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Five Simple Tips to Increase Fruit and Vegetable Intake

Adult women need at least 1½ cups of fruit and 2½ cups of vegetables each day and adult men need at least 2 cups of fruit and 3½ cups of vegetables each day. This may seem like a lot or a difficult task; however, below are five simple tips to increase fruit and vegetable intake to help one reach his or her healthy eating goals.

1. Taste the rainbow. Try adding a variety of colors to at least one meal per day. Adding colorful options will allow one to try different varieties of fruits and vegetables. Typically, children need between 10-12 introductions before enjoying a new food.

2. Go incognito. Vegetables are often not included in breakfast. Try adding a serving of leafy greens such as spinach or kale to a breakfast smoothie for a boost of iron and magnesium. Adding bell peppers and onions to scrambled eggs provides an antioxidant boost.

3. Make half your plate fruit and/or vegetables. MyPlate.gov suggests making half your plate fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are low in calories, high in fiber and water which helps promote fullness. Plus, they are packed with vitamins and minerals.

4. Boost cooking creativity. Allow children to help in the kitchen. Children can assist in

preparation and build creativity by helping plan fun nutrient-dense meals and snacks. Not only will this help teach children fine motor, language, math, and life skills but lay the foundation for healthy eating habits.

5. Shop the sales. When fresh fruits and vegetables are not financially wise to buy, enjoy options such as canned, dried, and frozen. These options are shelf stable and can help stock a pantry for quick use. Frozen corn, peas, edamame, or spinach can be added to a favorite dish for a boost of vitamins and minerals. Dried fruits and vegetables such as bananas, pineapple, apples, and turnips are a great way to enjoy a new fruit or vegetable. Make sure to check that there is no added sugar in the dried fruit. Mix frozen berries with yogurt or cereal for a quick breakfast.



Written by Heather Simpson, Extension Agent - Better Living for Texans

Content Source: <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/vegetables>.

*<https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/fruits>, Piernas C & Popkin BM. (2011). Food portion patterns and trends among US children and the relationships to total eating occasion size, 1977-2006. *Journal of Nutrition*, 141:1159-1164.*

Photo source: <https://www.canva.com/design>

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Recipe of the Month

Recipe and photo source: MyPlate Kitchen, <https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen>

Anytime Pizza

Make your own pizza topped with green peppers, mushrooms, or other vegetables.

Serves: 2

Ingredients:

- ¼ mini baguette or Italian bread split lengthwise or 2 split English muffins
- ½ cup pizza sauce
- ½ cup part-skim shredded mozzarella or cheddar cheese
- ¼ cup chopped green pepper
- ¼ cup sliced fresh or canned mushrooms
- Optional, other vegetable toppings as desired
- Optional, Italian seasoning.



Directions:

1. Toast the bread or English muffin until slightly brown.
2. Top bread or muffin with pizza sauce, vegetables, and low-fat cheese.
3. Sprinkle with Italian seasonings as desired.
4. Return bread to toaster oven (or regular oven preheated to 350 degrees).
5. Heat until cheese melts.

Nutrients Per Serving: 180 calories, 7 g total fat, 3 g saturated fat, 15 mg cholesterol, 502 mg sodium, 18 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 4 g total sugar, 1 g added sugar, and 11 g protein

Total Cost per serving: \$\$\$\$

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