



Fabulous Fruits & Versatile Vegetables

Did you know that fruits and vegetables provide many nutrients? They contain vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber, water, and healthful phytochemicals. Some are sources of vitamin A, while others are rich in vitamin C, folate, and potassium. Almost all fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories, and none have cholesterol. Eating enough vegetables and fruits may protect you from getting chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancers. But as abundant as fruits and vegetables are in Hawaii, many of us are not eating enough. We all need 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day for the nutrients they contain for our good health.

There are many reasons why we choose the fruits and vegetables we do, including nutrition and health. Children like fruits and vegetables because of taste—they taste good—and because of their bright colors, crunchiness, and juiciness.

Fruits are available in many different forms: fresh, frozen, canned, and dried. All count toward the servings we need each day. Like fruits, vegetables are available not only fresh, but frozen, canned, dried, and as juice. You can eat them raw, steamed, boiled, stir-fried, grilled, microwaved or baked. Aim to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables you eat in a day.

Tips to eating more fruits and vegetables

Think about variety. There are many fruits and vegetables. Try berries, half a grapefruit, or dried apricots for dessert or snack. Add cabbage, carrots, onions, tomatoes, eggplant, or zucchini to your next soup, stew, or salad.

Appeal to your senses. Most people prefer crunchy foods rather than mushy ones. Eat fruits raw, and enjoy vegetables raw or lightly steamed—this will help retain more of the

valuable nutrients that are lost during cooking.

Consider convenience. Nowadays, you can buy fruits and vegetables that are pre-cut and packaged for easy and quick eating. Pick up a bag of salad greens and some baby carrots, and have a salad in seconds.

Offer dips or dressings on the side. Many fruits and vegetables taste great with a dip or dressing. Try low-fat yogurt or pudding as a dip for fruits like melons. Try low-fat salad dressing with raw broccoli, red and green peppers, or cauliflower.

Add vegetables to your favorite foods. Shred carrots or zucchini into meatloaf or casseroles. Add chopped vegetables, like mushrooms, spinach, and onions, to pasta sauce, lasagna or pizza.

Keep fruits and vegetables around and “in sight”. Studies show that families that have fruits and vegetables available tend to eat more of them. Put a bowl of fruit on the table and keep carrot and celery sticks in a clear container in the refrigerator.

Use your blender. Make a fruit smoothie by blending low-fat milk or yogurt with fresh or frozen fruit. Try strawberries, bananas or peaches.

Use fruits and vegetables as ingredients. Try applesauce as a fat-free substitute for some of the oil when baking cakes. Add pureed, cooked vegetables to thicken stews and soups.

Think salad. Try a chef's salad for lunch, a fruit salad for dessert, or mixed greens along with your dinner. Many vegetables taste great in salads, like baby spinach, garbanzo beans, cauliflower, or red cabbage.

Snack on fruits and vegetables. For a crunchy snack, try baby carrots or a crispy apple. For smooth and sweet, have a banana. Need a flavor jolt? Munch on dried apricots. Treat yourself to the luxury of fresh raspberries.

Visit our Nutrition Education for Wellness (NEW) website at www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/NEW