Vegetable Group

Vary your veggies.

Vegetables provide important nutrients like vitamin A, vitamin C, potassium, and fiber. It is important to eat a variety of vegetables because different vegetables provide different nutrients. Try to include different colored vegetables at each meal to make sure you are getting the important nutrients they provide. See "Add a Little Color to Your Plate" for examples of different colors of vegetables.

Add a Little Color to Your Plate

Dark Green:	Broccoli, Greens (collards, mustard greens, kale), Spinach, Raw leafy greens (romaine, spinach, watercress, dark green leafy lettuce, endive, escarole)
Orange:	Carrots, Pumpkin, Sweet potatoes, Winter squash (acorn, butternut, hubbard)
Red:	Red peppers, Tomatoes, Beets
Yellow or White:	Cauliflower, Summer squash, Onions, Corn, Potatoes
Other Greens:	Green beans, Green peas, Cabbage, Celery, Green peppers, Zucchini, Cucumbers, Avocadoes
Dry Beans and Peas:	Black beans, Garbanzo beans, Kidney beans, Pinto beans, Soy beans, Black-eyed peas, Split peas

Try eating vegetables as a snack. They are naturally low in calories and fat.

Did you know… Eating vegetables (and fruit) as part of a healthy diet can reduce the risk of some diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and type 2 diabetes.

How many vegetables do you need to eat?

The exact amount of vegetables that you need to eat depends on your age, sex, and how much physical activity you get each day. A typical person should aim to eat **2 ½ cups** of vegetables each day. When deciding on what vegetables to eat, choose those that are dark green or orange more often and try to eat more dry beans and peas.

What counts as a 1/2 cup of vegetables?

- ½ cup diced, sliced or chopped raw or cooked vegetables
- ½ cup canned vegetables
- 1 cup raw leafy greens
- 1 medium carrot or 6 baby carrots
- ½ cup cooked dry beans or peas
- 1 small ear of corn
- ½ cup mashed potatoes

Know how. Know now.

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Choosing & Preparing Vegetables

- ► Wash all vegetables before eating or cooking.
- ► Choose vegetables that are in season. They usually cost less.
- ► Leave skin on if it can be eaten – it has a lot of fiber.
- ► Steam or microwave vegetables to keep the best flavor, color, and nutrition. Cook until tender, not mushy.
- ► Try frozen vegetables. They are low in cost and taste great.
- ► Select canned vegetables labeled "no salt added" or "low sodium."

Tips for Eating More Vegetables

1. Add lettuce, tomato, green pepper, or onion to sandwiches.
2. Eat a soup or salad that contains vegetables.
3. Cut raw vegetables, like carrots and peppers, to keep on hand for a quick snack.
4. Add vegetables to main dishes such as broccoli to pasta or casseroles.
5. Put a potato into the microwave for a snack or side at supper.

Smashed Potatoes

Makes 4 servings

6 medium baking potatoes (peeled and cut into 1" pieces)
3 tablespoons butter or margarine
1/2 cup skim milk
1/2 cup light sour cream
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil.
2. Put the cut potatoes into the boiling water and cook for 15 minutes.
3. Drain and put cooked potatoes in a large bowl.
4. Add margarine, milk, sour cream, black pepper.
5. Whip potatoes using an electric hand mixer until smooth. Serve immediately.

Nutrition Information: 300 calories, 11 g fat, 3 g saturated fat, 10 mg cholesterol, 160 mg sodium, 44 g carbohydrates, 3 g fiber, 7 g sugar, 6 g protein, vitamin A 15%, vitamin C 40%, calcium 10%, iron 4%

Source: UMASS Extension, "Putting Vegetables in Your Food Guide Pyramid", http://mypyramid.gov, United States Department of Agriculture, June 2005.

This material was funded in part by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call 1-800-430-3244.