



# Eat Your Veggies!

## (And Fruits)

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By now we've all heard about the many health benefits of eating fruits and vegetables. They are high in vitamins and minerals, high in fiber, low in calories and fat, and high in antioxidants. A diet that is rich in fresh fruits and vegetables can lower cancer risk and blood pressure, reduce your risk of heart disease or stroke, and keep your appetite under control.

Just knowing this information, however, doesn't mean we are diligent about including enough produce in our daily diets. Therefore, here are twenty-five easy tips to sneak more fruits and vegetables into your diet – or your loved ones' diets.

### **BREAKFAST**

- Love cereal? Sprinkle some fresh berries on top of practically any boxed cereal. Blueberries and strawberries are probably easiest to come by, but blackberries or raspberries also work.
- Likewise, slice up a banana or peach and add it to cereal or yogurt.
- Whip up a quick smoothie with a banana, berries (frozen can also work), yogurt, some flaxseed, and juice. Play with the amounts to get the desired taste and consistency. Do a web search for smoothie recipes for lots of great ideas.
- Add raisins or dried cranberries or cherries to your oatmeal.
- Chop up a red pepper and add it to eggs – scrambled, fried, or an omelet.
- Instead of toast with butter, try a mini pizza of toast or an english muffin with a sliced tomato and some cheese in the broiler.
- Scoop out a cantaloupe or honeydew and add cottage cheese in the center. Sprinkle cinnamon on top.

### **LUNCH**

- Add lettuce and tomato to any deli sandwich. Remember, the darker the greens, the more nutrients.
- Buy a bag of frozen peas, and pour a small amount into a freezer bag. Take that bag to work with you, and store it in the freezer so you can add the peas to any frozen entrée.
- Go meatless once a week and make your sandwich all veggies. Try a base of hummus and add baby spinach, tomato,

sprouts, shredded carrots, or anything you prefer.

- If you slice an apple or pear to pack in your lunch, add a drop of lemon juice to prevent it from browning. It will look more appetizing!
- Hitting the salad bar? Add some fruit to your salad for a sweet twist on an old standby. Try strawberries, blueberries, sliced apples, or dried fruits.
- Add diced carrots, celery, or cabbage to canned tuna.

### **SNACKS**

- A fan of peanut butter? Skip the bread and spread the peanut butter on apple slices or celery stalks.
- Munch on a mixture of baby carrots, sliced red pepper, and celery. The differences in texture, color, and taste will make it more appealing than just one veggie. If you can't stomach raw veggies by themselves, dip them into hummus.
- Keep fruits out where you can see them – on the counter at home or on your desk. You'll be less likely to grab a candy bar if that apple or orange is looking at you accusingly.
- Drink fruit juice instead of soda.
- Three words: chocolate covered strawberries.
- Store individual packs of apple sauce or fruit cups in your desk.

### **DINNER**

- Add extra vegetables to your soups and stews (canned or homemade).
- Add leftover vegetables to a plain cheese pizza. Bonus: You'll save money by not paying extra for the toppings!
- Skip the fries or baked potato in favor of a baked sweet potato.
- Even better, skip the fries or baked potato in favor of a side salad with a non-creamy dressing.
- Grill veggies along with meat when you cook outdoors. Similarly, roast vegetables in the oven.
- Craving something sweet after dinner? Try berries on vanilla ice cream or angel food cake.

Depending on the time of year, you will find a variety of healthy, tasty options at your farmer's market or grocery store. With so many delicious alternatives, you are sure to find your own ways to boost your produce intake. Enjoy!