

Nutrition Fact Sheet

Vegetables: Why You Should Get More!

Even though everyone knows that vegetables are good for you, 7 out of 10 Americans still do not meet the daily recommendations for vegetables. And, Americans are eating less today than 10 years ago. Consumers say their main reasons for not getting enough vegetables are not liking the taste, inconvenience, high cost, and low availability. However, there are plenty of easy, delicious and convenient ways for people to get more vegetables.

Why Do I Need Vegetables?

According to the USDA 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, vegetables are an essential part of a healthy diet. Eating the recommended amount of vegetables can help to reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. Vegetables are also naturally lower in calories than other foods and therefore important in weight management.

Vegetables provide essential nutrients and most are low in fat. They are an important source of potassium, magnesium, dietary fiber, folate, and vitamins A and C.

- *Potassium*: Helps maintain healthy blood pressure
- *Magnesium*: Necessary for healthy bones, muscles and for healthy blood pressure
- *Fiber*: As part of an overall healthy diet, helps reduce cholesterol levels and helps maintain digestive health
- *Folate*: Helps the body form healthy red blood cells
- *Vitamin A*: Keeps eyes and skin healthy and helps protect against infections

Did You Know?

- If you have a tossed, green salad before your main meal, you will be more likely to eat less at that meal.
- Choosing lower calorie, filling snacks such as raw vegetables or vegetable juice can help tide you over between meals.
- A recent study found that adding vegetable juice to their diet helped people meet their daily requirement for vegetables.

- *Vitamin C*: Helps heal cuts and wounds, keeps teeth and gums healthy and aids in iron absorption

Why Are Eating Different Colored Vegetables Important?

Think variety and think color. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines recommend an eating plan that includes a variety of vegetables to get a range of nutrients. An easy way to meet this recommendation is to choose a variety of vegetables of different colors. Different colored vegetables provide varying amounts of vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients that provide unique health benefits. The phytonutrients are responsible for the colors of vegetables. Vegetables can be classified into color groups, such as Red (tomato), Orange (carrots), Green

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(spinach), White (onions), and Purple (eggplant). Research suggests that phytonutrients may work best when eaten together in a whole food. So, eating a wide variety of different colored vegetables may provide greater health benefits than eating only a single type of vegetable.

How Can Vegetables Help Manage My Weight?

Eating foods like vegetables or vegetable juice can help with weight management. Vegetables add bulk but not a lot of calories. And research shows that eating bulky, lower-calorie foods like vegetables helps people feel full and eat less over the day.

How Much Do I Need?

The amount of vegetables you need depends on your age, sex and how active you are. For example, most women should eat about 2 ½ cups of vegetables daily. Men should eat about 3 cups per day. Children aged 4–8 years need about 1 ½ cups per day. Visit www.mypyramid.gov to determine your individual needs.

What Counts As a Cup of Vegetables?

Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice counts as a member of the vegetable group. In general, 1 cup from the vegetable group is equal to 1 cup chopped or cooked vegetables, 1 cup vegetable juice, or 2 cups raw leafy greens.

Easy Ways to Get More Vegetables

- Add vegetables or vegetable juice to your soups, pasta dishes or casseroles.

- Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick and easy cooking in the microwave.
- Drink vegetable juice as a snack or as a beverage with your meal.
- Buy pre-bagged vegetables for quick salads and snacks.
- Try crunchy vegetables instead of chips for your favorite dips.

Seven-Ingredient Chili

Prep: 10 minutes **Cook:** 25 minutes **Serves:** 8

Ingredients:

2 lb. ground turkey
1 large onion, chopped (about 1 cup)
2 tbsp. chili powder
½ tsp. ground cumin
3 ½ cups 100% vegetable juice (regular or low sodium)
1 small green pepper, chopped (about ½ cup)
2 cans (about 15 ounces each) red kidney beans, rinsed and drained

Directions:

Cook the turkey, onion, chili powder and cumin in a 4-quart saucepan over medium-high heat until the turkey is well browned, stirring often.

Add the vegetable juice, pepper and beans to the saucepan and heat to a boil. Reduce the heat to low. Cover and cook for 15 minutes or until the vegetables are tender.

Nutrition Information Per Serving:

Calories 299, Total Fat 10g, Saturated Fat 3g, Cholesterol 90mg, Sodium 338mg, Total Carbohydrate 24g, Dietary Fiber 7g, Protein 27g, Vitamin A 30%DV, Vitamin C 37%DV, Calcium 7%DV, Iron 21%DV
% Daily Value (DV) are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

For a referral to a registered dietitian and for additional food and nutrition information visit www.eatright.org



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