



Eat More Vegetables and Fruit

Did you know that people who eat a colourful variety of vegetables and fruit every day are less likely to get heart disease or cancer? We are learning that vegetables and fruit give your body more than nutrients and fibre. They also protect you from diseases such as heart disease and cancer.

Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide makes specific suggestions on the number of servings of vegetables and fruit you should eat each day, based on your gender and age. For example, a woman between the ages of 19-50 should eat 7-8 servings of vegetables and fruit every day. This may sound like a lot, but it is easier to eat more vegetables and fruit than you think and it is worth the effort!

Fresh, frozen, dried or canned – the choice is yours

Each form of vegetable and fruit has its benefits and drawbacks. Here are some tips on the different ways you can buy them:

Fresh often has the best flavour and texture. Buy local produce in season for the best quality and value.

Frozen is an easy and nutritious choice. Keep a bag in your freezer for when you need a quick vegetable or fruit. Frozen produce is picked when it is most ripe and is quickly frozen so its nutritional value is as good as, or even better than fresh produce. You can also go

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to Pick-Your-Own farms during the summer season and freeze the fruit you picked for a tasty treat in the winter.

Dried fruits like raisins, apricots, mangos and apples are handy and delicious. Dried vegetables like sun dried tomatoes are also popular and can be used in many dishes.

Canned vegetables and fruit are easy to use, but the flavour is not the same as frozen. Canned vegetables may also be high in salt, so choose lower salt varieties when possible. Read labels to choose fruit that has been canned in its own juice instead of syrup. When you compare prices by weight, canned produce is often more expensive.



Plant foods protect against disease

More than 20 studies from around the world show that people eating a colourful variety of vegetables and fruit every day are less likely to develop heart disease and some cancers. The word that is used to describe the part of the plant that has these health benefits is called phytochemicals. Hundreds of phytochemicals have already been discovered, and many new ones are being discovered.

Researchers are working to understand the way each phytochemical may help prevent heart disease and cancer.

For example:

- Phytochemicals in broccoli, Brussels sprout, cauliflower and other members of the cabbage family may prevent DNA damage done to your body from cancer.
- The phytochemicals that give plants their colour, such as the orange in carrots and the red in tomatoes act as antioxidants. Antioxidants prevent damage to your body cells.
- Phytochemicals found in soy beans and chick peas have similar effect on the body as the female hormone estrogen. These phytochemicals may help to lower blood cholesterol, and may also protect against breast cancer.
- Phytochemicals in garlic and onions help stop bacteria from growing. Some research suggests that eating a lot of garlic may help lower the risk for stomach cancer. Some studies also show that it may help lower blood pressure and help your body fight infections.

Although there are pills that contain these phytochemicals and antioxidants, research suggests that eating the whole food with these substances is better for your health. It is best to eat a colourful variety of vegetables and fruit every day.



What about pesticides, waxes and other residues?

You may have heard that some people are worried about pesticides, waxes and other chemicals on fresh produce. Pesticides are chemicals used to control bugs and insects on vegetables and fruit. Wax coatings are sometimes used on vegetables and fruit such as turnip, cucumbers, and apples. The wax keeps the produce looking fresh but can also seal in pesticides and other chemicals.

It is important to remember that Canada has one of the safest food supplies in the world. The pesticides and waxes used on produce sold in Canada are tested before being approved for eating. The health benefits of eating a diet rich in vegetables and fruit far outweigh the risk of residues.

Are organic vegetables and fruit safer to eat? Although organic vegetables and fruit contain fewer pesticide residues than regular produce, the use of organic methods doesn't always mean that the food is pesticide-free. Pesticides that are approved for use in both organic and non-organic farming are considered safe. Organic and regular produce are tested by the same standards for safety.

The grocery store, where you buy vegetables and fruit may be able to give you information on how the product has been treated.

Here are some tips to reduce your intake of residues on vegetables and fruit:

- When possible, buy local produce in season. These do not usually need as many pesticides and waxes as imported vegetables and fruit.
- Wash all produce carefully under cold running water. Don't forget the inner leaves of lettuce and other leafy vegetables.
- Cut the tips and outer leaves from celery, lettuce and other leafy vegetables. These are where most pesticides are found.

Getting enough servings

It may be easier than you think to get all the vegetables and fruit servings you need according to *Canada's Food Guide*. Here are two similar menus – menu A only has 3 servings of vegetables and fruit and menu B has 9 servings of vegetables and fruit.

Menu “A” – 3 servings*	Menu “B” – 9 servings*
<p>Breakfast Cereal Milk 125 mL (1/2 cup) fruit juice</p>	<p>Breakfast Cereal 1 banana milk 125 mL (1/2 cup) fruit juice</p>
<p>Lunch Tuna sandwich Yogurt Water</p>	<p>Lunch Tuna sandwich with romaine lettuce and tomato slices (1/2 of a serving) Carrot sticks (1 carrot) Yogurt mixed with 60 mL (1/4 cup) canned peaches in juice (1/2 of a serving) water</p>
<p>Snack Muffin Tea</p>	<p>Snack 1 apple whole wheat crackers Tea</p>
<p>Dinner Chicken breast 1 sweet potato 125 mL (1/2 cup) broccoli Whole wheat bun Cake with ice cream water</p>	<p>Dinner Chicken breast, skin removed 1 sweet potato 250 mL (1 cup) broccoli and cauliflower (2 servings) Whole wheat bun Cake with 125 mL (1/2 cup) strawberries water</p>
<p>* Each measure of vegetables and fruit is equal to one serving from <i>Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide</i> unless otherwise stated.</p>	

How to get children to eat more vegetables

Many of us expect children to not eat vegetables but, in fact, they are often attracted to their bright colours, interesting shapes, and sweet flavours. Here are some tips for getting your children to eat vegetables:

- Don't force your child to eat all their vegetables. Prepare vegetables at meal times, eat them yourself, and let your child try the vegetable on their own.
- Ask your child to try “one bite” for all the foods served at a meal. After taking one bite, allow your child to decide whether or not to eat more.

- Introduce a vegetable many times. It may take your child up to 10 times after seeing the vegetable to actually try it. Don't give up.
- Involve your child in growing, buying, and preparing vegetables. Children will take more interest if they have helped to grow or cook a food.
- Cook vegetables until they are just tender. Crunchy vegetables are more interesting for children.

For more information, recipes and tips on vegetables and fruit, visit www.toronto.ca/health, go to the A–Z index and click on Nutrition, *Invite Us Along!*

Buy local for better health and a better environment

Buying locally grown produce has many benefits:



- The produce is fresher and better tasting
- More food dollars remain in the local community
- It is environmentally friendlier because there is less processing, packaging and transporting.

Buy produce at farmers' markets and pick-your-own farms whenever possible. Buy large quantities in season and can or freeze for future use.

For more information about pick-your-own farms visit www.foodland.gov.on.ca

in the kitchen



Vegetable roast

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:

4	plum tomatoes, sliced in half	4
2	red, yellow or orange peppers cut into long strips	2
1	large Spanish onion, cut into rings	1
2	each of yellow squash and zucchini, cut into bite sized pieces	2
4	small potatoes, quartered	4
2 tbsp	olive oil	30 mL
1 tbsp	balsamic vinegar	15 mL
3	garlic cloves, crushed	3
½ tsp	salt	2 mL
¼ tsp	freshly ground black pepper	1 mL
1 tsp	dried basil	50 mL

Makes 6 one-cup servings

(1 cup = 2 **Canada's Food Guide** servings)

Nutrition Information

Per 1 cup (299 g): 160 calories, 5 g fat, 0.5 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 210 mg sodium, 28 g carbohydrate, 4 g fibre, 7 g sugars, 4 g protein, 0% DV vitamin A, 240% DV vitamin C, 4% DV calcium, 8% DV iron.

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C). Remove all the seeds and juice from the tomatoes. Place tomatoes in a large mixing bowl and add other vegetables.
2. Whisk oil with vinegar, garlic, salt, and pepper. Pour over vegetables and toss until evenly coated.
3. Spread vegetables in a single layer on an ungreased baking sheet or roasting pan. Bake in the centre of the oven for about 20 minutes, stirring twice, until vegetables are golden and just tender.
4. Spoon into a bowl; sprinkle with basil; and combine gently. Serve hot or cold.