

# “Why are fruits and vegetables so important to a healthy diet?”

Fruits and vegetables are lower in calories than other snacks, and loaded with these important nutrients, vitamins and minerals.

Nutrient	Why it's important	Which foods have it
<b>Calcium</b>	Essential for healthy bones and teeth.	Green vegetables, such as spinach, collard greens, turnip greens, soybeans, cowpeas, bok choy, broccoli and chick peas
<b>Magnesium</b>	Helps maintain healthy bones and is involved with more than 300 enzymes in your body. These enzymes help to regulate many bodily functions such as producing energy, body protein and muscle contractions.	Spinach, artichoke hearts, butternut squash, pinto beans, black beans, red kidney beans and soybeans
<b>Potassium</b>	Helps maintain normal blood pressure and regulates fluids.	Bananas, broccoli, zucchini, eggplant, cherries, sweet potatoes, baked potatoes, tomatoes, chickpeas, lentils, lima and white beans, beet greens, cooked greens, carrot and prune juice
<b>Folate (folic acid)</b>	Important during pregnancy for reducing the risk of serious birth defects of the brain and spinal cord (known as neural tube defects).	Asparagus, broccoli, spinach, romaine lettuce, chickpeas, lentils, orange juice (fortified with folic acid), black-eyed peas, great northern beans
<b>Iron</b>	Essential for healthy blood and normal cell functioning.	Spinach, lentils, chickpeas, white beans, kidney beans, lima beans, pinto beans, soy beans and navy beans
<b>Vitamin A</b>	Essential for healthy skin and eyes and helps protect against infections.	Carrots, cantaloupe, grapefruit, mango, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, spinach, turnip greens, mustard greens, kale, collard greens, red pepper and Chinese cabbage
<b>Vitamin C</b>	Essential for wound healing and maintaining healthy gums.	Oranges, tangerines, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, tomatoes, broccoli, spinach, peppers, cantaloupe, honeydew melon, kiwi and sweet potato
<b>B Vitamins</b>	Helps fight disease and infection.	Spinach, leafy greens, avocados, bananas, dried beans, chick peas, winter squash and watermelon
<b>Fiber</b>	Helps prevent coronary heart disease, diabetes, digestive problems and weight gain.	Apples, pears, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, bananas, dates, figs, broccoli, spinach, split peas, chick peas, black-eyed peas, lentils, artichokes, and navy, kidney, black, pinto, lima, white and soy beans

## Fill your plate with color!

Eat a wide range of fruits and vegetables, including all the colors of the rainbow: red, orange, yellow, blue, green and purple!

The next time you go for a snack, instead of grabbing a candy bar or cookie that only contains fat and sugar and is high in calories, go for a piece of fruit, such as an apple, or slices of raw vegetables, such as baby carrots or celery. You will get more nutrients and less calories from a piece of fruit or vegetable.

## Simple ways to add fruits and vegetables into your day:

- Add chopped vegetables—chopped peppers, onions, spinach, tomatoes or mushrooms—to your omelet or scrambled eggs in the morning.
- Make a smoothie with low-fat milk or yogurt and frozen fruit, instead of drinking a glass of orange juice or milk in the morning.
- Top your pizza or sandwich with as many vegetables as possible to add nutrients and fill you up.
- Keep fruit out in the open, on the counter in a bowl, or on a platter. You are more likely to eat the snacks that you can see when you look around your kitchen.
- Add vegetables to any sauce—spaghetti sauce, cream sauce, white wine and garlic sauce—for extra color and flavor!
- Add finely chopped vegetables to meatloaf or meatballs.
- Instead of an ice cream cone in summer, top raspberries, blueberries or strawberries with fat-free whipped cream for a low-calorie, highly nutritious delight.
- Keep chopped carrots, cucumbers, broccoli, celery, and green or red peppers in the refrigerator for convenient and healthy snacks. Instead of having chips and dip, have vegetables with low-fat ranch dressing to get fewer calories, less fat and more nutrients.