
Week 3: Don't Forget Your Veggies and Fruit!

What are the benefits, which ones to choose, how much, and what to do when you don't have vegetables available?



Week 3

The Benefits of Veggies and Fruit

An apple a day, keeps the doctor away.....

We've all heard this saying and it still stands true today. Vegetables and fruit contain more than enough vitamins and minerals to keep you strong and healthy for the long run.

Topic 1: Overfed, but undernourished.

Getting our daily intake of vegetables and fruits is not only important, its required! Without the vitamins and minerals that these foods contain, our risk of acquiring many cancers, diabetes, and heart disease increase. Western culture has no shortage of food, but even though people are not hungry, majority are undernourished and lacking many important vitamins and minerals.

Table 1 below shows that most American adults are lacking many important daily nutrients. More than 40 percent of adults have dietary intakes of vitamin A, C, D and E, calcium and magnesium below the average requirement for their age and gender.

While taking a daily multi-vitamin to ensure you're getting your required nutrients is good practice; getting your nutrients from whole veggies and fruit is more beneficial than getting them in supplement forms. Why is this you ask? Because when you eat whole food you also get higher amounts of fiber, which helps to improve blood sugar levels; reduces appetite; and increases your digestive health allowing your body to better absorb these nutrients.



Table 1: Ranking of vitamins and minerals according to the degree of dietary inadequacy among adults.

Nutrient from food alone, ranked by the occurrence of dietary inadequacy among adults	Percentage of dietary intakes below the estimated average requirement for adults aged over 19 years	Naturally occurring sources of nutrient
Vitamin D	95%	Fatty fish, mushrooms [vitamin D is naturally formed in the body when skin is exposed to sunlight; vitamin D is also added to fortified milk]
Vitamin E	94%	Nuts, seeds, vegetable oils, green leafy vegetables
Magnesium	61%	Green leafy vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds
Vitamin A	51%	Liver, fatty fish, milk, eggs; provitamin A carotenoids: carrots, pumpkins, tomatoes, leafy green vegetables
Calcium	49%	Milk, yogurt, cheese, kale, broccoli
Vitamin C	43%	All fruits and vegetables, particularly citrus fruits and tomatoes
Vitamin B6	15%	Fish, beef, poultry, potatoes and other starchy vegetables, and fruit other than citrus
Folate	13%	Spinach, liver, asparagus, Brussels sprouts
Zinc	12%	Red meat, poultry, beans, nuts, some seafood
Iron	8%	Highest amounts in meat and seafood; lower levels in nuts and beans

**Source: Dietary intake information derived from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey*

Topic 2: Which ones to choose?

When it comes down to it, any vegetable/fruit that you like to eat is a good choice! But there are some vegetables/fruit that you should try to limit more than others. Let's start off by recalling our superfoods list from Week 1:

1. Spinach/Arugula
2. Tomatoes
3. Cruciferous vegetables (kale, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower)
4. Mixed berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, etc)
5. Apples
6. Mixed beans/peas (black beans, lentils, split peas, etc)
7. Bell Peppers/Zucchini/Cucumber
8. Raw mixed nuts (pecans, walnuts, cashews, brazil nuts, almonds, etc)
9. Avocados

If weight loss is your goal then there are a number of vegetables and fruits that should be limited. This doesn't mean you can't ever have them, but they should be limited if possible. But why, aren't all vegetables and fruits good for you? Not necessarily. Some vegetables and fruits contain high amounts of sugar and will cause a spike in your insulin levels, which makes it much more difficult to drop the pounds.

Here is a list of some of the vegetables and fruits that should be limited:

1. Potatoes (especially white)
2. Corn
3. Pineapple
4. Mango
5. Papaya
6. Bananas
7. Pumpkin
8. Beets
9. Carrots
10. Yams
11. Cherries
12. Lychee

Topic 3: Serving Sizes and Daily Recommendations

It is recommended that every person gets at least 8-12 servings of vegetables and fruits each day. However, notice that throughout this entire lesson, I have said “Vegetables and Fruit” instead of “Fruit and Vegetables”. Of your daily intake, you should try to include more vegetables than fruit, especially if you’re trying to lose weight. Fruit is very important as part of your daily diet, but many fruits also contain high amounts of sugar (refer back to last week’s lesson on why sugar is bad), hence if you want to drop a few pounds, limit the amount of fruit you consume and stick to the veggies.

A serving is equal to:

- 1 medium sized fruit
- 1/2 cup raw fruit or 1/2 cup raw/cooked vegetables
- 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables

Try to include two servings of vegetables and/or fruits with each meal.



Here is what 10 servings of vegetables and fruit may look like in one day:

- 1/2 cup of green peppers, 1/2 cup red peppers, 1/2 cup onions, 1/2 cup mushrooms in a breakfast omelet
- 1 apple for morning snack
- 1 cup spinach, 1 tomato, 1/2 avocado with lunch salad
- 1 cup berries mixed in afternoon smoothie
- 1/2 avocado, 1 cup broccoli with dinner

Topic 4: Preparation Strategies

So you want to increase your intake of vegetables, but you often fall short because you don't like some veggies or you get bored of the same ones. Many times this is due to having inexperience with the variety of vegetables and preparation methods available.

Mix up the way you prepare your veggies and it will give you more variety. Here are a few different methods:

- Raw in salads
- Steamed
- Baked or roasted
- Stir-fried or sautéed
- Mixed in a smoothie



And don't think you can only have veggies at the main courses, use them for snack time as well. Try dipping red pepper or broccoli in hummus; or have an apple with some cheese as a delicious snack!

Wait, wait, wait! But what about juicing? I heard this was really good for you? Not necessarily. When you juice you take out all the fiber, meaning the pulp, which leaves nothing but the liquid from the vegetable or fruit. The problem with removing the fiber is that now all you have left is a big glass of sugar, and without the fiber to slow the absorption of that sugar, you might as well have a can of soda! If you do like to juice, then stick to the vegetables only.



Topic 4: Vegetable alternatives

We all have busy lives, so sometimes it can be hard to get our daily servings of vegetables. In circumstances like this, it is ok to use vegetable supplements, (similar to protein supplements) as a healthy substitute. These are powdered extracts of specific fruits and vegetables, but still contain majority of the important vitamins and minerals. However, these supplements should only be used as a short-term solution in specific situations, not as a long-term substitute for whole food.



***NOW MAKE IT A PRIORITY TO EAT
THOSE VEGETABLES AND FRUIT!***



Questions:

1. Think about your daily life, give three examples of how you can add more vegetables/fruit into your life? Be specific!

2. What are your favorite vegetables/fruit? What are your least favorite? How can you incorporate a greater VARIETY of vegetables/fruit into your daily nutrition?

3. Observation: After eating more vegetables and fruit, how does your body feel?
