

Eat More Fruit and Vegetables

Healthy eating includes eating *at least* five portions, and ideally 7-9 portions, of a variety of fruit or vegetables each day. Fruit and vegetables include fresh, frozen, tinned, or dried varieties, and fruit juice. On average, people who eat lots of fruit and vegetables tend to be healthier and live longer.

What are the health benefits if I eat enough fruit and vegetables?

- You have a lower chance of developing cardiovascular diseases due atheroma ('hardening of the arteries'). For example, heart disease, peripheral vascular disease, or a stroke.
- You have a lower chance of developing some cancers such as bowel and lung cancer.
- Fruit and vegetables also:
 - Contain lots of fibre which helps to keep your bowels healthy. Problems such as constipation and diverticular disease are less likely to develop.
 - Contain plenty of vitamins and minerals, which are needed to keep you healthy.
 - Are naturally low in fat.
 - Are filling but are low in calories. So, they are ideal to keep your weight in control.

How do fruit and vegetables prevent disease?

They are rich in vitamins and minerals which keep the body healthy. They also contain chemicals called antioxidants, such as carotene, which are thought to protect against damaging chemicals that get into the body. However, the exact way in which they prevent disease is not fully understood.

One portion of fruit or vegetables is roughly equivalent to:

- one large fruit such as an apple, pear, banana, orange, or a large slice of melon, or
- two smaller fruits such as plums, kiwis, satsumas, clementines, etc, or
- one cup of small fruits such as grapes, strawberries, raspberries, cherries, etc, or
- two large tablespoons of fruit salad, stewed or canned fruit, or
- one tablespoon of dried fruit, or
- one glass of fresh fruit juice (150 ml), or
- a normal portion of any vegetable (about two tablespoons), or
- one dessert bowl of salad

Some tips on how to increase fruit and vegetables in your diet

- Try some different types which you have not tried before. The variety of tastes and textures may be surprising. Juices, frozen, canned, and dried varieties all count.
- Try adding chopped bananas, apples, or other fruits to breakfast cereals.
- Aim to include at least two different vegetables with most main meals. Do not overboil vegetables. Steaming, stir-frying, or lightly boiling are best to retain the nutrients.
- Always offer fruit or fruit juice to accompany meals.
- How about cherry tomatoes, carrot sticks, dried apricots, or other fruits as part of packed lunches? A banana sandwich is another idea for lunch.
- Fruit is great for snacks. Encourage children to snack with fruit rather than with sweets.

Further help and information

Food Standards Agency

See their 'eatwell' advice - www.eatwell.gov.uk/healthydiet

Further reading & references

- [Cardiovascular risk - assessment and management](#), Clinical Knowledge Summaries (2008)

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