



Eating Your Way to Better Health

Benefits of fruit and veg

Australians are fortunate to have a wonderful supply of fruit and vegetables. They are an excellent and delicious source of vitamins, minerals and fibre. A long term daily habit of eating adequate fruit and veg promotes a general sense of well being and can protect you and your family against some serious diseases in the future.

PREVENTION OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

Eating plenty of fruit and vegetables is an important way to keep body weight under control. This is because fruit and veg are filling without adding excessive kilojoules. Maintaining a healthy body weight is one of the best ways of reducing your risk of chronic diseases and many other health problems.

NUTRITION AND CANCER

There is compelling evidence that eating more fruit and veg helps to prevent certain types of cancer. For example, an adequate fruit and vegetable intake may reduce the risk of cancers of parts of the digestive tract such as the oesophagus, stomach, colon and rectum.

HOW DO FRUIT AND VEGETABLES PROTECT US FROM CANCER?

Eating adequate amounts of fruits and vegetables may prevent at least one in five cancer cases. Fruit and vegetables are rich in vitamins, minerals and fibre, as well as a variety of naturally occurring nutrients called phytochemicals. Experts believe the large numbers of nutrients in fruit and vegetables work together in complex ways to help reduce the risk of developing a number of cancers. This means we cannot expect to reap the same benefits by simply taking vitamin pills. Different combinations of nutrients are found in each type of vegetable or fruit so it is important to eat a variety of these foods.

How much should we eat?

The recommended daily intake for Australian adults is at least two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables each day. Unfortunately, many Australian adults are not reaching this target. Tables 1 and 2 outline the recommended minimum daily serves of fruit and vegetables to eat. Pregnant and breastfeeding women are advised to increase their servings of fruit and vegetables to meet their increased dietary requirements. The minimum daily serves required by children vary according to their age.

Table 1: Recommended minimum daily intake of fruit and vegetables for adults

ADULT	FRUIT (serves)	VEGETABLES (serves)
Men & Women	2	5
Pregnant Women	4	5-6
Breastfeeding	5	7

Source: The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

Table 2: Recommended minimum daily intake of fruit and vegetables for children and adolescents

AGE OF CHILD (years)	FRUIT (serves)	VEGETABLES (serves)
4-7	1-2	2-4
8-11	1-2	3-5
12-18	3-4	4-9

Source: The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating





Eating Your Way to Better Health continued

HEART DISEASE

Adequate fruit and vegetable intake can protect us against one of the most common causes of death in NSW which is coronary heart disease. There are many ways that fruit and vegetables lead to this benefit. One way is by helping to prevent unhealthy weight gain. Some other ways are by helping to reduce blood cholesterol levels, reducing blood pressure and improving control of diabetes. Research evidence also indicates that the antioxidants in fruit and vegetables help keep our blood vessels in good shape.

BLOOD PRESSURE

Eating more fruit and vegetables can help prevent or control high blood pressure. Some of the reasons for this effect may relate to the high levels of potassium and fibre, and very low levels of salt (sodium), in fruit and vegetables.

CONSTIPATION

A good intake of fibre from plant foods such as fruit, vegetables and grain products (preferably whole grain), together with adequate fluid, promotes healthy bowel actions.

Fit a variety of fruit and vegetables into your day

It is recommended to eat a variety of fruit and vegetables every day. Include raw, cooked and many different colours. This is because different types of fruits and vegetables contain a variety of nutrients that the body needs and that may provide protection against certain cancers. Five serves of vegetables does not mean five serves of potato!

What is a serve?

One serve of vegetables is 75 grams or:

- ½ cup cooked vegetables
- ½ cup cooked dried beans, peas, legumes
- 1 medium potato
- 1 cup salad vegetables

One serve of fruit is 150 grams of fresh fruit or:

- 1 medium piece eg. apple
- 2 smaller pieces eg. apricots, kiwi fruit
- 1 cup chopped or canned fruit
- ½ cup (125mL) 100% fruit juice
- 1½ tablespoons dried fruit eg. sultanas or 4 dried apricot halves

DO FRUIT AND VEGETABLES HAVE TO BE FRESH TO BE HEALTHY?

While it is best to eat most fruit and vegetables in the fresh state, processed fruit and vegetables can be suitable, affordable alternatives. They come in many forms, including:

- Pre-prepared fresh e.g. commercial fruit salad and tabouli salad.
- Canned e.g. canned tomatoes, baked beans, beetroot.
- Frozen e.g. peas, beans, stir-fry vegetables, berries, corn.
- Dried e.g. dried soy beans, chic peas, sultanas.

These processed forms offer many benefits such as:

- Convenience.
- Longer shelf life.
- Year round availability.
- Most vitamins are retained as they are generally processed with hours of picking.
- Easy storage and preparation.
- Affordability when the price of fresh is high.

Select processed forms carefully to avoid added sugar, salt and fat.

Further information

For more information on healthy eating and physical activity for you and your family, go to:

www.gofor2and5.com.au www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au

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