

Elements of Nutrition

The 5-A-Day initiative encourages us to try to eat 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables as part of a healthy eating pattern may help protect us against many chronic diseases.

Five more may sound like a lot, but one serving can be a medium piece of fruit, a few pieces of dried fruit, a half-cup of chopped, cooked, or raw vegetables or fruit, or six-ounce glass of citrus juice. (They can be fresh, frozen, canned, or dried). Try steaming, baking, or microwaving vegetables instead of frying.

Activity: Healthy Nutrition

1. Show participants what a healthy 5-A-Day plate looks like. Ask participants what it looks like – a lot or not very much? Discuss problems people might have in eating 5 fruits and vegetables a day: cost, access to fresh produce, waste, difficulties cooking, etc. Have the group brainstorm possible solutions from their own experiences.
2. Discuss ways to incorporate more fruits and vegetables every day – on breakfast cereals or salads, for a snack, or a dessert.
3. Review the week's tips and tasks for healthy eating. Demonstrate how to keep track of the fruits and vegetables they eat.

Tips and Tasks

At least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables is the goal for a healthy diet. Eating vegetables and fruit can help prevent strokes, heart disease, diabetes, and intestinal problems. Try to add 1 more serving each day until the goal is reached.

What is a serving of fruit?

- 1 medium apple, banana, orange, pear
- ½ cup chopped, cooked, canned fruit
- ¾ cup (6oz) 100% fruit juice
- ¼ Cup dried fruit (e.g. raisins, prunes)

What is a serving of vegetable?

- 1 cup raw, leafy vegetables
- ½ cup other cooked or raw vegetables
- ¾ cup (6 oz) vegetable juice

Nutrition Facts and Tips

Colorful fruits and vegetables promote health!

- **Vitamin A** is found in orange and deep yellow fruits and vegetables – mangoes, cantaloupe, and yams.
- **Vitamin C** comes from a rainbow of colorful fruits and vegetables – citrus, strawberries, and green peppers.
- **Calcium** is a mineral that is needed for healthy bones and teeth, also regulates the heart and nervous system. For adults, the daily calcium needs are 1200mg or three or more servings of calcium-rich foods, which include:
 - ▶ Yogurt (plain, non-fat, or low-fat) 1 cup = 435mg
 - ▶ Sardines (canned, with bones) 4 ounces = 430mg
 - ▶ Fortified orange juice 1 cup = 300mg
 - ▶ Milk (whole, low/reduced, or fat free) 1 cup = 300mg
 - ▶ Swiss cheese 1 ounce = 270mg
 - ▶ Collard greens (cooked) ½ cup = 180mg
- **Fiber** (such as whole grains) may help prevent colon cancer, keep cholesterol from being absorbed by the body and reduce the risk of heart disease. It can also increase the feeling of fullness, so we don't eat more than we should. Adults need about 25 grams of fiber each day. If you are adding fiber to your diet, gradually increase your intake to avoid gastrointestinal discomfort.

Sensible portion sizes are an important key in reaching or maintaining a healthy weight. As we age, most of us need fewer calories than we did when we were younger. However, our nutritional requirements remain the same or increase with age. The nutrition label on foods contains information about serving size portions.

Serving Sizes

- Deck of playing cards = 3oz serving of meat, poultry, or fish
- Baseball = 1 cup of milk, yogurt, or chopped fresh greens
- Small fist (or computer mouse) = ½ cup of cut fruit, vegetables, or pasta
- Tennis ball = about the size of a medium size piece of fruit
- Golf ball = about 2 tablespoons of peanut butter
- Your thumb = about 1oz of cheese
- Your thumb tip = 1 teaspoon of margarine

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