

Five a day is the healthy way to eat

They say an apple a day keeps the doctor away. But a healthy diet requires more than a single piece of fruit every day. For good nutrition and great health benefits, include five or more servings of fruits and vegetables in your diet daily.

Fruits and vegetables are part of a well-balanced and healthy eating plan. Diets rich in fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of stroke, cardiovascular disease, some types of cancer and other chronic diseases. Fruits and vegetables also provide essential vitamins and minerals, fiber, and other substances that are important for good health.

Does five servings a day sound like a lot? It's easier than you think!

Start with size.

One serving of fruits or vegetables is about the size of a tennis ball. Many portions of fruits and vegetables are actually more than one serving! A large salad, for example, can easily add up to 2 or 3 servings.

If you measure it out, one serving is

- a small glass of 100% fruit or vegetable juice (three-quarters of a cup, or 6 ounces)
- a small banana, an orange or a medium-sized apple
- one cup of raw salad greens
- 1/2 cup of cooked vegetables
- 1/2 cup of cut-up fruit or vegetables
- 1/4 cup of dried fruit
- 1/2 cup of cooked beans or peas

To get maximum nutritional benefit, eat fruits and vegetables the way nature provided—or with fat-free or low-fat cooking techniques. Try steaming vegetables, using low-calorie or low-fat dressings, and using herbs and spices to add flavor. Eat fruit raw to enjoy its natural sweetness.

Canned or frozen fruits and vegetables are good options when fresh produce is not available. Choose those without added sugar, syrup, cream sauces, or other ingredients that will add sugar, sodium or fat. Select whole fruit over fruit drinks and juices for more fiber and fewer calories.

To get a healthy variety, think color. Eating fruits and vegetables of different colors gives your body a wide range of valuable nutrients, like fiber, folate, potassium, and vitamins A and C. Some examples include green spinach, orange sweet potatoes, black beans, yellow corn, purple plums, red watermelon, and white onions.

Sample something new from time to time -- kiwi, artichoke, papaya, jicama, even ugli fruit. You might discover a new favorite!

Spread it out!

- Start the day with a glass of 100% fruit or vegetable juice.
- Add some banana slices or strawberries to your cereal.
- Toss up a salad for lunch, choose a veggie wrap or pile your sandwich with lettuce, tomato, onion, peppers and sprouts.
- Munch an apple or carrot sticks for a mid-day snack.
- Serve up a vegetable with your dinner or add a side salad.
- Choose berries or baked apple slices for dessert.
- For late night munchies, pick raisins or dried cranberries.

There's great taste and good nutrition in fruits and vegetables -- so make it five a day, every day. You'll feel good doing what's good for you!

For more information on nutrition and wellness, log on to

www.HealthyHenryCounty.org

Information provided by Healthy Henry County Communities Wellness Journey, funded by the CDC Building Healthy Communities in Iowa through Harkin Wellness Grants through the Iowa Department of Public Health. Sources include www.5aday.gov/index.html