Smart Food Choices: Veggies Foster Health

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.

Fact Sheet FS1054





Cooperative Extension

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES

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Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice counts as a member of the vegetable group. Vegetables may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned, or dried/dehydrated; and may be whole, cut-up, or mashed. Vegetables are organized into 5 subgroups, based on their nutrient content. Vegetables provide nutrients vital for health and maintenance of your body. **The amount of vegetables you need to eat depends on your age, sex, and level of physical activity.**

Health Benefits of Eating Veggies

- Reduce risk for heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases.
- Reduce risk for type 2 diabetes.
- Protect against certain cancers, such as mouth, stomach, colon-rectum cancer.
- Reduce the risk of developing kidney stones and may help to decrease bone loss.
- Folate from fortified foods will reduce the risk of neural tube defects, spina bifida, and anencephaly during fetal development.

Nutritional Benefits of Vegetables

- Increase fiber intake while helping to lower calorie intake. Dietary fiber from vegetables, as part of an overall healthy diet, helps reduce blood cholesterol levels and may lower risk of heart disease. Fiber is important for proper bowel function. It helps reduce constipation and diverticulosis. Vegetables help provide a feeling of fullness with fewer calories.
- Increase potassium which may help to maintain healthy blood pressure. Vegetable sources of potassium include sweet potatoes, white potatoes, white beans, tomato products (paste, sauce, and juice), beet greens, soybeans, lima beans, winter squash, spinach, lentils, kidney beans, and split peas.
- Increases folate (folic acid) which helps the body form red blood cells.
- Increases Vitamin A which keeps eyes and skin healthy and helps to protect against infections.
- Increases Vitamin E which helps to protect vitamin A and essential fatty acids from cell oxidation.
- Increases Vitamin C which helps heal wounds and keeps teeth and gums healthy. Vitamin C aids in iron absorption.

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Daily Recommendation		
Children	2-3 years old	1 cup
	4-8	1 ½ cups
Girls	9-13 years old	2 cups
	14-18 years old	2 ½ cups
Boys	9-13 years old	2 ½ cups
	14-18 years old	3 cups
Women	19-30 years old	2 ½ cups
	31-50 years old	2 ½ cups
	51+ years old	2 cups
Men	19-30 years old	3 cups
	31-50 years old	3 cups
	51+ years old	2 ½ cups

What Counts as a Cup of Vegetables?

In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the vegetable group. The chart lists specific amounts count as 1 cup of vegetables (in some cases equivalents for ½ cup are also shown) towards your recommended intake:

	Amount that counts as 1 cup of vegetables	Amount that counts as ½ cup of vegetables
Dark Green Vegetables		
Broccoli	1 cup chopped or florets	
	3 spears 5" long raw or cooked	
Greens (collards, mustard greens, turnip greens, kale)	1 cup cooked	1 cup raw is equivalent to ½ cup of vegetables
	1 cup, cooked	
	2 cups raw is equivalent to 1 cup of vegetables	
Raw leafy greens: Spinach, romaine, watercress, dark green leafy lettuce, endive, escarole	2 cups raw is equivalent to 1 cup of vegetables	1 cup raw is equivalent to ½ cup of vegetables
Orange Vegetables		
Carrots	1 cup, strips, slices, or chopped, raw or cooked	
	2 medium	1 medium carrot
	1 cup baby carrots (about 12)	About 6 baby carrots
Pumpkin	1 cup mashed, cooked	

	Amount that counts as 1 cup of vegetables	Amount that counts as ½ cup of vegetables
Sweet potato	1 large baked (2 ¼″ or more diameter)	
	1 cup sliced or mashed, cooked	
Winter squash (acorn, butternut, hubbard)	1 cup cubed, cooked	½ acorn squash, baked = ¾ cup
Dry beans and peas (Such as black, garbanzo, kidney, pinto, or soy beans, or black eyed peas or split peas)	1 cup whole or mashed, cooked	
Tofu	1 cup ½″ cubes (about 8 ounces)	1 piece 2 ½ " x 2 ¾ " x 1″ (about 4 ounces)
Starchy Vegetables		
Corn, yellow or white	1 cup	
	1 large ear (8″ to 9″ long)	1 small ear (about 6″ long)
Green Peas	1 cup	
White potatoes	1 cup diced, mashed	
	1 medium boiled or baked potato (2 ½ " to 3" diameter)	
	French fried: 20 medium to long strips (2 ½″ to 4″ long) (Contains discretionary calories.)	
Other vegetables		
Bean sprouts	1 cup cooked	
Cabbage, green	1 cup, chopped or shredded raw or cooked	
Cauliflower	1 cup pieces or florets raw or cooked	
Celery	1 cup, diced or sliced, raw or cooked	
	2 large stalks (11" to 12" long)	1 large stalk (11″ to 12″ long)
Cucumber	1 cup raw, sliced or chopped	
Green or wax beans	1 cup cooked	
Green or red peppers	1 cup chopped, raw or cooked	
	1 large pepper (3″ diameter, 3-¾″ long)	1 small pepper

	Amount that counts as 1 cup of vegetables	Amount that counts as ½ cup of vegetables
Lettuce, iceberg or head	2 cups raw, shredded or chopped = equivalent to 1 cup of vegetables	1 cup raw, shredded or chopped = equivalent to ½ cup of vegetables
Mushrooms	1 cup raw or cooked	
Onions	1 cup chopped, raw or cooked	
Tomatoes	1 large raw whole (3")	1 small raw whole (2 ¼ ")
	1 cup chopped or sliced, raw, canned, or cooked	1 medium canned
Tomato or mixed vegetable juice	1 cup	½ cup
Summer squash or zucchini	1 cup cooked, sliced or diced	

The listed amounts are appropriate for individuals who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity, beyond normal daily activities. Those who are more physically active may be able to consume more while staying within calorie needs. Vegetable subgroup recommendations are given as amounts to eat WEEKLY. It is not necessary to eat vegetables from each subgroup daily. However, over a week, try to consume the amounts listed from each subgroup as a way to reach your daily intake recommendation.

Make Vegetables More Appealing

- Serve vegetables with a dip or dressing.
- Try a low-fat salad dressing with raw broccoli, red and green peppers, celery sticks or cauliflower.
- Add color to salads by adding baby carrots, shredded red cabbage, or spinach leaves.
- Include in-season vegetables for variety throughout the year.

It's a Grab and Go Society in the supermarket, the drive-through, local restaurant or the fast food chain. Make sure you choose salads, veggies and healthy produce on a daily basis. Meals and snacks need to include vegetables and fruits so the average adult is consuming 2 ½ cups per day. Eat it raw or cooked and choose the whole food rather than juice for the added fiber intake. Make vegetables a priority for your health.

Vegetable Tips for the Family

- Set a good example for children by eating vegetables with meals and as snacks.
- Try ethnic foods such as bok choy, endive, raw in salads.
- Serve jicama (yam bean) raw, as sticks with salsa or peel and cut into julienne strips and serve with melon. Sprinkle with lime juice and honey.
- Let children decide on the dinner vegetables or what goes into salads.
- Depending on their age, children can help shop for, clean, peel, or cut up vegetables.
- Allow children to pick a new vegetable to try while shopping.
- Use cut-up vegetables as part of afternoon snacks.
- Children often prefer foods served separately.
- Try serving two vegetables separately.
- Let children help to pick veggies and prepare salads.
- Mix plain yogurt with Ranch or Onion soup mix as a dip for fresh vegetables.

Get Moving - Get Healthy New Jersey

Fact Sheet

Keep Veggies Safe

- Wash hands OFTEN with hot soapy water for 20 seconds before, during and after preparation.
- Wash vegetables with cool tap water before cutting, eating raw or cooking.
- Rub vegetables briskly with your hands and a clean produce brush to remove dirt and surface residues. Dry after washing. Do not use soap or detergents to clean vegetables.
- Keep vegetables separate from raw meat, poultry and seafood while shopping, preparing, or storing.
- Do not cross contaminate! Use a clean cutting board for veggies.

For more info: http://njaes.rutgers.edu/fchs/ & http://www.getmovinggethealthynj.rutgers.edu/

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