



Fruits and Vegetables: How Much Do I Need?

Fruits and vegetables are good for you. They are full of fiber, vitamins, minerals, and thousands of powerful things called antioxidants and phytochemicals. These things give fruits and vegetables their colors, flavors, and smells. When you eat antioxidants and phytochemicals, they also help to protect you from many different diseases, like heart disease and cancer.

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. The more color, the better. Try to eat at least two different colors of fruits and three different colors of vegetables every day.

Most adults need 2 cups of fruit and 2½ cups of vegetables each day.

Most children need 1½ cups of fruit and 1½ cups of vegetables each day.

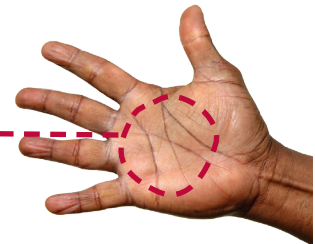
You can find more-detailed recommendations in the charts on the next page.



What does a serving of fruit or vegetables look like?



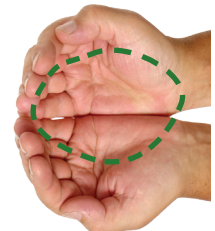
1 small piece of whole fruit = 1 cup of fruit



1 small box of raisins or ¼ cup of dried fruit = ½ cup of fruit



½ cup of fresh or frozen vegetables = ½ cup of vegetables



2 cups of raw leafy vegetables = 1 cup of vegetables

How many fruits and vegetables are needed?

The amount of fruits and vegetables you need to eat depends on your age, sex, and level of physical activity. Recommended daily amounts are shown in the first table, below.

Daily recommendations for fruits and vegetables.*

	Age range (years)	Fruits (cups)	Vegetables (cups)
Children	2-3	1	1-1½
	4-8	1-1½	1½
Girls	9-13	1½	1½-2
	14-18	1½	2½
Boys	9-13	1½	2-2½
	14-18	2	2½-3
Women	19-30	1½-2	2½
	31-50	1½	2½
	51+	1½	2
Men	19-30	2	3-3½
	31-50	2	3
	51+	2	2½-3



Vegetable choices should be selected from the different colored vegetable subgroups. Variety is key, as the different colored vegetables provide different kinds of nutrients. It is not necessary to eat vegetables from each subgroup daily. However, over the course of one week, try to consume the amounts listed from each subgroup as a way to reach your daily recommendations. Recommended weekly amounts from each vegetable subgroup are shown in the table below.

Weekly recommendations for subgroups of vegetables.*

	Age range (years)	Dark green vegetables (cups)	Red and orange vegetables (cups)	Beans and peas (cups)	Starchy vegetables (cups)	Other vegetables (cups)
Children	2-3	½-1	2½-3	½	2-3½	1½-2½
	4-8	1	3	½	3½	2½
Girls	9-13	1-1½	3-4	½-1	3½-4	2½-3½
	14-18	1½	5½	1½	5	4
Boys	9-13	1½	4-5½	1-1½	4-5	3½-4
	14-18	1½-2	5½-6	1½-2	5-6	4-5
Women	19-30	1½	5½	1½	5	4
	31-50	1½	5½	1½	5	4
	51+	1½	4	1	4	3½
Men	19-30	2-2½	6-7	2-2½	6	5
	31-50	2	6	2	6	5
	51+	1½-2	5½-6	1½-2	5-6	4-5

*These amounts are appropriate for individuals who get fewer than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity beyond their normal daily activities. Those who are more physically active may be able to consume more to meet their caloric needs.



Selecting, Storing, and Preparing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

- Choose produce with no cuts or bruises when shopping at the store or market. Check ripeness by feeling the outside surface and gently squeezing the fruit or vegetable. A ripe fruit or vegetable will give slightly.
- Select items that are ripe enough but not too ripe so the item will be fresh for at least three to five days at home.
- Wash fruits and vegetables by rubbing them with your hands under clean running water before preparing or eating them.
- Keep fruits and vegetables separate from raw meat, poultry, and seafood while shopping, preparing, and storing.

Storing fruits and vegetables

Fresh produce

- Store whole, fresh fruit at room temperature until it becomes ripe. Once ripe, store it in the refrigerator. Berries should always be stored in the refrigerator.
- Store whole, fresh vegetables in the refrigerator. Tomatoes, garlic, onions, potatoes, and winter squashes should be stored in a cool, dark place.
- Refrigerate fruits and vegetables within two hours after cutting.
- Use the “first-in, first-out” method of storing and eating fresh items from the refrigerator.

Frozen produce

- Store fruits and vegetables purchased frozen in the freezer. Frozen fruits and vegetables will last between six months and one year.
- Freeze fruit that is ripening faster than you can eat it by cutting it up, placing it in a plastic freezer bag, and putting it in the freezer. Vegetables should be blanched (quickly boiled and then shocked in an ice bath) before they are frozen.
- Thaw only the amount of food you can use immediately when using frozen fruits or vegetables. Thawed items should not be refrozen.

Canned and dried produce

- Store canned and dried fruits and vegetables in a cool, dry place. Check package expiration dates before consuming.

Top 10 Ways to Eat More Fruits and Vegetables

1. Buy fresh fruits and vegetables in season to save money and for best flavor.
2. Keep fruits and vegetables in easy-to-reach places for an easy snack. Chop fruits and veggies into bite-size pieces. Store in clear containers in the refrigerator.
3. Eat sliced fruits and vegetables with healthy dips, such as hummus, peanut butter, or low-fat yogurt.
4. Carry an apple, orange, peach, or some dried fruit in your bag or purse for an easy and refreshing snack.
5. Add vegetables to soups, sauces, stews, and sandwiches for a nutrient boost.
6. Make a healthy smoothie by blending together fresh spinach, a frozen banana, and a cup of low-fat yogurt.
7. Buy items that are easy to prepare, such as frozen vegetables and unsweetened canned fruits.
8. Buy canned vegetables with the label “low sodium” or “no salt added.”
9. Top hot and cold cereals, yogurt, and even salads with fresh, frozen, or dried fruits.
10. Aim to fill your plate with color, which is easy when you include fruits and vegetables!



When should I buy my fruits and vegetables?

The lists below show what fresh fruits and vegetables are available at different times of the year. You will get the best value if you buy fruits and vegetables when they are in season.

Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter	Available year-round
apricots	blackberries	apples	clementines	apples
honeydew melon	blueberries	cranberries	grapefruit	bananas
mangos	cantaloupe	persimmons	lemons and limes	papaya
pineapple	cherries	pineapples	oranges	avocados
strawberries	kiwifruit	grapes	pears	carrots
artichokes	peaches	pomegranates	Brussels sprouts	celery
asparagus	watermelon	cauliflower	cabbage	lettuce
broccoli	bell peppers	pumpkin	collard greens	potatoes
radishes	hot peppers	acorn squash	kale	mushrooms
spinach	beets	butternut squash	parsnips	onions
rhubarb	corn	Swiss chard	turnips	
peas	cucumbers	mushrooms	sweet potatoes	
	eggplant			
	green beans			
	summer squash			



For more tips, visit the Family Nutrition Program at



www.move-more.ext.vt.edu



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