Fruits & Veggies: Why More Matters

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Fruits and vegetables are a great way to get the most nutrition out of your calories. They are packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other nutrients. June is National Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Month, a great time to consider if you're including enough fruits and vegetables in your eating plan. Whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or 100 percent juice, fruits and vegetables are quick, delicious and convenient, and will keep you healthy all year round.

Tips to Get More Fruits and Vegetables:

Easy ways to add fruits and vegetables to meals. Make a habit of adding fruit (fresh, frozen, canned or dried) to your morning oatmeal, ready-to-eat cereal, yogurt, or toaster waffle. Stock up and fill your fridge with raw vegetables and fruits. Make your sandwiches more interesting by adding sliced pineapple, apple, peppers, cucumbers, and tomato. Top your pizza with lots of veggies such as broccoli, spinach, green peppers, tomatoes, mushrooms, and zucchini.

Smart snack ideas. Most healthy eating plans allow for one or two small snacks a day, and choosing fruits and vegetables will help you limit snacks to 100-caloires each. One snack-sized bag of corn chips (1 ounce) has the same number of calories as a small apple, 1 cup of whole strawberries, and 1 cup of carrots with 1/4 cup of low-calorie dip. Substitute one or two of these options for the chips, and you will have a satisfying snack with fewer calories.

Examples of items with approximately 100 calories or less are:
- Medium-size apple (72 calories)
- Medium-size banana (105 calories)
- 1 cup blueberries (83 calories)
- 1 cup grapes (100 calories)
- 1 cup carrots (45 calories), broccoli (30 calories), or bell peppers (30 calories) with 2 tbsp. hummus (46 calories)

Prepare fruits and veggies with fat-free or low-fat techniques. Try steaming your vegetables, using low-calorie or low-fat dressings, and using herbs and spices to add flavor. Some cooking techniques, such as breading and frying, or using high-fat dressings or sauces will greatly increase calories and fat. Eat your fruit raw to enjoy its natural sweetness.

How much is needed daily? For a 2,000-calorie diet, USDA's MyPlate recommends two cups of fruit and 2 ½ cups of vegetables daily. More or fewer cups may be eaten depending on individual calorie needs based on age, gender, and level of physical activity. To find out what your individual needs are check out the daily food plan or the Supertracker at:
- www.choosemyplate.gov/myplate/index.aspx
- www.choosemyplate.gov/SuperTracker/default.aspx

What counts as a cup?
- ***Fruit.*** Any fruit or 100 percent fruit juice counts as part of the fruit group. Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried, and may be whole, cut-up, or pureed. In general, 1 cup of fruit or 100 percent fruit juice, or ½ cup of dried fruit can be considered as 1 cup from the fruit group.

- *Vegetables.* Any vegetable or 100 percent vegetable juice counts as a member of the vegetable group. Vegetables may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned, or dried/dehydrated; and may be whole, cut-up, or mashed. In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the vegetable group.

The potential benefits associated with eating more fruits and vegetables stack up quickly, and reducing your risk of certain chronic diseases is only the beginning. Check out www.food.unl.edu for more information and resources on the importance of and how to get more fruits and vegetables into your diet.

Additional Resources & Links:
- **How to Use Fruits and Vegetables to Help Manage Your Weight.** Fruits and vegetables are part of a well-balanced and healthy eating plan. Using more fruits and vegetables along with whole grains and lean meats, nuts, and beans is a safe and healthy one. http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/fruits_vegetables.html
- **Fruits and Veggies: More Matters.** Check out this website for tips, recipes, and interactive tools on fruits and vegetables. http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/
- **9 "Bites" for Better Tasting Fruits and Veggies.** Use these preparation and storage "bites" to enjoy the abundant summer produce at its peak flavor, appearance, and safety. http://food.unl.edu/web/fnh/9bites

- **Storing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Neb-Guide.** Find out what the proper storage methods and conditions for fresh fruits and vegetables are with this UNL NebGuide. http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/sendIt/g1264.pdf

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Scan this QR Code with your smartphone or other electronic device to go directly to the food.unl.edu website.