

Wise Notes

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Americans Come Up Short on Fruits and Vegetables

This isn't the first time you've heard the advice to eat more fruits and vegetables. Eating fruits and vegetables provides vitamins, minerals, fiber and antioxidants that help reduce your risk for many diseases, including heart disease, stroke and some cancers. These low-calorie yet high-nutrient foods can even help you manage your weight when consumed in place of lower nutrient, higher calorie foods.

A recent report from the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention summarizes U.S. fruit and vegetable intake. Our report card isn't great. It's time to tune in and make some improvements to our diets. Adults who engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity daily should consume 1 1/2 to 2 cups of fruits and 2 to 3 cups of vegetables daily.

Here's great advice from the Mayo Clinic: Every time you eat, include a fruit or vegetable, or one of each. Sounds simple, and it is with a little planning. Here's how to make it happen:

- **Plan for it.** Get more fruits and vegetables in the house. Get them on your plate.
- **Store smart.** Put produce at eye level in the fridge or in a bowl right on the counter.
- **Pack it.** Put 2 to 3 options in your lunch sack, purse, gym bag or briefcase.
- **Eat it.** Enjoy fruits and vegetables simply or look for ways to include them in entrees and side dishes. Want dessert? Put more strawberries and banana than ice cream in a bowl — still delicious!

How will you plan, store, pack and, most importantly, eat more fruits and vegetables? For starters, try the following recipe for Spinach Berry Salad. From the Fit-I and Enjoy It! Healthy Cookbook, it has a sweet and nutty flavor and is an excellent source of vitamin C, folate and manganese.

Spinach Berry Salad.

4 packed cups torn fresh spinach
1 cup sliced fresh strawberries
1 cup fresh, or frozen, blueberries
1 small sweet onion, sliced
1/4 cup chopped pecans, toasted

Salad dressing:

2 tablespoons white wine vinegar, or cider vinegar
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons honey
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon curry powder (can be omitted)
1/8 teaspoon pepper

Directions

In a large salad bowl, toss together spinach, strawberries, blueberries, onion and pecans. In a jar with a tightfitting lid, combine dressing ingredients. Shake well. Pour over salad and toss to coat. Serve immediately.

Nutritional analysis per 1 1/2 cup serving: carbohydrates-25grams; dietary fiber- 4 grams; sodium- 198 mg; saturated fat- .5grams; total fat- 5 grams; added sugars- 19 grams; protein- 4 grams; calories- 158