



Fruit and Vegetables - Enjoy 5 a day!

Eating more fruit and vegetables could significantly reduce the risk of many chronic diseases, including, high blood pressure, obesity, cardiovascular disease and some cancers.

It has been estimated that diet is likely to contribute to the development of one-third of all cancers, and that eating more fruits and vegetables is the second most important cancer prevention strategy, after stopping smoking.

There is evidence to show that for every portion of fruits and vegetables eaten there is greater protection against strokes (by up to 40%) and some cancers (by up to 20%). Other health benefits found have included a delay in the development of cataracts, reducing the symptoms of asthma, improving bowel function and better management of diabetes. Including more fruits and vegetables in the diet reduces the overall calorie density, which helps us to maintain a healthier weight.

Why are fruits and vegetables so beneficial?

Fruits and vegetables not only contain lots of vitamins and minerals, and important fibre, they also contain a wide range of plant nutrients or phytochemicals, such as flavonoids, glucosinolates and phyto-oestrogens. Some of these phytochemicals act as antioxidants, which may reduce damage to cell DNA and cell membranes. Other phytochemicals are thought to influence the activation of carcinogens (cancer causing agents), or increase the level of protective liver enzymes. The phytochemicals and plant nutrients act together to provide us with the protective benefits of fruits and vegetables.

Vitamin and mineral supplements do not contain the range of phytochemicals found in fruits and vegetables, and so are unlikely to provide us with the additional benefits that eating fruits and vegetables do.

What counts as a fruit and vegetable portion?

Fresh, frozen, canned, juiced or dried fruits and vegetables all count in the diet. Potatoes and similar starchy foods, such as yam, plantain, and cassava, are carbohydrate foods, and are included in the bread and cereals food

group. These foods cannot be counted as a daily portion of vegetables.

You should aim to eat a minimum of five portions of a variety of fruits and vegetables each day.

Quick guide to fruit and vegetable portions

One portion of fresh fruit is:

- medium-sized: one medium fruit, such as one apple, banana, pear, orange, nectarine, or a sharon fruit
- small-sized fruit: for example; two plums, two satsumas, three apricots, two kiwi fruit, seven strawberries, 14 cherries, six lychees
- large fruit: half a grapefruit, one slice of papaya, one slice of melon (two-inch slice), one large slice of pineapple, two slices of mango (two-inch slices)



Dried fruit:

One tablespoon of raisins, currants, sultanas, one tablespoon of mixed fruit, two figs, three prunes, one handful of banana chips.

Canned fruit:

Roughly the same quantity of fruit that you would eat as a fresh portion: two pear or peach halves, six apricot halves, eight segments of canned grapefruit. Fruit canned in fruit juice is a healthier option



Juice:

One medium glass (150ml) of 100% fruit juice. Juice only counts as one portion a day, no matter how much you drink

One portion of vegetables is:

Green vegetables:

Two broccoli spears, eight cauliflower florets, four heaped tablespoons of cabbage, spinach, spring greens or green beans

Cooked vegetables:

Three heaped tablespoons of cooked (e.g. steamed, boiled, microwaved) vegetables such as courgettes, carrots, Brussels sprouts or swede.

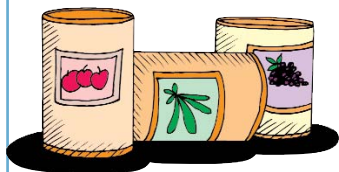
Salad vegetables:

Three sticks of celery, two-inch piece of cucumber, one medium tomato, seven cherry tomatoes.



Canned and frozen vegetables:

Roughly the same quantity as you would eat as a fresh portion. For example, three heaped tablespoons of canned or frozen carrots, peas or sweetcorn



Pulses and beans:

Three heaped tablespoons of kidney, cannelloni or butter beans or chick peas. Remember that beans or pulses only count as one of your five a day portions.

What about portion sizes for children?

These portion sizes are for adults. Children should be encouraged to eat five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables each day, but the portion sizes will be smaller - especially for young children. An easy measure of a portion is the amount that fits into the child's hand. Children under five will learn to eat fruit and vegetables by copying their parents or other children when they are eating together.

Do fruit and vegetables included in a composite meal count?

Composite dishes that contain several different fruits or vegetables, e.g., vegetable soups, ready-meals, pasta sauces, puddings and takeaway meals, can contribute to your 5 a day. However, many of these foods are high in added salt, sugar or fat, so check the nutrition information on food labels to help make suitable choices. It is unlikely that a ready-meal will contain more than a single portion of vegetables. In order to increase your intake, cook some fresh, canned or frozen vegetables to accompany ready-meals.



The Food Standards Agency is currently reviewing composite dishes in relation to five a day portions, and will be producing further guidance on this shortly. For more information see: www.5aday.nhs.uk

Prepared by Wendy Parker, Registered Dietitian

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