	1/2 cup	2.3
Cabbage, green, shredded	1/2 cup	2.1
Carrots, slices	1/2 cup	2.6
Cauliflower, pieces	1/2 cup	1.7
Corn	1/2 cup	2.3
Mixed vegetables	1/2 cup	4.9
Mushroom, pieces	1/2 cup	1.7
Onions, chopped	1/2 cup	1.5
Peas, green	1/2 cup	4.4
Pepper, green, chopped	1/2 cup	0.8
Potato, baked and eat skin	1 medium	4.9
Potato, baked, flesh	1 medium	2.3
Potato, french fried	10 strips	1.6
Potato, mashed, dehydrated	1/2 cup	1.5
Pumpkin, canned	1/2 cup	3.4
Spinach	1/2 cup	2.2
Squash, summer	1/2 cup	1.3
Squash, winter	1/2 cup	2.9
Sweet potato, mashed	1/2 cup	4.1
Tomato, canned	1/2 cup	1.2

*For one day if you ate one apple, 1/2 cup of peaches, 1/2 cup of green beans, 1 cup of cabbage salad, and*

*1/2 cup of broccoli you would have eaten 11 grams of dietary fiber—well on your way to eating enough fiber.*

**Adding vegetables and fruits to your diet is a wise dietary decision.**



**It isn't difficult, but will require planning before you'll be in the habit of making more vegetable and fruit choices.**



**The long term wellness benefits make the change a positive one.**

## Snack time is a time for vegetables and fruits.

- Snack on nutritious vegetables such as carrot sticks or green or red pepper slices. Try them alone or dip in low-fat dips.
- Keep a bowl of small-sized vegetables handy in your refrigerator. Cherry tomatoes, radishes, baby carrots, and sugar snap peas don't require cutting and are a quick snack.
- Have a bowl of fresh fruit always on hand.
- Try apple slices, low-fat cheese, and whole wheat crackers for a quick and delicious snack.
- Pack fresh or dried fruit for snacks away from home.
- Carry fruit or vegetable juice with you for snacks away from home.

Add cooked dry beans, lentils, and split peas



to soups, stews, dips, salads, and casseroles.

## Try these tips to add more legumes to your diet.

- Make a double batch when cooking dry beans and freeze in small containers. Microwave to reheat.
- Use canned pinto, small red, kidney, garbanzo, and Great Northern beans to shorten cooking time. They also make a great bean dip when put in the blender with chili powder, garlic, and other spices. This is a good dip for vegetables.
- Add cooked dry beans, lentils, and split peas (legumes) to soups, stews, dips, salads, and casseroles.

## When cooking with dried legumes, remember:

- Lentils do not need presoaking and cook in less than 30 minutes.
- To reduce cooking time of dry beans and reduce production of flatulence (gas), try the following. Add 10 cups of water to every pound of dry beans and heat water to boiling. Boil 2 to 3 minutes. Remove pot from the heat, cover, and set it aside for at least an

hour, but preferably 4 or more. Discard the water after soaking and continue as the recipe states.

## Warning!

Increase the amount of vegetables and fruit in your diet gradually. An increase in fiber should be done slowly. Add a new fiber containing food or increase the number of servings of a fiber food by one a week.

Don't forget to increase the amount of water you drink. Normally, you should be drinking a minimum of 8 glasses of water a day. Therefore, you need to drink more than 8 glasses if you increase your fiber intake.

Adding vegetables and fruits to your diet is a wise dietary decision. It isn't difficult, but will require planning before you'll be in the habit of making more vegetable and fruit choices. The long term wellness benefits make the change a positive one.

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