

Health and Wellness

News You Can Use

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Managing your weight with fruits and vegetables

Whether you're trying to lose weight or prevent weight gain, a diet rich in fruits and veggies and low in saturated fats and sugar - combined with physical activity - is the key. In fact, studies have shown that those who follow this regimen manage weight better, are less hungry, and have a better intake of nutrients such as vitamins and minerals.

Fruit and vegetable basics

Fruits and vegetables are essential to maintaining your health. With their combination of essential vitamins and vital nutrients, you should be eating fruits and vegetables every day.

Daily necessities

Fruits and vegetables contain essential vitamins, minerals, fiber and other naturally occurring substances that may help prevent chronic diseases.

- Most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat, sodium and calories. None have cholesterol. It is important to remember that some sauces or seasonings may add any of the above.
- Many contain Vitamin C, which is important for growth, healing cuts and wounds and aiding iron absorption. Vitamin-C rich foods include kiwi, strawberries, oranges, sweet potatoes, tomato juice and cauliflower.
- Diets rich in potassium help to maintain healthy blood pressure, decrease bone loss and reduce the



risk of kidney stones. To increase your potassium intake, try sweet potatoes, broccoli and cantaloupe.

- Folate (folic acid) helps the body form red blood cells. This is especially important for pregnant women (or those who wish to become pregnant), as it reduces the risk of birth defects. Asparagus, cooked spinach and black-eyed peas are all good sources.

How much do you need?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) suggests that children, teenagers and adults should fill half of their plate with fruits and vegetables at all meals. For more details, visit choosemyplate.gov.

Low-calorie options

To lose weight, you must eat fewer calories than your body uses. It's easy to create lower-calorie versions of some of

your favorite dishes by substituting fruits and vegetables in place of higher-calorie ingredients. Here are some simple ways to cut calories for each meal:

Breakfast:

- Cut back on the amount of cereal in your bowl to make room for some cut-up bananas, peaches or strawberries.
- Substitute spinach, onions or mushrooms for one of the eggs or half the cheese you would have in an omelet.

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Lunch:

- Add a cup of chopped vegetables such as carrots in place of 2 ounces of the meat or 1 cup of noodles in your favorite broth-based soup.
- Substitute vegetables such as spinach, green peppers, cucumbers or onions for 2 ounces of the cheese and 2 ounces of the meat in your sandwich, wrap or burrito.

Dinner:

- Take a good look at your dinner plate. Vegetables, fruits and whole grains should take up the largest portion of your plate. Remember to use a normal- or small-sized plate, and avoid larger platter-sized plates.
- Swap 1 cup of chopped vegetables for 1 cup of pasta or rice in your favorite dish.

Snacks:

- Try hummus and baked tortilla chips with salsa instead of chips and dip.
- Top a cup of low-fat, plain yogurt with fresh, sliced fruit.
- Store cleaned, cut-up vegetables in the fridge at eye level and keep a low-fat or fat-free dip on hand.

Tips for children

Fruits and vegetables are important for a child's healthy growth and development, both now and in the future. It can be difficult to persuade them to eat fruits and vegetables, especially when there are so many other attractive high-calorie options. Below are some ideas for encouraging healthy eating:

- Pack a water bottle or a 100 percent juice box in their lunch instead of soda pop.

- Make fruit kabobs with pineapple chunks, bananas, grapes and berries.
- Decorate plates or serving dishes with fruit slices.
- While shopping, allow children to pick out a new fruit or vegetable to try with dinner.
- Most importantly, set a good example by eating fruits and vegetables yourself every day.

Remember, substitution is the key. Eat fruits and vegetables instead of some other higher-calorie food, and your body will thank you!

Fruits and vegetables for disease prevention

Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables is not only important for maintaining a healthy weight and one's general health, but it can also help prevent chronic diseases and conditions, including:

Cardiovascular disease

Heart disease is the world's leading killer. All fruits and vegetables are good choices for the prevention of heart disease and stroke, but the best choices are green leafy vegetables and citrus fruits.

High blood pressure and high cholesterol

High blood pressure is a primary risk factor for heart disease and stroke. How fruits and vegetables lower cholesterol is still a bit of a mystery. However, some experts think that the soluble fiber in them helps block the absorption of cholesterol from other foods.

Cancer

It appears that eating more fruit may lower the risk of cancers of the esophagus, stomach and lungs, and reduces the risk of cancers of the mouth, pharynx, colon-rectum, larynx, kidney and bladder.

Gastrointestinal conditions

Indigestible fiber that comes from fruits and vegetables is important for preventing intestinal ailments. As fiber passes through the digestive system, it soaks up water and expands. This can calm irritable bowels and decrease pressure inside the intestinal tract.

Cataracts and macular degeneration

Usually related to aging, a cataract is the gradual clouding of the eye's lens. Macular degeneration is damage to the center of the retina. Dark green leafy vegetables contain two pigments (lutein and zeaxanthin) that aid in protecting the eye. In addition, the vitamin A found in carrots, cantaloupe and pumpkin improves night vision.

Birth defects

Neural tube defects (NTDs) are major defects of a baby's brain or spine. Folate (folic acid) is a B vitamin used in the body to make new cells. Most NTDs can be prevented if a woman has enough of this in her body before becoming pregnant. Folic acid is found in asparagus, cooked spinach and certain fortified breakfast cereals.

Other diseases and conditions that can be prevented are coronary artery disease and osteoporosis, as well as dental problems and skin infections. The next time you get hungry, consider eating a fruit or vegetable.

Source: Zywave

Recipe



Source: Allrecipes.com

Healthy Recipe: Summer Lemon Pea Salad

Ingredients

- 1 cup raw peas
- 1/2 lemon, juiced
- Salt and ground black pepper to taste

Directions

Mix peas, lemon juice, salt and pepper together in a bowl.