

Making Vegetables and Fruits the Easy Choice!

Eating at least five servings of vegetables and fruits every day as part of healthy eating patterns can reduce the risks of several chronic diseases. That is only one and a half to 2 cups of fruit and for vegetables 2 to 3 cups for most people, can lower the risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and some types of cancer.

Our lifestyles can be challenging. It can be hard to fit in fruits and vegetables. However it can be easy by trying some of these ideas to eating more fruits and vegetables.

- **Make half of your plate fruits and vegetables.** Follow Choose MyPlate recommendations. The rest of your plate should include one quarter grains and preferably whole grains, one quarter protein and low fat dairy on the side. So an example might be a turkey sandwich with a slice of low-fat cheese on wholegrain bread, adding lots of vegetables with a side of fruit.
- **Choose a variety of colors.** Fruits and vegetables are colorful and can be appetizing to eat. Colors in fruits and vegetables are complex contain nutrients that can help reduce the risk of various diseases and help to keep you healthy. Vary your color, eat the entire rainbow, not just one or two colors.
- **Choose whole fruits and vegetables over juice.** Juices often contain added sugars and can make it high calorie. Whole fruits and vegetables provide fiber, less sugar, more vitamins and minerals. Besides there is a better feeling of satiety when you eat that whole fruit or vegetable versus just drinking it.
- **Prepare vegetable and fruits snacks ahead of time.** Busy schedules and hunger can often mean unhealthy snacks. Have your fruits and vegetables cut up or easily available, so they can be as easy to grab and eat as a candy bar. Prepare small bags of bell peppers, carrots, strawberries or your favorite fruit or vegetable for the week.
- **Choose to flavor your water with fruits and vegetables.** You can make your own flavored water by freezing diced fruits and vegetables and adding them to water. When you finish your water eat the fruit or vegetable as a snack. Try freezing cucumbers, raspberries or watermelon and add them to your water.
- **Choose fruit and vegetables to begin your day.** Fruits can be an easy breakfast choice. Vegetables can be as well. Try adding spinach, onions, or mushrooms to your eggs; avocados to your toast or tomatoes to a breakfast sandwich.
- **Choose to make fruits and vegetables exciting.** Add vegetables and fruit to your favorite dishes, such as carrots to meatloaf. Have a vegetable or fruit contest. Encourage the kids to create dishes that add fruits and vegetables.

For more tips on improving your fruit and vegetable consumption visit the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension website a <http://fcs.tamu.edu>. Also for healthy fruit and vegetable recipes visit <http://dinnertonight.tamu.edu>.